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‘Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock: a further examination of the Muslim sources

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Introduction

One of the important issues in the discussion concerning Greater Syria (al-Shām) in general, and Palestine and Jerusalem in particular in the Umayyad period, relates to the reasons for the building of the Dome of the Rock. The 19th and early 20th century scholars saw in ‘Abd al-Malik’s building of the Dome of the Rock a clear manifestation of the Umayyad desire to transfer the political centre of the caliphate to Jerusalem. Goldziher consolidated and developed the opinions and evaluations presented by earlier scholars, arguing that by erecting the Dome of the Rock, ‘Abd al-Malik intended to divert the pilgrimage from Mecca to Jerusalem because Mecca was at the time under the complete control of his rival caliph, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr.

When the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik wished to stop the pilgrimage to Mecca because he was worried lest his rival ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr should force the Syrians journeying to the holy places in Hijāz to pay homage, he had recourse to the expedient of the doctrine of the vicarious hajj to the Qubbat al-Ṣakhra in Jerusalem. He decreed that the obligatory circumambulation (tawaf) could take place at the sacred place in Jerusalem with the same validity as that around the Ka’ba ordained in Islamic law.

Goldziher’s basic thesis was rejected by Goitein, who argued that the original incentive for the appreciation of the sanctity of Palestine in

1 Elad, Jerusalem, pp. 147–148.
3 Goldziher, Muslim studies, vol. 2, p. 44; see also ibid., pp. 45–46.
early Islam should not be sought in the field of politics, but rather in
the field of religion.⁴ Regarding the thesis proposed by Goldziher and
his school, Goitein maintains that

there is no foundation to surmise that the Dome of the Rock
in Jerusalem was created in order to divert the Muslim pil-
grimage from the holy sites of Islam to those of Judaism and
Christianity. . . The erection of the Dome of the Rock was
prompted by the cultural needs of the second generation of
the Muslims. It was intended — as proven by its inscrip-
tions — as a means of rivalry with the Christians and as an
appeal to them to join the new religion, which, so to say,
incorporated their own.⁵

Most contemporary scholars support Goitein’s thesis. They do not
think that the Dome of the Rock was intended to compete with the Ka’ba
and certainly not to replace it.⁶ The controversy between Goitein and
Goldziher is general and extensive, and concerns the reasons and back-
ground for the increased status of Syria, and more specifically Jerusalem,
in the Umayyad period. The discussion regarding the Dome of the Rock
is only one sub-topic in the context of this wider discussion, which is
in itself subordinate to the overall polemics concerning the status and
sanctity of Syria in the Umayyad period.

Regarding the sanctity of al-Shām, Goitein relies on several tradi-
tions, in which the Holy Land (termed by Goitein “Eretz Israel” in his
Hebrew version of the article, and “Palestine” in the English version) is
mentioned. In his opinion, these traditions attest to the unique religious
status they wish to impart to the Holy Land.⁷

I wish to suggest that these traditions can be understood in a different
way. They were created and developed by scholars in the Umayyad
period, under the inspiration and direction of the Umayyads — on whom
these scholars depended. These traditions reflect the Umayyad desire
to exalt the political and religious importance of al-Shām (including
Palestine), in opposition to the Hījāz, the old political and religious
centre.⁸ The tradition in praise of Jerusalem certainly existed in the
Jewish and Christian traditions before the emergence of Islam, but the

⁴Goitein, “The sanctity of the Holy Land,” p. 26; idem, “The sanctity of
⁵Goitein, “The sanctity of Jerusalem,” p. 147; see also idem, “The historical back-
⁶For a partial list of these scholars, see Elad, Jerusalem, p. 159, note 53.
⁷Goitein, “The sanctity of the Holy Land,” pp. 26–28; idem, “The sanctity of
Jerusalem,” pp. 143–146.
⁸Elad, Jerusalem, pp. 149–153; idem, “Jerusalem during the Umayyad period,”
pp. 26–29.
Umayyads began to spread them and enriched them with new, Islamic elements.

In this article, I shall reexamine Goitein’s thesis, while reviewing his argument and the textual evidence on which they are based.

A) Al-Yaʾqúbī’s testimony: the problem of the textual evidence

I have extensively dealt with this subject elsewhere, but a summary of the arguments is in order.9

The essential evidence (or as Goitein calls it, the “Crown witness”) on which Goldziher based his thesis is found in al-Yaʾqúbī. Goitein concentrates on refuting this historian’s reliability: due to his Shiʿi bias, his testimony must be considered anti-Umayyad.10 This observation was accepted by the scholars.

Today, however, the opinion that al-Yaʾqúbī’s moderate Shiʿi outlook completely distorted his historical writing is not accepted.11 By examining the methodology of early Arabic historiography and its various aspects, it is possible to rebut this negative view of al-Yaʾqúbī’s work.12 Furthermore, I demonstrated that al-Yaʾqúbī’s description is not the only one in the early Muslim sources (as Goitein thought). We now have a number of other early sources that confirm al-Yaʾqúbī’s report. On the one hand, his report on the rituals and ceremonies on the Haram and in the Dome of the Rock in the period of ’Abd al-Malik is confirmed by the early traditions included in the Praises of Jerusalem (fadāʾil al-Quds) literature. These traditions are much longer and more detailed than al-Yaʾqúbī’s short report that Goitein used and attempted to refute.13

On the other hand, other sources confirm al-Yaʾqúbī’s assertion that the central motive for building the Dome of the Rock was politico-religious: the struggle against the rival caliph, ’Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr.

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11Duri, “Historical writing,” p. 66; Rosenthal, Historiography, pp. 64, 134; but esp. Marquet, “Yaʾqúbī.”
12Following the observations of Khālidī, Arabic historical thought, p. 226; see also Duri, op. cit., pp. 66–67; Humphreys, Islamic history, pp. 72, 102–103; Rosenthal, op. cit., p. 64.
No less than four early important historians emphasize that this was ‘Abd al-Malik’s sole reason for building the Dome of the Rock.\textsuperscript{14} This tradition is found in late sources; however, they were not influenced by al-Ya‘qūbī — as Goitein thought\textsuperscript{15} — and they did not copy his tradition. On the contrary, they relied on other texts, in particular that of Sibt b. al-Jawzī.\textsuperscript{16}

B) The imitation of the Meccan \textit{hajj} ceremonies in Jerusalem and in other cities in the early Islamic period: the problem of \textit{al-ta‘rif}

In one place Goitein mentions that al-Ya‘qūbī reports on the performance of the \textit{tawaf} in Jerusalem during the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik and other Umayyad caliphs.\textsuperscript{17}

He further develops this point, referring to a single testimony (from 1047) of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, who described the performance of some major \textit{hajj} rites in Jerusalem, such as the \textit{wuqaf} (standing before mount ‘Arafa/‘Arafā near Mecca during the \textit{hajj}), and the sacrifice during the “Feast of Sacrifice” (‘\textit{id al-aḍḥā}a) by those who cannot perform the \textit{hajj} to Mecca.\textsuperscript{18} Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s testimony, continues Goitein, “has sometimes been quoted as a corroboration of Goldziher’s above mentioned thesis.”\textsuperscript{19} It is noteworthy, however, that al-Ya‘qūbī, does not mention the \textit{wuqaf} ceremonies but only the \textit{tawaf} — in this case the circumambulation of the Dome of the Rock instead of the Ka‘ba.

