

## Historical Narratives on Reconstruction of al-Aqsa Mosque in Early Islam\*

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine historical accounts related the first demarcating re-construction of *al-Aqsa* mosque in Jerusalem after Islam. It focusing on the differences between the early and later sources by examining the early and later Islamic narratives and sources and the available non-Islamic sources. This research attempts to find some explanation behind the differences between the early and later sources. Through the analysis of the early sources, the author also discusses and analyses the views of some modern researchers who have dealt with some of these issues.

**Keywords:** Jerusalem, Umar ibn al-Khattab, re-construction, *al-Aqsa* mosque, Bayt al-Maqdis

### Introduction

The discussion regarding the first demarcating re-construction of *al-Aqsa* mosque in Jerusalem after Islam may be viewed as some of the most complex historical issues in both the early and later Islamic narratives and sources. Of particular concern are the early sources in general which were silent with the exception of a few short accounts which mentioned that he demarcated the construction of chamber “*a Mihrab*’.” The later sources, however, reported a number of long accounts.

It seems that there are many reasons for the differences between the early and later sources, especially with regard to the silence of the early sources and the significant interest of the later sources in ‘Umar’s demarcates for building a mosque in Jerusalem. This paper aims to examine the early and later Islamic narratives and sources and the available non-Islamic sources in an attempt to find some explanation behind the silence of the early sources and the development in the Islamic narratives.

### The Narratives

Before examining the early accounts and narrations which deal with the question of ‘Umar’s entry into Jerusalem and measuring the activities he eventually undertook in the walled city,<sup>1</sup> it is essential to highlight an important issue. It is the fact that most of the early historians have made any reference to ‘Umar ordering the construction of a mosque in Jerusalem.

Al-Wāqidi<sup>2</sup>, was the first among the early narrators who mentioned ‘Umar’s designs for the construction of a mosque in Jerusalem. Al-Wāqidi, who represents one of the earliest Islamic sources, was quoted by al-Azdi as stating that ‘Umar had actually spent no more than five days there. During that time he drew a map of chamber “*a Mihrab*” from the east side. The text reads: “*‘Umar’s entry (into Aelia) was on Monday and he stayed there until Friday. He drew a map of a ‘Mihrab’<sup>3</sup> from the east, which is the site of his mosque; then he advanced and led his companions in the al-Jum’a prayer.*”<sup>4</sup>

One of the other early sources which follow al-Wāqidi, is Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām. Ibn Sallām alluded in a couple of texts to the construction of the mosque. In the first context, he reported on the authority of Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār, on the authority of al-Haitham Ibn ‘Ammār al-‘Abbsī, on the

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<sup>1</sup> The reasons and objectives of these visits was discussed in: Othman Ismael Al-Tel and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor (2017), “Umar Ibn al-Khattab’s visit to Bayt al-Maqdis: A study on its reasons and objectives,” *Journal al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 79-91.

<sup>2</sup> Modern scholars generally classify Al-Waqidi book *Futuh al-Sham* as a falsely-attributed later work, dating it to around the time of the Crusades, though some scholars believe a small portion of the text may be traced back to al-Waqidi.

<sup>3</sup> ‘*Mihrab*’ means A place in the mosque where the *Imam* (leader of the Muslim worshipping in prayer) stand.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Waqidi, Muhammad Ibn ‘Umar (n.d.), *Kitab Futuḥ al-Sham Wabihamishi Tulfat al-Anzirin fi man Hakama misr min al-Wūlā wal-Ṣalāṭin li ‘Abdullah al-Sharqāwī*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Cairo: Maktabat wa Matb’at al-Mashhad al-Husaynī, p. 152; Al-Azdi, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdullah (1979), *Tarikh Futuh al-Sham*, ‘Abd al-Min’im ‘Amir (ed.), Mūassasat Sijil al-‘Arab, p. 259. In another account from Shihr Ibn Hausha, he mentioned that ‘Umar spent ten days in Jerusalem. p. 153.

authority of the latter's grandfather, that when 'Umar entered the walled part of Jerusalem he asked Ka'b al-Ahbar whether he knew the site of the 'Rock'. Then he asked his opinion on the most suitable place for a mosque or *qibla* (direction which Muslims face when praying). In the narration Abu 'Ubayd states that : "Hishām Ibn 'Ammār on the authority of al-Haytham Ibn 'Ammār al-'Abbsī said: When 'Umar was appointed as a *Walī* (became or pointed caliph), he visited the people of al-Shām (The Levants or Historical Syria); he descended on al-Jābiya and then sent a man from Judayla to [conquer] *Baiy al-Maqdis*. He occupied it after ratifying a peace accord [*Sulh*] and 'Umar subsequently came accompanied by Ka'b. He ['Umar] Said: O Abū Ishāq, do you know the site of the "Rock"? He [Ka'b] said that "it was only a few feet away from the wall near the "Valley of Hell; dig there and then you will find it." He said: "There and then it was a place of garbage"; he said they eventually dug and the "Rock" appeared. Thereupon 'Umar asked Ka'b: "where do you think we should locate the mosque - He said: or the *qibla*? Locate it behind the "Rock" so that it combines both *Qiblas*: The *qibla* of Moses (peace be upon him)", and the *qibla* of Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him)", he said [Ka'b]. He ['Umar] said: "you have emulated Judaism, O Abū Ishāq! The best mosques are in the front of it." He then said: "consequently he constructed it in front of the "Rock"<sup>5</sup>.

In the second narration Abu 'Ubayd reported on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm, on the authority of Sa'īd Ibn 'Abd al-Azīz, he says that 'Umar had employed the villagers (*Anbāt Ahl Filastīn*) to clear the place of garbage of Jerusalem. Ibn Sallām himself adds a few lines to complete the narrative by saying that 'Umar won the mosque for the Muslims from the *Dhimma* people (the people of the book), and that he did not include it as part of the peace accord. To illuminate the nature of this narration and show its importance we will cite it in full : "He said [Abu 'Ubayd]: "Hisham has told me, on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm, on the authority of Sa'īd Ibn 'Abd al-Azīz, saying that 'Umar employed the villagers of Palestine (*Anbāt Ahl Filastīn*), and got them to sweep Bayt al-Maqdis which had a lot of garbage<sup>6</sup>.

Abu 'Ubayd said: Do you not see that 'Umar has taken over the mosque for Muslim use, and prevented the *Dhimma* people from using the mosque. Accordingly, until this day they cannot enter it. The country had a peace accord [*Sulh*]; but 'Umar did not include the mosque as part of that accord, because it was not part of their rights"<sup>7</sup>.

While these accounts represent most or all that has been mentioned on the subject in the early Islamic sources, al-Ṭabarī and other later narrators who relied on him, reported a great deal of additional information shown in the Syrian narratives. Al-Ṭabarī offered three narrations that are lengthy and detailed in comparison to the ones we have just quoted. He reports his first narration on the authority of Abū Maryyam al-Filastīnī,<sup>8</sup> and the second on the authority of Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawa and the third (also in agreement with the narrative of Rajā'), with a slight addition, on the authority of Rabī'a al-Shāmī<sup>9</sup>. Al-Ṭabarī states in the first text that : "According to Abū Maryyam, the client of Salāmah, who said: I witnessed the conquest of Aelia with 'Umar: He then went from al-Jabiyah, leaving it behind until he came to Aelia. He then went on and entered the mosque. Then he went toward the *mihrab* of David, while we were with him, he entered it, recited the prostration of David, and prostrated himself, and we prostrated ourselves with him."<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, al-Ṭabarī, in two other similar accounts; one on the authority of Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawa, and the other one on the authority of Rabī'a al-Shāmī, states : "According to Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawah,<sup>11</sup>-persons who were present at the event: When 'Umar came from al-Jabiyah to Aelia and drew near the gate of the

<sup>5</sup> Abu 'Ubayd, Al-Qasim Ibn Sallam (2007), *Kitab al-Amwal*, Abu Anas Saied bin Rajab (ed.), Dar Al-Huda, Egypt, and Dar Al-Faqila, Saudi, p. 260, p. 260.

<sup>6</sup> Abu 'Ubayd, Al-Qasim Ibn Sallam (2007), *Kitab al-Amwal*, p. 254.

<sup>7</sup> Abu 'Ubayd, Al-Qasim Ibn Sallam (2007), *Kitab al-Amwal*, p. 259.

<sup>8</sup> Abu Maryyam al-Filastini belonged to al-Azd tribe. In Islamic Sources, however, there are inaccuracies between several persons who named Abu Mariyyam.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr (1992), *The history of al-Tabari, Tārīkh al-Arusul wa`a-muluk*, Vol. X. 11. The Battle of al-Qadisiyya and the conquest of Syria and Palestine translated and annotated by Yahanan Friedman, University of New York press, pp. 196-197.

<sup>10</sup> Tabari (1992), *The history of al-Tabari*, Vol. X. 11, pp. 193-194.

<sup>11</sup> He was a Syrian from Kinda tribe, a highly-regarded jurist, in the Umayyad period, in particular during the 66-112 AH/ 688-730-31 C.E. See: Al-'UsFuri, Khalifa Ibn Khaiyyat (1966), *Kitab al-Ṭabaqat: Ririwayat Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Al-Azdi*, Suhail Zakkar (ed.), Vol. 2, Dimashq: Matabi' Wazarat al-Thqafa wa al-Irshad al-Qawmi, p. 793; Ibn Qutayyba, Abi Muhammad 'Abdullah Ibn Muslim (n.d.), *Kitab al-Ma'arif*, Tharwat 'Ukasha (ed.), Cairo : Dar al-Ma'arif, pp. 472-473; Ibn Sa'd, Muhammad (2001), *al-Ṭabaqat al-Kubra*, Ali Mohammad Umar (ed.), Vol. 9, Cairo : Maktabat al-Khanji, p. 457.

mosque, he said:” Watch out for me Ka‘b<sup>12</sup> on my behalf ‘When the gate was opened for him, he said: O God, I am ready to serve you in what you love most. Then he turned to the *mihrab*, the *mihrab* of David, peace be upon him. It was at night, and he prayed there.<sup>13</sup> It was not long before dawn broke, and then ‘Umar ordered the *Mu‘adhdhin* to sound the call of prayer. Then he moved forward, led the prayer, and recited *Sūrat Sād* with the people. During the prayer he prostrated himself. Then he stood up and read with them in the second (*Rak‘ah*) the beginning of *Sūrat Banī Isrā‘il*. Then he prayed another *Rak‘ah* and went away. He said: “Bring Ka‘b to me.” Ka‘b was brought to him. ‘Umar said: “Where do you think we should establish the place of prayer?” Ka‘b said: “Toward the Rock” ‘Umar said:” O Ka‘b, you are imitating the Jewish religion! I have seen you taking off your shoes. “Ka‘b said: “I wanted to touch this ground with my feet. “Umar said:” I have seen you. Nay, we shall place the *qiblah* in the front of it; the Messenger of God likewise made the front part of our mosques the *qiblah*. Take care of your own affairs; we were not commanded to venerate the Rock, but we were commanded to venerate the Ka‘bah.”<sup>14</sup>

‘Umar made the front part of the mosque its *qiblah*. Then he stood up from his place of prayer and went to the rubbish in which the Romans had buried the temple (*Bayt al-Maqdis*) at the time of the sons of Israel. (When he came to the Byzantines, they had uncovered a part but left the rest [under the rubbish]. He said: “O people, do what I am doing. “He knelt in the midst of the rubbish and put it by the handful into the lower part of his mantle. He heard behind him the proclamation “God most great.” He disliked improper behavior in any matter and said: “What is this? “The people said:” Ka‘b proclaimed God is most great! and the people proclaimed it following him. “Umar said: “Bring him to me!” Ka‘b said:” O commander of the faithful, five hundred years ago a prophet predicted what you have done today. “Umar asked: “In what way?” Ka‘b said: The Byzantines (*Rūm*) attacked the sons of Israel, were given victory over them, and buried the temple. Then they were given another victory, but they did not attend to the temple until the Persians attacked them. The Persians oppressed the sons of Israel. Later the Byzantines were given victory over the Persians. Then you came to rule. God sent a prophet to the [city buried in] rubbish and said: “Rejoice O Jerusalem (*Ūrī shalam*)! Al-Faruq will come to you and clean you.” Another prophet was sent to Constantinople. He stood on a hill belonging to the city and said: “O Constantinople, what did your people do to my House? They ruined it, presented you as if you were similar to My throne and made interpretations contrary to My purpose. I have determined to make you one day unfortified (and defenseless). Nobody will seek shelter from you, nor rest in your shade. [I shall make you unfortified] at the hands of Banū al-Qādhir, Sabā, and Waddān.<sup>15</sup> By the time it was evening nothing remained of the rubbish. An identical tradition was transmitted to Rabī‘ah al-Shāmī. He added: “Al-Fārūq came to you with my obedient army. They will take revenge upon the Byzantines on behalf of your people.” Then regarding Constantinople he said: “I shall leave you unfortified and exposed to the sun; nobody will seek shelter from you, and you will not cast your shade on anyone.”<sup>16</sup>

These accounts clearly show part of the development of the Islamic narrative in Syria. Al-Wāqidī, has reported that ‘Umar only demarcated the construction of a *Mihrab* without mentioning any details. Abu ‘Ubayd, expanded on that when he reported the role of Ka‘b al-Ahbar in finding the location of the rock and that ‘Umar constructed the *qibla* in front of it. Al-Ṭabarī reported in his first account that ‘Umar entered the *Mihrab* and prayed there without mentioning the rock. However, in his two second accounts not only did he mention the prayer, but also that he built a place of prayer (*Musallā*), in front of the rock.

### Analysis of the chains (*Isnāds*), times and places

The early sources relating to the activities of ‘Umar in Jerusalem can be divided on the basis of time and place into four categories:

<sup>12</sup> Ka‘b al-Ahbar (d. 32 A.H/ 653 C.E). A Yemenite Jew who converted to Islam during the reign of Abu Bakr or ‘Umar and was considered an important transmitter of Jewish traditions into Islamic lore. Tabari (1992), *The history of al-Tabari*, Vol. X. 11, pp. 194. (Margin 718), See Wolfensohn, *Ka‘b al-Ahbar*, Numerous transmissions by him have been assembled and analysed in Kister, *‘Haddithu‘an bani Israil*. See also: *EI 2*, s.v. *Ka‘b al-Ahbar* “(M. Schmitz).