Neither does Sa‘d b. al-Bitriq (Eutychius) mention the \textit{ta‘rif} (the verbal noun derived from ‘\textit{arrafa} — the performance of the \textit{wuqaf} ceremonies in front of Mount ‘Arafa), but in general relates that ‘Abd al-Malik forced his subjects to perform the \textit{hajj} rituals in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{20} But Goitein connects the descriptions of al-Ya‘qūbī and Eutychius that relate to the Umayyad period with the much later evidence of Nāṣir-i

\textsuperscript{14}For a full discussion, see Elad, “‘Abd al-Malik,” pp. 38–40, 47–48, 50–51.
\textsuperscript{16}See the full discussion in Elad, “‘Abd al-Malik”.
\textsuperscript{17}Goitein, “The sanctity of the Holy Land,” p. 25.
\textsuperscript{18}Nāṣir-i Khusraw, \textit{Safar Nāme}, pp. 19–20 (Arabic translation); Le Strange, \textit{Palestine}, p. 88 (English translation); Goitein, “al-Kuds”, p. 325; \textit{idem}, “The historical background,” p. 105; \textit{idem}, “The sanctity of Jerusalem”, p. 137; Nāṣir-i Khusraw records that in certain years more than 20,000 people came to these ceremonies. Goitein, “Jerusalem in the Arab period,” p. 189, argues that this is a standard number used by Nāṣir-i Khusraw in his descriptions.
\textsuperscript{19}Goitein, “The historical background,” p. 105.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibn al-Bitriq, \textit{Ta‘rikh}, p. 39; see also Elad, “‘Abd al-Malik,” pp. 44–45.
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Khusraw (from 1047), who specifically mentions the *wuqāf* ceremony in Jerusalem.

This connection was based on the well-known fact that *al-ta’rif* ceremonies were also held in several important cities in the early period, and therefore, adds Goitein, one should not attribute a special importance to Jerusalem, or to attribute the reason for these ceremonies to the struggle between ‘Abd al-Malik and ‘Abd Allâh b. al-Zubayr.

According to Goitein, these ceremonies were held in the following cities:

1) Al-Basra, during ‘Ali b. Abî Tâlib’s reign (r. 36/656–40/661); *al-ta’rif* ceremony was introduced by the governor of the city, ‘Abd Allâh b. al-‘Abbâs (d. 68/687).21

2) Al-Fustat, by ‘Abd al-‘Azîz b. Marwân b. al-‘Hâkâm (d. 85/704), the brother of ‘Abd al-Malik, who served as the governor of Egypt during the caliphate of his father, Marwân (d. 64/684–65/685) and his brother, ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65/685–86/705).22

Other testimonies bear witness to the performance of special ceremonies on “‘Arafa day” (*yawm ‘Arafa*) in other Muslim cities: al-Kūfâ in al-‘Irâq and al-Madîna in al-Ḥijâz. This confirms Goitein’s argument that these ceremonies were a very early phenomenon.

Nevertheless, it seems that *al-ta’rif* ceremonies in Jerusalem merit a different explanation and deserve a more comprehensive and detailed study.

B.1) The ‘Arafa day (*yawm ‘Arafa*) ceremonies in al-Kūfâ, al-Basra, al-Madîna and al-Fustat

1) Al-Kūfâ. Special ceremonies were held in the city on *yawm ‘Arafa* by ‘Amr b. Ḥurayth b. ‘Amr b. ‘Uthmân al-Makhzûmî (d. 85/705).23

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21 This is the accepted year of his death; there are also other dates ranging from 64 AH to 70 AH; on him, see Sezgin, *GAS*, I, pp. 25–28.

22 Goitein, “The historical background,” p. 105; *idem*, “al-Kûds,” p. 325; in both articles the reference is only to Egypt (according to Ibn Tağhrîbirdî, *Nujûm* [ed. Juynîbîlî and Matthew], p. 207); the reference to al-Basra is missing.

'Amr b. al-Hurayth was a distinguished shari' in al-Kufa. He served as the deputy governor of the city on behalf of its famous governors Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan (known as Ziyad b. Abihi, governor of al-Kufa and al-Basra 50/670–53/673) and the latter's son, 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad (governor from 55/675 until some time after the death of caliph Yazid b. Mu'awiya in 64/683). He also served as the head of the shurta of al-Kufa on behalf of 'Ubaydallah b. Ziyad and as the governor of al-Kufa on behalf of Bishr b. Marwân, 'Abd al-Malik's brother in 73/692–693 and 74/693–694.25 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal related that he was the first to introduce the ta'rīf ceremony [in al-Kufa],26 but according to other sources it was Mus'ab b. al-Zubayr (d. 72/691),27 the governor of the city on behalf of his brother (from 67/686–72/691), who first introduced the ta'rīf ceremony in al-Kufa.28

2) Al-Madīnah. The Spanish scholar Ibn Waqqas (Muhammad b. Wadqah b. Bazi', 199/815–286/899) records a tradition29, according to which on the "Day of 'Arafa," Näfi', the mawla of 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar

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25Al-Tabarî, Ta'rikh, 2nd series, pp. 853, ll. 15–16; 857, ll. 12–13.


b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. between 116/734–35 and 120/737–38) went out to the people who gathered at the Prophet’s mosque after al-‘aṣr prayer offering prayers of request and supplications (du‘ā’). He told them that what they were doing is considered a bid‘a and not sunna.30

3) Al-Baṣra. There is substantial evidence that the ta‘rif ceremonies in the city were first carried out by ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās (d. 68/687) when he was governor during ‘Ali b. Abī Tālib’s reign (35/656–40/661). It is clear, therefore, that these ceremonies do not have any relation to the struggle between ‘Abd al-Malik and Ibn al-Zubayr, which took place more than twenty years later. Many of these testimonies are recorded from the great Baṣran scholar, al-Hasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728):

“The first who carried out the ta‘rif ceremonies in al-Baṣra was ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās.”31

The well-known Egyptian scholar al-Quḍā’ī (d. 10/1002)32 quotes al-Jāḥiṣ (d. 255/868–69) from the latter’s (lost) book Naẓm al-Qur‘ān,33 where he stated that ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās was the first who established the practice of al-ta‘rif in the major city mosques.

4) Al-Fustāṭ. Arab historians of medieval Egypt, among whom the earliest is al-Kindī (d. 350/951), record that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān [‘Abd al-Malik’s brother] was the first who performed the ta‘rif ceremonies in the city in 71 [691].35 Noteworthy are Ibn Taghrībirdī’s


31See al-Quḍā’ī, al-İnhā‘, pp. 6–19.