<sup>13</sup> Herbert Busse claims that in this tradition, *Mihrab Dawud* refer to the citadel of David. He also claims that ‘Umar’s night prayer is a reflection of a Christian custom of praying there at night. See Herbert, Buss (1984), “‘Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem: to the first Colloquium from Jahiliyya to Islam,” *Journal of Jerusalem Studies In Arabic and Islam*, Vol. 5, p. 84. Herbert Busse (1986), “‘Omar’s Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem: to the first Colloquium from Jahiliyya to Islam,” *Journal of Jerusalem Studies In Arabic and Islam*, Vol. 8, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup> Tabari (1992), *The history of al-Tabari*, Vol. X. 11, pp. 194-195.

<sup>15</sup> Tabari (1992), *The history of al-Tabari*, Vol. X. 11, pp. 195-196.

<sup>16</sup> Tabari (1992), *The history of al-Tabari*, Vol. X. 11, pp. 196-197.

Firstly, the Iraqi sources such as al-Wāqidī, who could also be counted as a Madīnīan or Hījāzī historian, have reported a few narratives, which were quoted by al-Azdī, stating that ‘Umar had demarcated the construction of the *Mihrab* or mosque in the eastern area of the city.

On the other hand, neither al-Balādhurī nor al-Ya‘qūbī, who were associated with moderate Shi‘ism, nor historians such as, Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, al-Azdī, or any other early sources had made any mention of Umar’s demarcating the construction of a mosque in Jerusalem.

The second category includes the Syrian historians. Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām (d. 224 A.H/ 839 C.E) was the only Syrian historian to give any account of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s construction of a *Mihrab* or mosque in front of the rock in Jerusalem. He also reported without *Isnād* that ‘Umar employed the villagers of Palestine (*Anbāt Ahl Filastīn*), and got them to sweep Bayt al-Maqdis which had a large garbage dump on it. These two accounts were not reported by the earlier famous Syrian historian Abī Zir‘a al-Dimashqī, who was close to the time of Abu ‘Ubayd, nor even by some later Syrian sources such as Ibn ‘Asākir.

Thirdly, among the Iraqi sources comes the famous Muslim historian al-Ṭabarī, who can be singled out for being the only source to report the earliest long account regarding the arrival of Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in Jerusalem and his construction of a *Mihrab* or a mosque in front of the rock.

Finally, the early Syrian accounts of the activities that ‘Umar undertook in Aelia. These sources, excluding Abu ‘Ubayd, relied on the Iraqi sources, excluding al-Ṭabarī, and were also relied on by the Hījāzī and the Egyptian sources which include historians such as Khalifa Ibn Khayyāt, Muḥammad Ibn Sa‘d, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam and others, who mentioned that ‘Umar demarcated a *Mihrab* or a mosque in Jerusalem. On the other hand, none of the above had mentioned any details regarding the prayer that ‘Umar gave while he was in Jerusalem, or that he visited the site of David’s temple or other places in Jerusalem.

While, Hussain ‘Atwān claimed that the Syrian narratives are usually long and detailed but differ from the Hījāzī and ‘Iraqī accounts,<sup>17</sup> the researcher argues that the early Syrian accounts relating to the activities of ‘Umar in Jerusalem, judging from the accounts of Abu ‘Ubayd, are rather short and do not provide details or elaborations. In the case of the later Syrian accounts however, the narrations contain a great deal of inaccuracies and non-historical details. This fact perhaps offers some explanation, as will be seen, regarding the development of the narratives in Syria, especially regarding the inaccurate information about the sites of the mosques of David, ‘Umar and *al-Aqsa*.

Again, contrary to H. Busse’s argument that non-Islamic sources have copied the Islamic ones with regard to the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem,<sup>18</sup> the researcher argues that this is totally incorrect and, in fact, the opposite is true. It seems to the researcher that the influence of the non-Islamic accounts in the Islamic sources from the beginning of the fourth century, are the reasons behind the expansion on the topic in the later Syrian Muslim narrations and the claims that ‘Umar was interested in visiting the site of David’s temple, and then that he built a mosque in the vicinity of its structure.

As we move from investigating sources to narrators it is interesting to find that Abu ‘Ubayd and al-Ṭabarī, are singled out for relating the activities undertaken by ‘Umar. They took their information from Syrian narrators as can be clearly seen from the *Isnāds* of the above-mentioned accounts. On the other hand, none of the famous narrators from the other regions in the Islamic state had made any mention of such accounts.

With regard to Abu ‘Ubayd’s account,<sup>19</sup> it would be safe to say that the line of this *Isnād* is acceptable when we know that he died in 224 A.H/ 839 C.E, and quoted his account from Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār who died in (d.180 A.H/ 796 C.E), and that Hishām had quoted it from al-Haythām Ibn ‘Ammār who died in 160 A.H/ 777 C.E. In this case however, it could be argued that it is interesting that other famous

<sup>17</sup> Husian ‘Atwān, (1986), *Al-Riwayyat al-Tarikhiyya fi Bilad al-Sham fi al-‘Asr al-Umawai*, ‘Amman, pp. 231-232.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Busse (1984), “‘Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem,” pp. 73-119; Herbert Busse (1986), “‘Omar Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem,” pp. 149-168.

<sup>19</sup> Tabari (1992), *The history of al-Tabari*, Vol. X. 11, pp. 194-195.

historians such as al-Balādhurī and Abī Zir‘a al-Dimashqī do not mention at least some of what he reported.

Those historians were close to the time and place of Abu ‘Ubayd, and depended greatly upon the same narrators from whom he took his information, making one expectation that they would mention at least some of what Abu ‘Ubayd reported. Furthermore, the researcher could not find accounts such as those of Abu ‘Ubayd in other later famous Syrian sources, such as, Ibn ‘Asākir who died in 539 A.H/ 1144 C.E, and who reported many accounts from Ka‘b al-Ahbar regarding the literature of praise (*Aḥādīth al-Fadā’il*).<sup>20</sup>

It seems that Abu ‘Ubayd (who is known as a jurist more than as a historian), aimed for precedence (*Sābiqa*) from his accounts, as it is known that the jurists were mainly concerned with the precedence that led to the mutation of articles of Sharī‘a (law). He aims from this precedence, to rely on ‘Umar’s action to rationalise an event in which the *Dhimma* people were reported to have complained of Muslims descending upon their houses<sup>21</sup>. The complaint was made on the grounds that ‘Umar had already stated that, according to the peace accord, Christian churches and houses did not belong to Muslims.

This emphasis contrasts with what ‘Umar had done in the case of Jerusalem. He had excluded it from the peace accord. He added to the account, without *Isnād*, the report that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb had taken over the mosque for Muslim use, and that he had prevented the *Dhimma* people from entering the mosque, and had not included the mosque in the peace accord. It is possible that Abu ‘Ubayd took his information from one of the Sharī‘a lawyers (experts), who supported the State’s opinion and attributed it to the Syrian narrators who mentioned it in order to make it more acceptable.

Examining the *Isnāds* of al-Ṭabarī’s accounts shows, on the one hand, that these *Isnāds* are weak and broken. This is because they do not continue until his time. On the other hand, he does not mention the identity of the narrator who told him that they heard the account of Rajā’ Ibn Ḥayawa (d 112 A.H/ 730 C.E). There are about five generations between al-Ṭabarī, and the time of Raja. The same thing can be said about the *Isnād* of his accounts from Rabī‘a al-Shāmī and Abū Maryam al-Filastīnī. All of these *Isnāds* are broken; in addition there is no mention of such accounts by other early sources that are closer to the time of the period. In the light of these facts, the researcher argues that some people in Syria, or others elsewhere, attributed these accounts to those narrators but never reported it. This is because they are not found in the Syrian sources, which were close to their time and place, while they are found in the narratives of the ‘Irāqī al-Ṭabarī, who rarely cited accounts in his history from Syrian narrators even when he related episodes on the history of Syria<sup>22</sup>.

The analysis of the time, places, and *Isnāds* of the early Islamic narratives and sources shows that most of the early sources were silent with regard to the demarcating of the construction of a mosque in Jerusalem, except for the reports of al-Wāqidī, Abu ‘Ubayd and al-Ṭabarī. The *Isnāds* of the above-mentioned accounts show that the Syrian narrators are singled out for reporting the first demarcated mosque and the role of Ka‘b al-Ahbar in finding the location of the rock. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the aim of Abu ‘Ubayd was to look for precedence (*Sābiqa*), in order to rationalise an event during the era of ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. In addition, the *Isnāds* of al-Ṭabarī in all of his accounts were weak and broken, which cause them to be considered untrustworthy in the study of the narratives.

Lastly, the mention of the role of Ka‘b al-Ahbar in leading ‘Umar to the location of the rock seems to give substantial proof of additions to the Islamic narratives in Syria with regard to the major activities that ‘Umar undertook in Jerusalem.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn ‘Asakir, Abu al-Qasim ‘Ali Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Hibatullah Ibn al-Husaīn (1951), *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq wa Dhikr Fada’iluha wa Tasmīyat ma Halaha mi al-Amathil au Ijtaza bi Nawahiyaha min Wāridiyha wa Ahliha*, al-Mujalada al-Ula, Shalah al-Munjid (ed.), Matbū‘at Majma‘ al-Lugha al- ‘Arabīah bi Dimashq, Vol. 1, pp. 147-148.

<sup>21</sup> Abu ‘Ubayd’s was the early source who reported that ‘Umar had asked Ka‘b al-Ahbar about the site of the rock and then located the *qibla* or the mosque in front of it. Abu ‘Ubayd (2007), *Kitab al-Amwal*, p. 260.

<sup>22</sup> See: Fred McGraw Donner (1987), “The Problem of Early Arabic Historiography in Syria,” Proceedings of the Second Symposium on the History of Bilad al-Sham During the Early Islamic period up To 40 A.H/640 C.E. The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilad al-Sham (English and French papers), Muhammad ‘Adnan al-Bakhit (ed.), University of Jordan, al-Yarmuk University, pp.1-2.

## Ka‘b al-Ahbar

Contrary to the non-Islamic sources, it can be seen that the early Islamic sources, in particular both Abu ‘Ubayd and al-Ṭabarī gave the main role to Ka‘b al-Ahbar in finding the location of the rock and being the person to lead the caliph ‘Umar to it, rather than the Patriarch Sophronius as the non-Islamic sources confirm. However, the account of Abu ‘Ubayd does not mention that this was the site of David’s temple as in the case of the accounts of al-Ṭabarī.

The problem of the role of Ka‘b al-Ahbar in the Islamic tradition has been the subject of various studies, in particular the studies of Welhausen and others.<sup>23</sup> The researcher could add here that there is unanimous agreement among early Islamic sources that Ka‘b who was a Jew from Yemen, embraced Islam when he met the caliph ‘Umar in Jerusalem, as indicated by al-Wāqidī, Ibn Sa‘d and others<sup>24</sup>.

In short, a brief comparison between Ka‘b who is known in the Islamic tradition for relating *al-Isrā’iliyyāt*,<sup>25</sup> along with another famous Yemeni narrator, Wahab Ibn Munabbih (d. 114 A.H/ 732 C.E), who was even more well-known than Ka‘b for relating *al-Isrā’iliyyāt*,<sup>26</sup> has cited nothing regarding the activities that ‘Umar undertook in Jerusalem or the role of Ka‘b there. This makes the researcher inclined to argue that there was nothing to cite. It makes sense to say that if these events were true then Wahab would have been the first narrator to cite them according to his background in relating *al-Isrā’iliyyāt*.

Indeed, in the case of the presumption that Ka‘b entered Jerusalem with ‘Umar, not before, it is hard to suggest that he had more knowledge than ‘Umar or anyone else about the location of a place in Jerusalem especially in the light of the fact that Ka‘b had been a Jew a short time before he embraced Islam. It is also well known that the Jews had been absent from the city for five hundred years except the period during the Persian’s control between 614-628 AD, and the researcher did not find any evidence indicating that Ka‘b has visited Jerusalem before. The researcher is intrigued by how one could accept that Ka‘b, who had never before entered Jerusalem, could guide ‘Umar to the location of the rock or to any other site in Jerusalem.

Lastly, the problem of Ka‘b residing in Hims after he became a Muslim until he died in 32 AH,<sup>27</sup> may raise many questions about his role in finding the location of the Rock and his desire to locate the *qibla* behind the Rock to combine both *Qiblas* (the *qibla* of Moses and the *qibla* of Muhammad). The most important of these questions is why he chose Hims and not Jerusalem for his residence when his role and the interests he had shown were directed towards both the Rock and the location of the *qibla*, and reflected the great tradition of the literature of praise, *Ahādīth al-Fadā’il*, when he described Jerusalem as one of the cities of paradise? It seems that some Islamic sources have exaggerated Ka‘b’s role in Jerusalem, and that the later Islamic historians found his personality suitable for attributing these accounts to him when they began writing the literature of praise, *Ahādīth al-Fadā’il*, after the war of the Crusades.

The researcher is inclined to argue that Ka‘b, without a doubt, did not play any role in or pay any significant attention to Jerusalem. Also it is very likely that most or even all the tradition of the literature of praise, *Ahādīth al-Fadā’il*, which was reported in later sources is attributed to him in later periods as a result of the conditions that affected Syria, which greatly differed from the period of the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem. In addition, it could be argued that the role that was attributed to him is part of the development of non-historical legends in the Islamic narratives of Syria.

<sup>23</sup> Skizzen Welhausen and Helf Vorarbeiten, IV (1976), *Ka‘b al-Ahbar: Jews and Judaism in the Islamic Tradition*, Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup> Waqidī, (n.d), *Kitab Futūḥ al-Sham*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 153; Ibn Sa‘d (2001), *al-Ṭabaqat al-Kubra*, Vol. 7, p. 449.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al-Duri (1983), *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, Conrad Lawrence I (trans.), New Jersey: Princeton University press, pp. 30-32; Fred McGraw Donner (1998), *The Narratives of Islamic Origins, The Beginnings of Islamic History Writing*, Princeton: The Darwin Press, pp. 156-159; Aboot Nabia (1957), *Studies in Arabic Literary, Papyri, 1: Historical Texts*, University of Chicago Press, pp. 44-56; Anred Tor (1987), *In the Garden of Mysticism Trans*, New York: University of New York Press, pp. 20-26. Al-Isrā’iliyyāt concept mean the legends and myths in Islamic tradition which taken from the Old Testament (Torah and Injil). See: ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Duri (1960), *Baḥth fi Nash‘at ‘Ilm al-Tarikh ‘ind al-‘Arab* (Beirut, p. 26. (in Arabic), Al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Salim (1981), *Al-Tarikh wal-Mu‘arikun al-Arab*, Alexandria: Mu‘assasat Shabab al-Jami‘a, p. 46.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al-Duri Al-Duri (1983), *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs*, pp. 30-32; Donner (1998), *The Narratives of Islamic Origins*, pp. 156-159; Nabia Aboot (1957), *Studies in Arabic Literary*, pp. 44-56; Anred Tor (1987), *In the Garden of Mysticism Trans*, pp. 20-26.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Sa‘d (2001), *al-Ṭabaqat al-Kubra*, Vol. 9, p. 449.