32This source may be added to Pellat’s list of sources for this lost work; see Pellat, “Gazhiziana III,” p. 172, no. 143 (‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Tālib’s ta‘rif ceremony in al-Baṣra).


words: “the sixth year of the governorship of `Abd al-`Aziz b. Marwân on Egypt, e.g., the year 71. In this year `Abd Allâh b. al-Zubayr Amîr al-Mu`minîn [!] stood at the head of the pilgrims (in Mecca), while in Egypt [al-`Udârât] `Abd al-`Azîz b. Marwân, the subject of the biography, carried out the ceremonies that are held at `Arafah. He was the first who carried out the `Arafah ceremonies in that city. He governed on behalf of his brother, Amîr al-Mu`minîn `Abd al-Malik b. Marwân.” 36

The special ceremonies that were held on “Day of `Arafah” in al-Fustât were practiced in later periods as well: this we learn from the objection of the well-known scholar and the qâdî of Egypt, al-Layth b. Sa`d (94/713–175/791) to give this day any special distinction.37

We have seen so far that the custom of gathering in the great mosque on the “Day of `Arafah” after the afternoon prayer, and of performing ceremonies there took place in several cities, and can be dated to an early period.38

B.2) The nature of the “Day of `Arafah” ceremonies in various cities

We have information about these ceremonies mainly with regard to `Abd al-Kindî both al-Quddâ (al-`Ibâd, p. 212) and Ibn Khallikân (Wafayât, vol. 3, p. 72 who copied the former) quote al-Kindî’s tradition; al-Maqrî, Khitaṭ (ed. Sayyid), vol. 2, p. 48; Ibn Ta`ghribîrdî, Nujûm (ed. Matthews and Juynboll), vol. 1, p. 207. It seems that al-Quddâ collected two pieces of evidence that appear one after the other in al-Kindî’s work when he relates (ibid.): “Abû `Umar al-Kindî mentioned that `Abd al-`Azîz b. Marwân was the first who established the custom of ta`raj in al-Fustât (Egypt? Arabic: Misr) in the great mosque after the evening prayer, and this in the year 71” 37 al-Quddâ added to this evidence about the ta`raj in Egypt, segments from another line of al-Kindî (Wafayât, p. 72): “The first to introduce the new improper custom on `Arafah’s Day of sitting [?]” in the mosque after the evening prayer was `Abd al-`Azîz b. Marwân “an one of `Abdu`llah b. al-Zubayr’s three brothers, and one of the first three who established the `Arafah ceremonies in various cities, and can be dated to an early period.38

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38 Al-`Isâmî (d. 1111/1699–1700) concludes the discussion on the custom of al-tarîf by saying: “It was said that the first to carry out al-tarîf in al-Baṣrâ was `Abd Allâh b. al-`Abbas, may God be pleased with both of them, while being its governor on behalf of `Ali b. Abî Tâlib, may God be pleased with both of them, and in Egypt [that is, al-Fustât] `Abd al-`Azîz b. Marwân, `Abd al-Malik’s brother, and in Jerusalem `Abd al-Malik b. Marwân.” (Al-`Isâmî, Simt al-nujûm, vol. 3, p. 158).
Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās in al- Başrā. Most of the evidence is quoted directly from al-Ḥasan al- Başrī, who relates that the Muslims gathered in the mosque on the eve of the “Day of ʿArafa.” Ibn al-ʿAbbās ascended the minbar, recited Sūrat al-Baqara (according to several sources he also recited Sūrat Al-ʿImrān) and explained each and every verse. These traditions emphasize that the gatherings were not meant to imitate the ḥajj rituals at Mount ʿArafa, but rather to encourage communal study.

However, other traditions relate that in the gatherings led by Ibn al-ʿAbbās supplications were uttered and sermons were delivered, as was the custom at ʿArafa. Some traditions relate that the gathering in the mosque was similar to that which took place during the wuqūf in front of Mount ʿArafa. The intention to emulate the wuqūf ceremonies was the reason for performing the taʿrīf ceremonies by Ibn al-ʿAbbās in al- Başrā.

Al-Ḥasan al- Başrī may have used Ibn ʿAbbās’ taʿrīf as a precedent: according to one witness, he used to sit in the mosque on the “Day of ʿArafa” after the afternoon prayer, and uttered supplications and invoked God (فَدَعَوْا وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ). It seems, however, that al-Ḥasan al- Başrī was not entirely satisfied with this practice.


40Abū Shāma, loc. cit.

41Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya (Beirut ed.), vol. 8, p. 299 (Dār al-Nīl ed., vol. 8, p. 322): The people of al- Başrā gather in the mosque around Ibn ʿAbbās, who interprets for them Qurʿānic verses, preaching about the divine reward and punishment (wa-yudhakkir al-nās), from the end of the afternoon prayer until the evening prayer, which he led.

42Abū Shāma, al-Bʿāʾith, vol. 1, p. 34.

43Ibn Kathīr, loc. cit.

44Ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq, al-Musannaf, vol. 4, p. 376: ʿAbd al-Razzāq ʿAbd al-Maʿmar b. Ṭabashī, d. 153–154/770–771 < Qatāda b. Dīʿāma, d. 118/736 < ʿAbd b. ʿArṭāt (d. 102/720) who says to al-Ḥasan al- Başrī: Would you go out with the people and perform the ceremony of the taʿrīf for them? This was in al- Başrā. Al-Ḥasan said: the location of the standing is ʿArafa. He said: al-Ḥasan used to say: the first person who performed the taʿrīf ceremonies in our land [that is, in al-ʿIrāq] was Ibn ʿAbbās”. If the testimony is authentic, it bears witness to al-Ḥasan’s objection to performing the taʿrīf ceremonies in any place other than Mecca. However, it is possible to understand al-Ḥasan’s words as expressing a weak reservation, while in reality he performed prayers and supplications on the “Day of ʿArafa”, based on the precedent of Ibn ʿAbbās. From another source we learn that al-Ḥasan did not attend the mosque on the eve of the “Day of ʿArafa” (Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Musannaf, vol. 3, p. 288). It is possible that al-Ḥasan al- Başrī is used
From the seventh century onward, Muslim scholars differed as to the legitimacy of holding taʾrīf ceremonies in the various cities. In this study, I shall briefly mention the opinions of several well-known scholars.

Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Athram (d. 260/873–74 or 261 AH or 273/886–87), one of the well-known disciples of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) relates the following: “I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh [the kunya of Ibn Ḥanbal] about al-taʾrīf in the cities, that is, [the custom of] gathering in the mosques on the “Day of ʿArafa”. He replied: “I hope that there is no harm in this; for some people had done it. Abū ʿAbd Allāh said: [those who did it were] al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Bakr (b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Muẓani, d. 106/724–25 or 108/726–727), Thābit (b. Aslam al-Bunānī (? d. 123/740–41 or 127/744–45) and Muḥammad b. Wāsi (d. 120/738 or 123/740–41 or 127/744–45). They attended the mosque on the “Day of ʿArafa.”

Another source quotes this tradition verbatim, but adds at the end: “Ahmad (b. Ḥanbal) said: “There is no harm in this, for it is to be considered only as a voluntary prayer, mentioning (the uniqueness and glory of) Allāh.” It was said to him: “Do you personally perform it?” He said: “I myself do not.”

ʿAbd al-Karīm b. al-Haytham b. Ziyād Abū Yahyā al-Qaṭṭān al-ʿAqūlī (or al-Dayr ʿAqūlī, d. 278/891) relates: “I stayed with Ahmad b. Ḥanbal ... and I asked him about al-taʾrīf in the towns [التعريف بالقرى].”