## **Non-Islamic and Later Islamic Narratives**

A careful analysis of the early narratives and sources mentioned above, and from the *Isnāds* of the narrators who told these accounts, shows that great development has taken place with accounts being expanded and embellished with the passing of time. This could be attributed to some earlier Syrian narrators. This development seems to be the cause for many of the contradictions and non-historical legends that appeared in later sources. The researcher argues that the reasons behind this expansion and embellishment, and the development of non-historical legends are: firstly, the later Islamic accounts and sources are produced in circumstances and social-political circumstances that affected the people of Syria in general and the people of Palestine and Jerusalem in particular after the crusade war.

Secondly, it is one of the results of the inaccuracies between the followers of the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), in the area in general and Jerusalem in particular. This mix-up led to the influence of non-Islamic accounts and sources, in particular the Christians', in later Islamic sources. These writers copied literally or translated the literal meanings, and added many fabrications as well as non-historical details, and attributed them to some of the Syrian narrators, particularly to those who were well-known in narrating the history of Syria in the early Islamic period, rather than to their original sources.

To understand the reasons for this development, it is important to look at some non-Islamic sources which were close to the time of the early Islamic sources. Eutychius, the patriarch of Alexandria, who lived under Islamic rule and died in 262 AH/ 876 AD, reported: "Then Umar said to him (Sophronius): "You owe me a debt. Give me a place in which I might build a sanctuary (*Masjid*)," The patriarch said to him: "I will give to the commander of the Faithful a place to build a sanctuary where the kings of Rūm were unable to build. It is the rock where God spoke to Jacob and which Jacob called the Gate of Heaven and the Israelites the Holy of Holies. It is in the centre of the word and was a Temple for the Israelites, who held it in great veneration and wherever they were they turned their faces toward it during prayer. But on this condition, that the promise is in a written document that no other sanctuary will be built inside of Jerusalem."

Therefore Umar ibn al-Khattab wrote him the document on this matter and handed it over to him. They were Romans when they embraced the Christian religion, and Helena, the mother of Constantine, built the church of Jerusalem. The place of the rock and the area around it were deserted ruins and they (the Romans) poured dirt over the rock so that great was the filth above it. The Byzantines (Rūm), however, neglected it and did not hold it in veneration, nor did they build a church over it because Christ our Lord said in his Holy Gospel "Not a stone will be left upon a stone which will not be ruined and devastated." For this reason the Christians left it as a ruin and did not built a church over it. So Sophronius took Umar ibn al-Khattab by the hand and stood him over the filth. Umar, taking hold of his cloak filled it with dirt and threw it into the Valley of Gehenna. When the Muslims saw Umar ibn al-Khattab carrying dirt with his own hands, they all immediately began carrying dirt in their cloaks and shields and what have you until the whole place was cleansed and the rock was revealed. Then they all said: "Let us build a sanctuary and let us place the stone at its heart." "No", Umar responded. "We will build a sanctuary and place the stone at the end of the sanctuary." Therefore Umar built a sanctuary and put the stone at the end of it.<sup>28</sup>

A similar Christian account was reported by the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes who died in the early ninth century, (284 AH/ 897 AD) : "In this year Umar undertook his expedition into Palestine, where the Holy City having been continuously besieged for two years (by the Arab armies), he at length became possessed of it by capitulation. Sophronius, the leader of Jerusalem, obtained from Umar a treaty in favour of all the inhabitants of Palestine, after which Umar entered the Holy City in camelhair garments all soiled and torn, and making a show of piety as a cloak for his diabolical hypocrisy, demanded to be taken to what in former times had been the Temple built by Solomon. This he straightway converted into an oratory for blasphemy and impiety. When Sophronius saw this he

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<sup>28</sup> This translation of Eutychius account has been quoted from: F.E. Peters (1995), *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginning of Modern Times*, New Jersey: Princeton University press, pp. 187-188.

exclaimed, “Truly this is the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, and it now stands in the Holy Place”, and he shed many tears.”<sup>29</sup>

This account was not mentioned in any early Islamic source and the first source to mention some of these details is al-Ṭabarī. The important questions that arise here are: firstly, why did the early Islamic sources remain silent and cite nothing regarding Sophronius leading ‘Umar to the site of David’s temple, and the building of a mosque by ‘Umar in that place as is much reported in later Islamic sources, specifically from the start of the fourth century?

Secondly, were the Syrian narratives, from whom al-Ṭabarī took his information, not available to the other Muslim historians, specifically those who were closer to the time and place of the Syrian narrators and depended upon them more than him? Thirdly, one should ask: why were the early Syrian narrators and sources the only ones to mention these accounts while the other narrators cited nothing? The researcher argues that the earlier sources of al-Ṭabarī were at least available to some historians, specifically to those who were close to the time, but in fact there are no such actions by ‘Umar to cite. These accounts are in fact no more than non-Islamic accounts, in particular of Christians, whose influences originated in Syria and which found their way to the later Islamic sources from the start of the fourth century. In order to see how the Christian accounts influenced the Muslim sources at the time of al-Ṭabarī, it is important to realise that al-Ṭabarī began writing his history after 290 A.H/ 903 C.E, and finished it in 302 A.H/ 914 C.E. These two dates show that al-Ṭabarī’s time was later than the time of Eutychius who died in 262 A.H/ 876 C.E, and the time of Theophanes who died in the early ninth century, (284 A.H/ 894 C.E).

On the other hand the other early Muslim historians, such as the ones mentioned earlier, were dead before that time. This led the researcher to argue that these non-Islamic sources were not available to the early Muslim historians and narrators, in particular in Syria, before the beginning of the fourth century. They did not hear of such events from other sources, but they became known at the time of al-Ṭabarī. This shows that the earliest mention of ‘Umar building a mosque in Jerusalem is by the Christians. Also, it indicates where the later Muslim historians took their information from. Le Strange claimed that he was able to discover that the earliest mention of ‘Umar’s building a mosque in Jerusalem is the account found in the Chronicle of the Byzantine historian Theophanes.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, K. A. C. Creswell, argues that the first source mentioning that ‘Umar built a mosque in Jerusalem is Eutychius (939), but his account is full of elements branded as obviously legendary.<sup>31</sup>

Examining some later Islamic accounts regarding the interest that ‘Umar had shown in the site of David’s temple showed that most, if not all, of these accounts were taken from non-Islamic sources, in particular from Eutychius and Theophanes. Yāqūt al-Hamawī (d. 626 AH) reported that the mosque that ‘Umar built and the prayer that he gave outside the church took place in the church of Bethlehem not Jerusalem. He states: “When the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab came to Jerusalem, a monk from Bethlehem came to him and said: I have a treaty of safety (*amān*), from you on Bethlehem. ‘Umar said: I don’t know that, then the monk showed it to ‘Umar who recognised it and said: the treaty is correct, but we should put a mosque in every Christian place. The monk said, there is a *Hanya* in Bethlehem built towards your *qibla*, make a mosque for the Muslims and do not destroy the Church. ‘Umar left the Church to him and prayed to the *Hanya*, and took it as a mosque. He imposed upon the Christians to light and serve it. The Muslims still visit Bethlehem and seek that *Hanya* and pray in it. Their successors know from their primogenitors that it is ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab’s *Hanya*. The *Hanya* is still known until today; the Crusaders did not change it when they ruled the region. It is said that the graves of David and Sulaiyman, peace be upon them, are in it.”<sup>32</sup>

The analysis of Yāqūt’s account shows that it is full of contradictions as he mentioned that the monk had come to ‘Umar in Jerusalem without referring to when ‘Umar had visited Bethlehem. The question arising here is how the monk asked him to pray in the *Hanya* in Bethlehem when they were some 10

<sup>29</sup> This translation of Theophanes account has been quoted from F.E. Peters (1995), *Jerusalem*, pp.188-189.