He said: “Abd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās had already performed it in al-Baṣra and ʿAmr b. Ḥurayth in al-Kūfā; it [the taʾrīf] is a voluntary prayer and a good thing (duʿāʾ wa-khayr); it had been performed in the past by Muhammad b. Wāsi, Ibn Sirīn (d. 110/728) and al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]; and he mentioned a group of the Baṣrān (scholars).”

Other scholars were opposed to performing the ʿArafa ceremonies in Muslim cities. Thus Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) who was asked by
Ibm Wahb53 “about people who sit in their mosque on the Day of ‘Arafa and the Imam calls [some] people who pray to God, the Exalted, for the congregation until sunset. Mālik said: We do not acknowledge such a practice, but people here (‘indanā) [that is, in al-Madīnah] do it today.”54

Later scholars did not object to the ta‘rīf ceremonies in the cities.55 Ibn Kathīr summarizes the matter thus: “The scholars (al-‘ulāmā)’ were divided on the matter after him [i.e. after ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abhās]; among them were some who opposed and disapproved of (karīha) it, saying: This is an unlawful innovation (bid‘a); the Messenger of God did not know it; none of his Companions (aṣḥābīhi) [knew it] except Ibn ‘Abbas; (but) among them there were some who considered it lawful because of the invocations of Allāh and because it was identical [with the actions of the] pilgrims [in Mecca].”56

One of the most important Shāfi‘i jurists in Egypt in the 16th century, Muḥammad b. Ṭahmāb, known as al-Khaṭṭīb al-Sharbīnī (d. 977/1569), argued that even those who consider this practice bid‘a, are lenient in their approach towards it.57 Another Shāfi‘i scholar, a contemporary of al-Sharbīnī, quotes al-Wanādī, who claims that the custom of performing ta‘rīf at any place other than ‘Arafa should not be condemned, for it is an acceptable religious innovation.58

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55Abū Shāmā, al-Bā‘ith, vol. 1, p. 32: “And among them were some who considered it lawful, ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭahmāb, al-Khaṭṭīb al-Sharbīnī (d. 977/1569), argued that even those who consider this practice bid‘a, are lenient in their approach towards it.”
B.3) The ceremonies of the “Day of ‘Arafa”
in Jerusalem and Goitein’s thesis

At the beginning of this section, I argued that Goitein’s interpretation regarding the ceremonies of the “Day of ‘Arafa” in Jerusalem could be understood and interpreted differently.

As noted above, al-Ya’qūbī relates that ‘Abd al-Malik compelled the people to circumambulate the Dome of the Rock (or: the Rock within it). In this case it is the tawaf which is mentioned by al-Ya’qūbī and not the special prayers held in the mosques of the different cities on the eve of the “Day of ‘Arafa” described by the sources; it is not similar to the wuqūf ceremonies mentioned by Nāṣir-i Khusrav in 1047. Al-Ya’qūbī describes unique ceremonies. Additional early sources that were not available to Goitein give more credence to al-Ya’qūbī’s description.

1) Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/819) reports that during ‘Abd al-Malik’s rule “the Muslims used to stand near the Rock [thus performing the wuqūf], circumambulate it as they used to circumambulate the Ka’ba, and to slaughter [animals] on the Feast of Sacrifice [‘id al-‘adh]”

2) According to another tradition, related by Hishām al-Kalbī from his father, Muḥammad b. al-Sā’ib (d. 146/763), and also by Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqiqī (d. 207/823) and other transmitters besides him who reported some choice parts of the tradition, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, the rival caliph, accused ‘Abd al-Malik of transferring “the tawaf from the House of God to the qibla of the Children of Israel and (leveled against him other accusations) in the same manner.”

3) In another early tradition from the end of the Umayyad period ‘Abd al-Malik is denounced and defamed by the Khārijī rebel Abū Hamza al-Mukhtār b. ‘Awf in al-Madīna (or Mecca). He accuses the caliph of destroying the Ka’ba, reviving the way of the ignoble people, giving the Rock in Jerusalem a status like that of the Maqṣūm [Ibrāhīm at the Ka’ba]. “This is where the rough Arabs of Syria go on pilgrimage.” A version of this sermon was reported by al-Haytham b. ‘Adī (d. 206–207/821–823 or 209/824–825), who transmitted the first-hand testimony of ‘Isā b. ‘Abd al-Hamīd.

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61 Sibt b. al-Jawzī, op. cit., fol. 154a; Elad, op. cit., pp. 35 (English translation), 54 (Arabic text).

62 Al-Azkawī, Kashf al-ghumma, fol. 273b; Elad, op. cit., pp. 50–51, and the detailed
Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock

In conclusion, the custom of *al-ta‘rif* in Jerusalem (and most probably in al-Fuṣṭāt as well) was stimulated by the struggle between ‘Abd al-Malik and ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr. The ceremonies in Jerusalem were unique, and took place on a site which was built under unique historical circumstances. They are different from other *ta‘rif* ceremonies held in other Muslim cities.

I tend to agree with al-Qudā‘ī’s explanation (d. 454/1062) that the Dome of the Rock was built due to the struggle between ‘Abd al-Malik and ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr when the former “prevented the people from performing the pilgrimage to Mecca because Ibn al-Zubayr forced them to swear allegiance to him.” Therefore, continues al-Qudā‘ī, ‘Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock, “and the people used to come to it on the “Day of ‘Arafa,” standing beside it [i.e., performing the *wuqūf* ceremonies], and it was said that this was the reason for *al-ta‘rif* in the mosque of Jerusalem and in the mosques of [other] major cities (*al-ansār*).”

B.4) Worship and ceremonies in the Dome of the Rock during ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign

Goitein argued mainly against al-Ya‘qūbī’s description and to a lesser extent, against that of Eutychius. Today, we have at our disposal new texts, both published and unpublished. We are thus able to reconstruct a detailed and complex picture of the ceremonies and worship held on the Haram, mainly within the Dome of the Rock, during ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign. This evidence is found in the following sources:

1) The Literature in Praise of Jerusalem (*fādā’il Bayt al-Maqdis*).

No less than eight extremely important traditions on the history of Jerusalem in the early Islamic period were transmitted by a family, whose forefather was a special slave of the Umayyad treasury (*al-akhmās*) and served in the Dome of the Rock. These traditions were then passed on through al-Walīd b. Ḥammād al-Ramlī (fl. second half of the third/ninth discussion there; I was unable to identify ‘Isā b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, who appears to have been an eyewitness to the entry of Abū Ḥamza with his men into al-Madīna; I am grateful to Prof. Michael Cook for this reference.


64 The *akhmās* were slaves of the caliph who belonged to the state treasury as the fifth part (*khums*) of the booty, or who were acquired by the treasury from the *khums* money.

2) Sibt b. al-Jawzî’s monumental work, *Mir’āt al-zamān*, most of which is still in manuscript form. This information was transmitted by some well-known and distinguished early historians: Muhammad b. al-Sâ‘ib al-Kalbî (d. 146/763), his son Hishâm (d. 204/819), al-Wāṣîdî (d. 207/823) and others whose names went unmentioned.

The descriptions of the construction of the Dome of the Rock and of the rituals held there, recorded by the early authors of the Praise of Jerusalem literature (mainly al-Wâṣîṭî, Ibn al-Murajjî and their followers), are almost identical to the description rendered by the early historians in Sibt b. al-Jawzî’s book. It is plausible that they had a common source, perhaps one of the Jerusalemite scholars.

These testimonies contain detailed descriptions of the splendor of the Dome of the Rock: its Dome and gates were gilded; the Rock was encompassed with a balustrade made of ebony inlaid with jade; behind the balustrade were curtains of variegated and decorated silk embroidered with gold hung between the pillars. The Dome of the Rock was open to the public only on Mondays and Thursdays (the days in which Jews finish the reading of the Torah), during the other days of the week only special attendants entered the building. The parallel traditions both in the Fadâ‘îl literature and in Sibt b. al-Jawzî’s book record in minute detail the ceremonies of their purification in a bath house; the replacement of regular clothing with special silk garments; the preparation of special perfumes to be rubbed on the Rock and preparations of the perfumes for incense which is put in censers of gold and silver. At each gate ten gate-keepers were posted; they were part of the 300 special attendants (the slaves of the caliph), who were purchased by Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik

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68 This problem will be dealt with in a forthcoming study.


from the *khums*\(^\text{72}\) money. They received a monthly allowance from the government and their sons inherited their positions.\(^\text{73}\)

It is possible that their offspring continued to carry out these duties on the Haram still in the mid-tenth century, for al-Muqaddasi relates that in his days, the attendants of the Haram are slaves (*mamlākī*), who were appointed by ‘Abd al-Malik from the *khums*; therefore they were given the epithet *al-akhmās* and nobody except them serves in the Haram.\(^\text{74}\)

In addition to these special servants, there were Jews and Christians who performed public service in the Haram during ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign:

It [the Haram?] had ten Jewish attendants on whom poll tax was not levied. Their number increased and they became twenty. They were engaged to clean the dirt (left by the) people during the pilgrimage seasons and in winter and summer, and to clean the places for ablution (*al-matḥīr*) around al-Masjid al-Aqṣā [*al-Ĵāmi‘*]; It [i.e. the Haram] had ten Christian attendants, of [one] family, among whom the role of servicing the building [*khidmat al-bayt*] was passed on by inheritance, that is, making the plaster, sweeping the mats of the mosque and the canals leading to the water reservoirs, as well as cleaning the water reservoirs. In addition to this, it had a group of Jewish attendants who used to make the glass for the lamps, the (big) bowls and the glass vessels (*al-bazzāqa*),\(^\text{75}\) and other things besides this. The poll tax was not taken from them, neither from those who were in charge of the preparation of the wicks (*al-surāqa*) of the lamps.

The narrator [most probably in early ninth century] concludes by saying: “(This exemption from the poll tax) is carried out in regard to them and their children forever, as long as they live, from the time of ‘Abd al-Malik until today [*ilā ‘l-ān*].”\(^\text{76}\)

An inseparable part of the ceremonies established in the Umayyad period in the Dome of the Rock was the Black Paving Stone (*al-Balṭāta*).

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\(^\text{72}\) The fifth of the spoils to which the Caliph was entitled.


\(^\text{75}\) Apparently some kind of a glass vessel, see Dozy, *Dictionnaire*, b.z.q., s.v.: “bazzāqa... Doit désigner un objet fait de verre.”

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al-Sawdā’), which was set in the floor adjacent to the north gate of the Dome of the Rock. This stone is linked to early traditions about Paradise and the Last Day, dating from the mid-Umayyad period. It is said to be located at one of the gates of Paradise and supplications made on it are granted.77

I pointed out elsewhere that the builders of the Dome of the Rock were conscious of the parallel between this black paving stone and the Black Stone in the Ka’ba. The placing of the paving stone in the Dome of the Rock strengthens the theory put forward by Goldziher, Wellhausen, and others, who maintained that the Dome of the Rock was intended to compete with the Ka’ba.78

Concerning traditions emphasizing the central role of Jerusalem on the Last Day,79 noteworthy is the description of Ibn Kathir, most probably copied from Sibt b. al-Jawzī, about the pictures and signs painted on the Haram relating to the Last Days which were executed during the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik: “They painted the picture of the sirāt, the Gate of Paradise, and the footprint of the Prophet, and the valley of Gehenna. And they also painted on its gates and in the [holy] places there.”80

Before concluding this section, I would like to refer to an early tradition relating to a chain which hung from the center of the Dome in ‘Abd al-Malik’s day. Several items were hung on this chain: a precious stone, the horns of the ram sacrificed by Abraham (according to some traditions, these items originally hung in the Ka’ba)81, and the crown of Kusra, king of Persia. When the ‘Abbāṣīs assumed power, adds the transmitter, a member of the Jerusalemite family who lived at the beginning of the ‘Abbāṣī rule “moved it [the chain] to the Ka’ba.” In spite of some scholars’ reservations regarding the historical value of the tradition, it seems to reflect ‘Abd al-Malik’s desire to give the Dome of the Rock a unique status.82

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77 Al-Waṣāṭī, Fadlāl, pp. 89–90, no. 146; Ibn al-Murajjāl, Fadlāl, p. 112, no. 128; Elad, Jerusalem, pp. 77ff; Kaplony, The Haram, index.
78 Elad, Jerusalem, p. 80. Nevertheless, a thorough study of the parallels between the sites is necessary in order to reach binding conclusions.
80 Ibn Kathir, al-Bidāya (Cairo, 1351–58 AH), vol. 8, p. 281 (Dār al-Nil ed. vol. 8, p. 302); Elad, “The history and topography,” pp. 61–62; idem, “‘Abd al-Malik,” pp. 51–52. Although Ibn Kathir says that he copied this section from Sibt b.al-Jawzī, I was not able to find this paragraph in the MSS of the latter which I consulted.
The bulk of evidence which was not at Goitein’s disposal testifies to an extensive and complex set of ceremonies held inside the Dome of the Rock and around it during ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign.

The “Day of ‘Arafa” ceremonies in Jerusalem in the post-Umayyad period

The ta’rif on the “Day of ‘Arafa” was performed in later periods as well. Abū Shāma (d. 665/1268) calls it al-ta’rif al-muhdath, saying:

It is the gathering of the people on the eve of the Day of ‘Arafa in places other than ‘Arafa. This (also) means the supererogatory prayers, supplications and praises to God that the pilgrims perform on the Day of ‘Arafa. It was an unwarranted religious innovation from an early period and was widespread all over the world from east to west. The situation regarding this custom in Jerusalem became serious (wa-’staṭha al-amru bi-bayt al-maqdis). The “Day of ‘Arafa” ceremonies in Jerusalem in the post-Umayyad period

It is possible that Abū Shāma is referring here to ‘Abd al-Malik’s period, but he may also be describing ceremonies performed in his days. It is well-known that in later periods, Muslims used to sacrifice animals and perform the wuqūf ceremonies on the Haram, in the Dome of the Rock and around it at the time of the hajj. This was noted by Nūṣir-i Khusraw in 1047. Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, the famous Spanish scholar (d. 520/1126 or 525/1131), who resided in Jerusalem around the end of the eleventh century, describes how on the “Day of ‘Arafa” Muslims from the city and from the surrounding villages prayed while facing Mecca, raising their voices in prayers of request as if they were standing in front of Mount ‘Arafa. “I used to hear there a widely circulated saying according to which four wuqūfs in Jerusalem equal one pilgrimage to Mecca.” There is even later evidence of the ceremonies on the Haram during the time of the hajj.  