<sup>30</sup> Le Strange Guy (1890), *Palestine Under The Muslims*, Cambridge University Press, p. 91.

<sup>31</sup> K. A. C. Creswell (1997), *The Early Muslims Architecture*, 2nd ed, in two parts, Vol. 1 Part 1, *Umayyad, C.E. 622-750 With A contribution on The Muslims Of The Dome Of The Rock In Jerusalem And Of The Great Mosque In Damascus* by Marguerite Gautier-Van Berchem, New York: Hacer Art Books, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Hamawī, Yaqut. Shihab al-Din Ibn ‘Abdullah al-Rumī al-Baqdadi (d. 626 A.H/ 1299 C.E) (1990), *Kitāb Mu’jam al-Buldan*, al-Jindī, Farīd ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (ed.), Vol. 1, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, pp. 618-619.



Km from the place! Furthermore, it could be understood from the account that the monk had a treaty of safety (*amān*) from ‘Umar personally before his arrival in the region while at the same time there is no evidence referring to ‘Umar’s visiting the area i.e, Palestine in general, after he become caliph or even after the rise of Islam! The question here is when did ‘Umar grant this treaty of peace to this monk?

These inaccuracies in Yāqut’s account seems to be due to quoting from Eutychius, as well as adding some fabricated narratives to it. He also ignored other information, such as the details of ‘Umar’s prayer inside the church of Bethlehem as Eutychius confirmed, which led him to fall further into inaccuracies. Eutychius reported that ‘Umar refused to pray inside Jerusalem’s church because of his fear that Muslims would take it from the Christians and convert it into a mosque if he prayed there.

Interestingly, we can see his claim that ‘Umar had prayed inside the church of Bethlehem and wrote to its patriarch forbidding the Muslims from congregations and assemblies for prayer in the place expect one after another.<sup>33</sup> Again, how could ‘Umar fear that the Muslims would take the church of Jerusalem from the Christians and not do the same in Bethlehem, and why would he not do the same thing in both cases?

Examining a few other later Islamic Syrian narratives before and after of Yāqūt’s time such as Ibn al-Murajā, Mujīr al-Dīn, and others, shows clearly how such accounts are also quoted by Muslims from the Christian sources, (such as Yāqut’s) then they also added many fabricated details. However, they also attributed these accounts to some Muslim Syrian narrators, specifically to al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm (d. 205 A.H/ 820 C.E), and not to its original sources. One of Ibn al-Murajā and Mujīr al-Dīn’s important accounts read : “On the authority of Al Walid ibn Muslim, it is reported as coming from a Shaikh of the sons of Shadād ibn Aus, who had heard it from his father, who held it from his grandfather, that ‘Omar, as soon as he was at leisure from the writing of the Treaty of Capitulation made between him and the people of the Holy city, said to the Patriarch of Jerusalem: ‘Conduct us to the Mosque of David.’ And the Patriarch agreed thereto. Then ‘Omar went forth girt with his sword, and with him four thousand of the Companions who had come to Jerusalem with him, all begirt likewise with their swords, and a crowd of us Arabs, who had come up to the Holy City, followed them, none of us bearing any weapons except our swords. And the Patriarch walked before ‘Omar among the Companions, and we all came behind the Khalif. Thus we entered the Holy City. And the Patriarch took us to the Church which goes by the name of the Kumamah, and said he: This is David’s Mosque. And ‘Omar looked around and pondered, then he answered the Patriarch: ‘Thou liest, for the Apostle described to me the Mosque of David, and by his description this is not it’. Then the Patriarch went on with us to the Church of Sihyun (Sion), and again he said: ‘This is the Mosque of David’. But the Kalif replied to him: ‘Thou liest’. So the Patriarch went on with him till he came to the noble Sanctuary of the Holy City, and reached the gate thereof, called (afterwards) the Gate Muhammad. Now the dung which was then all about the noble Sanctuary, had settled on the steps of this gate, so that it even came out into the street in which the gate opened, and it had accumulated so greatly on the steps as almost to reach up the ceiling to the gateway. The Patriarch said to ‘Omar: ‘It is impossible to proceed and enter-except crawling on hands and knees’. Said ‘Omar: ‘Even on hands and knees be it’. So the Patriarch went down on hands and knee, preceding ‘Omar and we all crawled after him, until he had brought us out into the Court of the Noble Sanctuary of the Holy City. Then we arose off our knees, stood upright. And ‘Omar looked around, pondering for a long time. Then said he: ‘By Him in whose hands is my soul!-this is the place described to us by the Apostle of Allah’.”<sup>34</sup>

The investigation of some later Islamic narratives and sources and comparison with the Christian accounts<sup>35</sup> shows that the Muslim historians in Syria not only quoted the Christians accounts, but also added a great amount of fabrications to them, and attributed them to Muslim Syrian narrators instead of their original sources. Furthermore, their literal copies and attribution led them to make many inaccuracies when they inaccurately reported the real activities of ‘Umar in Jerusalem, which shows the

<sup>33</sup> al-Baqdadi (1990), *Kitāb Mu’jam al-Buldan*, pp. 618-619.

<sup>34</sup> This translation has been quoted from Le Strange (1890), *Palestine Under The Muslims*, pp.141-142. See the original Arabic text in: Ibn Al-Murajjā, Abūal-Ma’ālī al-Musharrāf (1995), *Faḍl’al Bayt al-Maqdis wa al-Khalil wa Faḍl’al al-Sham*, edited by Livni, ‘Ujir, Shfa’amir, Palestine, p. 49; Al-Hanbali, Mujir al-Din (1999), *Al-Uns al-Jalil bi Tarikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil*, ‘Adnan Yunies Abu Tibana (ed.), Vol. 1, Palestine : Maktabat Dandees, pp. 379 – 380.

<sup>35</sup> For Christians narratives and Umar ibn Al-Khattabs visit to Jerusalem see: Tayseer Khlaf (2010), *al-Riwaya al-Siryaniya Lilfutahat al-Islamiya (The Syriac Narrative for the Islamic conquests)*, Syria: Muassat Filasteen lil-Thaqafa, pp. 55-59.

influence of the Christian accounts in Syria from the beginning of the fourth century, with regard to 'Umar's demarcate for the construction of the *Mihrab* in Jerusalem.