60–61, treats this tradition as a legend of a folklore nature.  
63Abū Shāma, al-Bā’idh, vol. 1, p. 32.  
64See note 18 above.  
66For evidence from the 12th and 14th centuries, see Elad, Jerusalem, p. 62.
C) The mosaic inscriptions inside the Dome of the Rock

Another of Goitein’s central arguments is based on the content and nature of the original gilded mosaic inscriptions on the upper part of the octagonal arcade within the Dome of the Rock. These inscriptions consist of Qur’anic verses, cited in full, in part or paraphrased. This caused followers of the “revisionist school” to assume that in ‘Abd al-Malik’s period, the Qur’an had not yet achieved its final form; I find this assumption to be far-fetched. Goitein argued (an argument accepted by other scholars), that these verses clearly reflect the nature of Islam’s dispute with Christianity: Jesus, who is mentioned in the verses, is a true prophet and servant of God, though he is not His son. In addition, they emphasize five times the expression related to God, “He has no partner” (الله لا شريك له). In summary, he says that “All this shows that rivalry with Christendom, together with the spirit of Islamic mission to the Christians, was at work at the creation of the famous dome.”

Since the end of the 19th century, the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock were copied and discussed by scholars, most noteworthy among them being Van Berchem. A very small number of studies have been devoted to these inscriptions. These inscriptions are not only important for the study of religious, political and cultural aspects of the Umayyad period; they also indicate the way in which the builders of the Dome of the Rock evaluated its importance and viewed the status of Jerusalem in Islam.

A profound philological-historical study of the inscriptions is called for, but in the present paper, I wish to make only the following comments.

1) It is now customary to consider the inscriptions as an integral text (further on this below). It seems to me that Grabar’s argument that the two inscriptions that were apparently inscribed on the copper plates

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90 The contribution of these inscriptions to early Arabic paleographic-epigraphic research is clear. One of the subjects worth clarifying in connection with these inscriptions is checking the citations from the Qur’an, their precise comparison with the printed version of the Qur’an and the qir‘āt literature. Among the partial studies of the inscriptions other than Van Berchem’s, we will note the studies of Kessler, “‘Abd al-Malik”; Grabar, “The Dome of the Rock”; idem, *Jerusalem* (see following remarks); Rabbat, “The Dome of the Rock revisited,” p. 70; see a recent and extremely important discussion of the subject in Whelan, “Forgotten witness.”
in the period of ‘Abd al-Malik and were still in their original location above the eastern and northern gate of the Dome of the Rock at the end of the 19th century should also be considered part of this whole.91

2) The long inscriptions are on the inner and outer part of the octagonal arcade within the Dome of the Rock. The prevailing view is that they begin at the southeastern end of the arcade and they end in its inner side, in the south. Therefore, the Muslim visitor in ‘Abd al-Malik’s time presumably began the circuit at the southeastern exterior end of the arcade, and continued clockwise up to the dedicatory inscription of the building. The circuit in the inner side of the arcade was followed counter-clockwise.92 The prevailing opinion among researchers of Islamic art is that the entrance to the Dome of the Rock was from the southern gate.93 Nevertheless, Grabar is not entirely satisfied with this view when he raises the question: “But from the point of view of the building, south was the qibla, the direction of prayer, and one may question whether a Muslim building with pious functions would have had its major entrance to the south.”94

Shani uses the question of Grabar as a cornerstone supporting her central thesis that the main entrance to the Dome of the Rock was from the northern gate, “Hence, my reservations regarding the accepted notion that the original entrance for visitors must have been from the south, which would mean that Abd al-Malik was ignoring Mecca as the qibla.”95 The builders of the Dome of the Rock wanted to emphasize (mainly by ornamental motifs) the north-South axis.96 It should be remembered, however, that the Dome of the Rock was not built as a mosque, and did not serve as such, certainly not in the Umayyad period. It was a kind of temple which was open to the public twice a week. Ritual ceremonies were carried out in it by special officials. Shani, following Grabar, posits that the southern part of the Dome was particularly emphasized by its builders, and thus emphasis is put on the qibla. However, if the building is not a mosque, why should the qibla be emphasized? Grabar’s reasoning therefore cannot stand, whereas Shani’s arguments,97 to the extent that they are correct, can only reinforce the idea that the entrance to the Dome was indeed in the south. Shani’s argument can be used to

94 Ibid.
96 Ibid., mainly from pp. 178 to 182.
support the opposite conclusion: the builders of the structure wanted to emphasize the southern entrance, not as the qibla, but particularly as the south-north axis. This issue is important and requires further study which cannot be attempted here.

3) The inscription on the outer side is different from that on the inner side in both content and style. As far as the content is concerned, the two inscriptions on the two gates of the Dome of the Rock belong to the outer inscription.98

The inscription on the outer side of the octagonal arcade is divided into six parts separated by a rose (rosetta) or a star within a square.99

In the sixth and last part, historical information is given about the builder of the structure and the date it was built. Five parts begin with the basmala, stressing the absolute oneness of Allâh (لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له); these parts cite or paraphrase Qur’ânic verses. In two of the five parts, there are also Qur’ânic verses emphasizing that Allâh has no progeny. In the first part, Qur’ân 112 is cited in full: 1) “Say: he is God one 2) the everlasting Refuge 3) who has not begotten, and has not been begotten 4) and equal to him is not any one.” In the second part, Qur’ân 17:111 is fully cited (with the exception: “Say” وَقُلْ ("[Say], Praise belongs to God who has not taken to Him a son and who has not any associate in the kingdom, nor any protector out of humbleness. And magnify Him with repeated magnificats.”100

A trend to disputation with Christianity might be seen here, though, notably, Jesus is not mentioned (as opposed to the inner inscription). Moreover, immediately after this, in every one of the five parts, not only in the two mentioned above, the inscription reiterates that Muḥammad is the messenger of Allâh. Noteworthy is the citation from Qur’ân 33:56: “God and his angels bless the Prophet; O believers, send your blessing on him and grant him peace.” The Prophet is the one who will intercede for his community on the Day of Judgment: وَتَقَلِّبُ شَفَاعَتِه بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فِي نِعَمَتِه.

The outer inscription, then, emphasizes the absolute oneness of Allâh and Muḥammad’s status as His messenger; Jesus is not mentioned. Even if it is possible to see in the two cases some relation to Christianity, this is not the main subject addressed by the inscriptions. In content, the two inscriptions on the doors of the Dome of the Rock101 fit the outer inscriptions discussed above. The inner inscription is one unit consisting

100Translation by Arberry, The Qur’ân interpreted.
101See footnotes 91, 98.
of several Qur’anic verses. Although the inscription begins with the belief in the oneness of Allāh and in His Prophet Muhammad, most of the inner inscription deals with Jesus, who is presented as a prophet, servant of God, and not the son of God; he was born, died, and will be resurrected. The inscription is aimed at emphasizing the main difference between Muslim and Christian beliefs. The inner inscription is easier to read, since this passage is more spacious and better lit than the outer roofed arcade.

Nevertheless, the lighting conditions in ‘Abd al-Malik’s time may possibly have been better in the outer arcade. Geographers and historians of the 9th and 10th centuries describe many large windows in the drum of the Dome of the Rock as well as the large lamps and candles that lit up the structure. Some of these reports are early, and although the numbers they give are exaggerated, they themselves seem authentic.

Thus, Ibn al-Faqīh writing in 289/902 or 290/903 and describing his times, relates that there were five hundred copper chains on the Haram. Every night 1600 lamps (qindīl) were lit on it. The Dome of the Rock was lit up every night by 300 lamps. In its upper part there were 56 glass windows of different colours. The window dimensions were six cubits in length [between three and four meters] and six spans (shibr) [around 1.80 m] in width.

Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi (246/860–328/940) relates that on the entire Haram there were 1500 lamps. In the Dome of the Rock there were 460 lamps.


103 Kessler, “‘Abd al-Malik,” pp. 11–12; Blair, op. cit., p. 77; Grabar, Jerusalem, p. 67.

104 Such reports are found in sources such as Ibn al-Faqīh (d. in the first half of the 10th c.), Buldān; Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi (d. 328/940), al-Iṣqal al-Muqaddasi (d. ca. 1000), Ahsan al-taqāsim and Ibn al-Murajjil, Fada’il.

105 According to Ibn al-Faqīh, Buldān, p. 100, every night 1600 lamps (qindīl) were lit on the site of the Haram, and the Dome of the Rock was lit up by 300 lamps at night; Ibn al-Murajjil, Fada’il, p. 61, relates (from various sources) that on the entire Haram there were 5000 lamps, and that on special occasions (such as Friday nights and the two ‘Īdūs), 1000 (or 2000, according to another version) candles were also lit, and according to Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, al-Iṣqal (Cairo ed.), vol. 6, p. 263, there were 460 lamps in the Dome. Similar large numbers are given concerning the windows; see for instance Ibn al-Faqīh, Ibid.

106 On him see H. Masse, “Ibn al-Fakīh,” EI², s.v.


108 Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, al-Iṣqal (Cairo ed.), vol. 6, p. 263.
The author proceeds by giving a detailed description of the amounts and types of oils that were supplied every month to light the entire mosque as well as the budget for the glass and the workers who maintained the roofs of the mosque structures. Ibn al-Faqih testifies to the existence of upper windows, even if their dimensions and numbers were certainly exaggerated. Al-Muqaddasi (died ca. 1000) reports that in the cupola of the Dome of the Rock there are large windows. In the most important tradition about the the Dome of the Rock and the ritual ceremonies conducted in it during ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign — this tradition was transmitted by the Jerusalemite ‘Abd al-Rahmân’s family, which can be traced back at least to the end of the Umayyad period — much data on the Haram in the period of ‘Abd al-Malik is given.

Ibn al-Murajjâ reports that on the Haram there were 385 chains, 280 of them on the Haram and the rest, in the Dome of the Rock. The lengths of the chains were 40,000 qubits. On the entire Haram there are 5000 lamps. On Friday nights, middle of the months of Rajab, Sha'bân, and Ramadân, and on the nights of the two Feasts, 2000 candles were also lit. Some of these data are identical to what was transmitted by Sibt b. al-Jawzi from early transmitters who take the tradition back to at least the middle of the 8th century. These transmitters are not from the Jerusalem family who are mentioned in al-Wâsiti’s and Ibn al-Murajjâ’s Fuḍâ’il. Nevertheless, there are parallels between the two compositions.

On the entire Haram, according to the early sources of Sibt b. al-Jawzi there were 5000 lamps, an identical number to that noted by Ibn al-Murajjâ. In the Dome of the Rock there were 400 chains. The chains were 40,000 qubits long. This is a number identical to that transmitted by Ibn al-Murajjâ. Each night 100 candles were lit in the Dome of the Rock.

109 Ibid., p. 265. It appears that he had first-hand information.
110 Al-Muqaddasi, Absan al-taqâsim, pp. 169–170: طاقان كبار عن طاقان. I translated the word طاقان as windows. This is the plural of طاق, which is customarily understood as a vaulted opening, a window, though every vaulted structure is also called طاق. See Lane’s Lexicon, s.v.; see also Le Strange, Palestine, p. 124, who translates the expression as windows. Yâqût, Ma’jam, vol. 5, p. 170, who copies al-Muqaddasi, uses the word طاقات instead of طاقان. طاقات is also a plural form of طاق.
111 Al-Wâsiti, Fuḍâ’il, pp. 81–84 (nos. 136–137); Ibn al-Murajjâ, Fuḍâ’il, pp. 58–62 (no. 47); see also Elad, Jerusalem, pp. 17–18 (discussion of ‘Abd al-Rahmân’s family).
112 In Rihâf al-abhissâ and Mujîr al-Dîn’s versions: 4000 !.
113 The feast of sacrifice (‘id al-adhâ) and the feast at the end of Ramadân (‘id al-fitr).
114 Ibn al-Murajjâ, Fuḍâ’il, p. 61, the text with variations of the versions with references to the literary parallels.
Rock and an identical number was lit in al-Aqsā mosque. In another version, the author of the tradition adds, it is said that their number was 1000. [This number is identical to the number given by Ibn al-Murajjà].

For whom were these inscriptions intended? It seems that Grabar’s opinion — that they were meant for Muslims — is correct. Did the builders of the Dome of the Rock intend the Muslim visitor to circle the building, reading the inscriptions? The answer is not clear. In this period very few Muslims could read and write, and the placement of the inscriptions was such that they probably could not have been easily read in full. However, the verses were not chosen at random. It thus seems that the inscriptions were meant to play a part in the polemic debate with Christianity.

D) The Syrian Umayyad delegation to the ḥajj in the year 68/688

Another argument raised by Goitein is based on a tradition recorded by al-Ṭabarī, according to which, in 68/688, “four camps — those of Abd al-Malik, Ibn Zubair, Najda (the Kharidjite) and Ibn al-Hanafiyya (Shī’a) took part jointly in the Hajj.” The inevitable conclusion, according to Goitein, is “It takes for granted the fact that men from Syria performed the hajj at other times also during those crucial years.”

Al-Ṭabarī’s text indeed reports that there were four camps, each with its own banner. One of the camps is said to be the [camp at the head of which] the flag of Banū Umayya was carried (لواء بني أمية). Goitein considered this ‘Abd al-Malik’s camp. Based on the same source, Goitein also stated: “On the contrary, we learn that ‘Abd al-Malik himself sent a group of celebrants [that is, pilgrims] to Mecca.”