The question to be asked here is: what are the reasons behind the development in the Islamic narratives in Syria and the influences of Christian's narratives in the later Islamic Syrian narratives with regard to the inaccuracies of interests that 'Umar showed in the site of David's temple? Also, what are the reasons behind the attribution of such accounts to some Syrian narrators and not to their original sources? It seems to the researcher that the reasons can be summarised as follows: Firstly, the significance of Jerusalem to the Christians reflected their interest in telling and writing such accounts in order to depend upon them as proof in their hands to confront any attempts that might arise by the Muslims to take over their properties or Holy places in the city. Secondly, the traditional conflict between Christians and Jews in the area, specifically in the region of Jerusalem, could be seen clearly from the investigation of the contrary accounts of each side. Some Jewish sources claimed that the Jews of Syria were "patiently waiting" the arrival of the Muslim armies in Syria because they were groaning under the rule of the tyrannical Byzantines a long time before the rise of Islam.<sup>36</sup>

Others claimed that the Jews welcomed and assisted the Muslims and that a group of them joined the Muslim armies and assisted them particularly during the siege of Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, it is claimed that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb was accompanied by Jewish wise-men and that he played the role of arbitrator or forceful mediator between them and the Christians as well as allowing seventy Jewish families from Tiberius to settle in the south of Jerusalem, and that he rejected the Christians' requests not to allow them to settle in Jerusalem.<sup>38</sup>

Contrary to this viewpoint, the Christian sources claimed that the Jews indicated to 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb that he should tear down the crosses on the top of the church on the Mount of Olives if he wanted his building to stand up when he began to build a mosque in Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup> In addition, they claim that 'Umar refused to pray in Jerusalem's church because of his fear that the Muslims would take it and convert it into a mosque.<sup>40</sup> However, the same Christian sources claimed that 'Umar had accepted to pray in David's temple and that he took it over and constructed a mosque in its place.<sup>41</sup> One example of such bias is Simon's assertion; he argues that: "'Umar has left the churches to the Christians and built a new mosque in the place where Solomon's formerly stood."<sup>42</sup>

In addition, other sources claimed that 'Umar accepted the Christians' request to exclude Jews from residing in the Jerusalem region because they wanted Jerusalem to remain a Christian city.<sup>43</sup> These contrary claims show clearly how the traditional conflict between the Christians and Jews in Jerusalem was reflected in their sources. It also shows the attempts of each party to claim that they were the group who obtained the honour and favour of the Muslim conquerors, specifically from the caliph 'Umar personally, while he dealt with indignity with the others.

Thirdly, with regard to the early Islamic sources, it seems that there are no events or activities such as the ones reported in the above-mentioned sources, and that the early writers and historians found nothing to cite. It seems to be without doubt that the later Islamic narratives are not related to the period of the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem, but rather they are greatly different from the real activities that 'Umar undertook in Jerusalem.

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<sup>36</sup> Ben Zeev, (1976), *Ka'b al-Ahbar*, Jerusalem, p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Ben Zeev (1976), *Ka'b al-Ahbar*, pp.36-37. See also Karen Armstrong (1996), *A History of Jerusalem: One city, Three faiths*, London: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 230; Crone, Patricia and Cook, Michael (1976), *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world*, London: Cambridge University Press, p. 156; Moshe Gil argues that "One cannot conclude from these sources that there were Jews in the ranks of the Muslims army." Furthermore, he accusation Patricia Crone and Michael Cook saying that they "exaggerate in seeing here proof of general Muslim-Jewish collaboration." Moshe Gil (1992), *A History of Palestine: 634-1099*, London: Cambridge University Press, p.71.

<sup>38</sup> Ben Zeev (1976), *Ka'b al-Ahbar*, p.39; 'Abd al-Fattāh El-'Awaisi (2000), "'Umar's Assurance of Safety to the People of Aelia (Jerusalem): A critical analytical study of the Historical Sources," *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem studies*, Vol, 2, 2000, pp. 58-59; Moshe Gil (1992), *A History of Palestine*, pp. 70-75; Marten Ernest (2000), *The Temple that Jerusalem Forget*, USA: Portland, pp. 143-162.

<sup>39</sup> Theophanes (1982), *The Chronicle of the Theophanes: An English translation of animundi 6095 C.E 602-813*, Harry Turtledove (trans.), Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> Eutychius in F.E. Peters (1995), *Jerusalem*, pp. 187-188

<sup>41</sup> Theophanes, in F.E. Peters (1995), *Jerusalem*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>42</sup> Oclely B.D Simon (1948), *History of the Saracens, Life of Muhammad and his Successors*, London, p. 124.

<sup>43</sup> See: Daniel J Sahas (1994), *Patriarch Sophronious, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab and the Conquest of Jerusalem*. In Hadiyya Dajani-Shakil and Burhān Dajani. *Al-Sra' al-Islami al-Firanji 'Ala Filstin fī al-Qurun al-Wusta (The Islamic Frankish (Ifranji) conflict over Palestine during the Middle Ages*, Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, p. 54.

The researcher argues that these accounts, which were quoted by the later Muslim historians in Syria, reflect the conditions which affected the position of the Muslims in Syria. They perhaps aimed to show them how the first Muslim conquerors dealt honourably with the Christians and bestowed favours upon them when they entered Jerusalem for the first time.

It seems to the researcher that the mingling among Jerusalem's inhabitants<sup>44</sup> makes the Christian accounts well known in Syria, not only to the historians but also to the public, which make it easy for the later Muslim writers and historians to quote from them. The development of the legendary accounts in later Islamic Syrian sources did not stop at quoting Christian accounts and attributing them to Muslim Syrian narrators; it also affected the great traditions from the literature of praise, *Ahādīth al-Fadā'il*, which contained a lot of myths. Part of these *Ahādīth* were attributed to persons who converted to Islam after the death of the prophet Muhammad such as Ka'b al-Ahbar who had never seen the prophet or heard him, as has been mentioned earlier. These great traditions are the same as the historic narratives that appeared in Syria at the weakness time of the Islamic state in the fourth century A.H/ ninth C.E.

The many inaccuracies that the later Muslim Syrian historians made were that they did not attribute the accounts to their real sources but to some early Syrian narrators. This also led most modern scholars to make the same errors when they used the later Islamic sources as admitted historical fact to show that Muslims built *al-Aqsa* on the structure of David's temple. Moreover, the attitudes and opinions of the majority of modern scholars was shaped by the religious and political conflict over Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular.

The researcher argues that there is no doubt that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb did nothing, rather than demarcate the re-construction of a mosque in Jerusalem on his first visit. He also did not find any difficulty in reaching the area where he demarcated a mosque at the place where *al-Aqsa* was built some time later. This is in light of the fact that this area was empty and it was some distance from the residential area and the holy places inside the walled city, as can be clearly seen from the Ma'dabā mosaic.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, it is unexpected that there is any connection between 'Umar praying in front of the rock and the location of the *qibla* because there is no proof that the rock within the perimeters of *al-Aqsa* was the same rock as that of the Jewish sanctuary. In addition, the geological survey of the perimeters of *al-Aqsa* showed that all these areas consist of one rock. In other words, the entire area of *al-Aqsa* is a huge rock.<sup>46</sup> The top of this rock is the site where the Muslims built the Dome of Rock.

All these facts led the researcher to argue that 'Umar had chosen this part for prayer for two main reasons. Firstly, because it is more plateau than the top and secondly, it could hold the large number of Muslims who entered Jerusalem with him, among whom those who came with him from Madīna and those who besieged the walled city at the eve of his arrival.

### **The first Building of *al-Aqsa* Mosque**

The fact that there were no Muslims among the inhabitants of Jerusalem when it was taken by the Muslims makes the researcher inclined to argue that the first re-construction of the mosque (*al-Aqsa*) in the place where 'Umar demarcated its re-construction had taken place sometime later, after his arrival in Jerusalem. This point gives some explanation as to why the early Islamic sources cited nothing regarding a mosque in Jerusalem at the time of 'Umar.

Furthermore, it seems that the early sources did not mention the first construction of *al-Aqsa* because the initial re-construction was a rudimentary one consisting of planks and beams. These sources, however, paid great attention when the Muslims constructed the Dome of the Rock and renewed the mosque by using magnificent architecture during the rule of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik and

<sup>44</sup> Al-Maqdisi, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Abi Bakir al-Banna' al-Bishari (1994), *The Best Division for Knowledge of the Regions: A Translation Of Ahsan al-Taqaṣīm Fi Ma'rifat al-Aḡalim*, Basil Anthony Collins (trans.), Center For Muslim Contribution to Civilization, p.152. He claims that the Jews and the Christians were a majority in Jerusalem and they control most of the public services.

<sup>45</sup> This is the oldest map of the holy city of Jerusalem, dated 548 CD. See Avi-Yonah, Michael (1954), *The Madaba Mosaic Map: With Introduction and Commentary*, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, pp. 1-54.

<sup>46</sup> Haytham al-Ratrut (2002), "The Architectural Development Of al-Aqsa Mosque in Islamic Jerusalem in the Early Islamic period: the Sacred Architecture in the shape of "The Holy"," Unpublished Ph.D thesis on University of Strathclyde.

his son al-Walīd.<sup>47</sup> This explained why the traveller Arculf was the earliest source to mention a mosque in Jerusalem after the first Islamic conquest of the city. Arculf, a Christian pilgrim who visited Jerusalem in 680 AD, described the earlier mosque as follows: “But in that renowned place where once the Temple had been magnificently constructed, placed in the neighbourhood of the ‘city’ wall from the east, the Saracens now frequented a quadrangular house of prayer, which they have built rudely, constructing it by setting planks and great beams on some remains of ruins: this house can hold three thousand men at once.”<sup>48</sup>

The researcher argues that the first demarcate to re-construct a mosque in Jerusalem (*al-Aqsa*), was drawn up by ‘Umar but the building was undertaken a short time after ‘Umar had appointed ‘Ubāda Ibn al- Sāmīt as a judge in Palestine and leader of prayer (*Imām*) in Bayt al-Maqdis. As mentioned, in his first visit to Jerusalem ‘Umar appointed ‘Alqama Ibn Mujziz as military governor of the Jerusalem region and ‘Alqama Ibn Hakīm governor of al-Ramla. ‘Alqama Ibn Mujziz resided near the coast and stayed there until his death in the sea in 20 A.H/ 640 C.E, and he did not live in the city centre of Jerusalem.

Furthermore, all of the inhabitants of the Jerusalem region were Christians and there were no Muslims among them before ‘Ubāda Ibn al- Sāmīt resided there, and also all of the Muslim conquerors left the region with ‘Umar after the conquest. It can possibly be said that ‘Umar appointed ‘Ubāda Ibn al- Sāmīt after the end of the conquests of Syria and during his second visit to the region after the plague of ‘Imwās in 18 A.H/ 639 C.E or sometime later when the Muslims began to settle in Palestine and in Jerusalem in particular.<sup>49</sup>

It could be argued that after the end of the conquests, Muslims began to settle in the areas which belonged to those amongst the Byzantines who left Jerusalem. Therefore, their properties were owned by the conquerors, including the area outside the walls of the city. This made it necessary for the Muslims to build not only a mosque, but also a governor’s residence or Dār al-Imāra when ‘Ubāda Ibn al-Sāmīt was appointed a judge in Palestine and Imam in Bayt al-Maqdis.

## **Conclusion**

It is fair to say that the analysis of the early and some later sources led the researcher to argue that during his first visit to Jerusalem, ‘Umar demarcated the re-construction of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. All the accounts which reported that ‘Umar had shown interest in the location of David’s temple in Jerusalem and that he built a mosque (*al-Aqsa*) in its place are non-historical and legendary accounts founded under conditions which greatly differ from the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem. These accounts are mentioned only for the first time in Christian sources as part of the traditional conflict between them and the Jews in Jerusalem. The aim of such Christian accounts were to confront the Jewish claims regarding Muslims, specifically, that Caliph ‘Umar allowed them to return to Jerusalem after more than five hundred years of absence from the region after being expelled in 135 C.E by the Byzantines. Then, after the Crusades, the Muslim Syrian sources quoted these accounts and added many fabricated events to them with attributions to some Syrian Muslim narrators. In the light of these facts it can be understood why none of the early Islamic sources cited any text, either long or short regarding the activities that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb undertook in Jerusalem. Furthermore, the influence of the Christian narratives and sources shed light on why all the accounts reported by Syrian sources, narrated only by Syrian narrators, were not mentioned by any other early sources or narrators from other regions in the Islamic state.

It seems that one of the main reasons behind the influence of the Christian accounts between later Muslim historians in Syria in the fourth century A.H=ninth C.E is the events which affected the position of the Muslims at that time Muslim writers gathered these accounts and the great traditions from the literature of praise, *Ahādīth al-Fadā’il*, for two reasons. The first was to deflect the Christians claims

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<sup>47</sup> See: Ibn al-Murajja (1995), pp. 58-62; Mujir al-Din (1999), Vol. 1, pp. 401 – 404; V. 2 (1999), edited by Mahmoud ‘Uda Ka’abna, Hebron : Maktabat Dandees, pp. 53-54.

<sup>48</sup> See the text in Creswell (1997), *The Early Muslims Architecture*, p. 34.

<sup>49</sup> D. Goitein (1968), *Jerusalem During the Arab period: 638-1099*, in *Jerusalem Cathedral, studies in the: History, Archaeology, Geography and Ethnography of the land of Israel*, Ben-Zvi (ed.), Jerusalem, p. 175. He argues that shortly after the conquest, the Muslims began to settle in Jerusalem.

that the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem were faced with violence by the Muslims while they were on their way to Jerusalem, by quoting and emphasising their accounts, which showed the great honour that they received from the Muslim conquerors. The inaccuracies that Muslim writers fell into was that they did not attribute these accounts to their original sources but to some earlier Syrian Muslim narrators, without noting that the Christians had in fact reported these accounts to reflect the significance of Jerusalem to the Christians, and in addition as a part of their traditional conflict with the Jews in the area. Secondly, after the Crusaders war, one of the aims behind the great interest of the later Islamic writers and historians in such accounts was to encourage the Muslims to liberate Jerusalem from the Crusaders by reminding them of the sanctity of this area in the Islamic traditions and faith. Lastly, some modern scholars made the same errors as the later Islamic writers when they depended upon these sources to support their claims concerning the location of David's temple and that the Muslims built *al-Aqsa* on its structure. However, they forgot, that the roots of these accounts belonged to the Christian sources. Moreover, it is clear that the religious and political conflict over Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular was shape the attitudes and the opinions of the majority of modern scholars.

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