But this claim is not substantiated by this tradition of al-Ṭabarī. Moreover, nothing is said about the nature of this Umayyad camp. In this tradition, the leader of each camp is mentioned by name — except the Umayyad one. That the leader of the Umayyad camp was not 116Elad, “‘Abd al-Malik,” p. 56 (the Arabic text).
117Grabar, Jerusalem, p. 68.
119Ibid.
120Ibid.
121Goitein, “Jerusalem in the Arab period,” p. 177 (according to al-Ṭabarī, 2nd series, pp. 781–782).
mentioned by name could possibly mean that he was not a well-known figure. Furthermore, we do not know if the pilgrims in this group came from Syria and if they were sent by ‘Abd al-Malik; they could have been Umayyad supporters from al-Hijáz. The parallel texts do not record the nature of the Umayyad camp or the name of its leader either, but they do report the names of the leaders of the three other camps. Al-Yaqūbī’s report may serve as an example when he says:

In this year [68 AH] four banners were posted [literally: “stood”] at ‘Arafāt: Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya at the head of his supporters, Ibn al-Zubayr at the head of his supporters, Najda b. ‘Amīr al-Ḥarūrī, and the banner of Bānū Umayya. [The poet] al-Musawir b. Hind b. Qays recited: they branched off, each group had an Amīr al-Ma‘minin.\(^{122}\)

Goitein also concludes from al-Ṭabarānī’s text that “men from Syria performed the Ḥajj at other times also during those crucial year [s].” This is not corroborated by al-Ṭabarānī or by any other source. Al-Ṭabarānī, his copyists and al-Yaqūbī, all give the year 68 AH as the year of the gathering of the four camps. Possibly another early source, Ibn Khayyāt (d. 240/854), describes this episode although he gives the year 66 AH instead of 68 AH and he reports of three camps only; the Umayyad camp is missing from his report.\(^{123}\)

Furthermore, it is clearly stated both by al-Ṭabarānī and and other sources that in each and every year, including 68 AH, Ibn al-Zubayr was the supreme leader of the Ḥajj. He held a position higher than that of other leaders: “and the camp (literally: the banner) that sped out from ‘Arafa was that of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya [...] then the banner of Ibn al-Zubayr and the people followed him”: \(^{124}\) وَكَانَ أَوْلُ مِنْ أَفَاضِ لَوَاءِ حِمَدٍ بْنِ الحَبْطِيَةِ [\_] مَنْ لَوَاءٍ لِْيَنِّي اِلْزَيْرِ وَبِعْيَ النَّاسِ or: “In this year [68 AH] Ibn al-Zubayr stood at the head of the pilgrims of the Ḥajj”: \(^{124}\) يَوْمَ اِلْزَيْرِ يَدُلُّ فِي هِذِهِ الْسَّنَةِ 

\(^{122}\) Al-Yaqūbī, Ta’rīkh (Beirut ed.), vol. 2, p. 263: وَفِي هَذِهِ السَّنَةِ وَقَتَّلَ أَرْبَعَةٌ أَلْوَانٍ عِبَارَاتٍ حِمَدٍ بْنِ الحَبْطِيَةِ فِي أَحْصَاهُ وَأَبِهِ الْزَيْرِ فِي أَحْصَاهُ، وَأَحْصَاهُ بَنَةً عَمَّارِ الْحَرُوريَّةِ وَلَوَاءٍ يَنْيِي أَمْيَة وَقَلْفُ الْمَسْأَلَرِ بِنَهَدٍ بْنِ قِيسٍ وَتَقَعُّومُهُ فَصَفْعٌ فِي كُلِّ قَبْلَةٍ


\(^{123}\) Ibn Khayyāt, Ta’rīkh, vol. 1, p. 333.

\(^{124}\) Al-Ṭabarānī, 2nd series, p. 782; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazam, vol. 6, p. 71; Ibn Khayyāt, loc. cit.: وَفَقَّهَا حَجُّ جَمِيعَةَ بِنَاعِرْ مَقْدَفَ مَعْلُومٍ بْنِ الحَبْطِيَةِ بِأَحْصَاهُ وَقَتَّلَ مَقْدَفَ جَمِيعَةٌ مِّلْيَنِ مَارَى
This information is important since it corresponds to what we know of Ibn al-Zubayr's complete control over Mecca and Medina. It is compatible with the evidence reported in the sources that from 64/684 until 71/691 (except perhaps 68/688), ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr stood alone at the head of the hajj pilgrimage.125 There are also sources according to which Ibn Zubayr led the pilgrimage for nine successive years (64–72 AH).126

125 Al-Ṭabarî, 2nd series, p. 537 (year 64 AH); p. 593 (year 65); p. 700 (year 66); p. 762 (year 67); p. 782 (year 68: four camps); p. 796 (year 69); p. 797 (year 70); p. 818 (year 71); Ibn Khayyāt, Ta’rīkh, vol. 1, p. 334 (year 67); p. 337 (year 70); p. 339 (year 71); but see ibid., p. 342; al-Ya’qībī, Ta’rīkh (Beirut ed.), vol. 2, p. 268: ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr stood at the head of the pilgrims in 63, 64 (it was said that in this year it was Yahyā b. Saṭwān al-Jumāḥī who led the pilgrims), and in 65, 66, and 67; in 68 four banners were stationed in ‘Arafāt; and in the years 69, 70 and 71, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr stood at the head of the pilgrims; see also Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazam, vol. 6, pp. 31, 41, 61, 67, 71 (year 68 AH: four camps); pp. 93, 101, 113: years 64–71 AH accordingly; see also Ibn Taghrībirdī, Nujum (ed. Juynboll and Matthews), vol. 1, pp. 197, 199, 200, 203, 204, 205: years 66–71 AH accordingly; the year 68 AH: four camps; year 69 AH: Muṣṭafā b. al-Zubayr (on behalf of his brother).

126 Ibn Khayyāt, Ta’rīkh, vol. 1, p. 343: “‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr stood at the head of the pilgrims from 64 until the arrival of the pilgrim’s season of 72, for [even] then ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr stood at the head of the pilgrims, but they did not perform the wuqūf where it was accustomed to do it [that is, in front of mount 'Arafāt that was under the control of al-Ḥajjāj’s army]: while al-Ḥajjāj, stood [in this year] at the head of the Syrian pilgrims, but they did not perform the tawāf around the Ka’ba.” Al-Qudūrī, al-Inbā’, p. 212: “‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr] did not cease to stand at the head of the people during the hajj from the year 64 until 72.”
E) Some religio-social and cultural aspects of the Umayyad caliphate

A) ‘Abd al-Malik and the ḥajj

One of the main arguments raised by Goitein, and accepted by other scholars\(^{127}\) was that ‘Abd al-Malik would not have been able to establish Jerusalem as an alternative centre to Mecca, because by doing so he would have subverted one of the pillars of Islam, the pilgrimage to Mecca (al-ḥajj) and subsequently he would have been declared an unbeliever (kāfir). Rajāʾ b. Haywa, who was in charge of building the Dome of the Rock, and ‘Abd al-Malik himself, says Goitein, were pious Muslims and “it is inconceivable that, for political reasons, they would have been prepared to disavow the acknowledged sanctuary of Islam about which Muhammed spoke at length in the Qurʾān.”\(^{128}\)

In order to examine this argument, several aspects pertaining to the Umayyad caliphate must be discussed.

1) Islam in the Umayyad caliphate: principles and institutions

In the Umayyad period, basic religious rituals, beliefs and institutions had not yet fully developed, and ignorance regarding such issues prevailed.\(^{129}\) Muslims living in later periods — when the various institutions and law were better developed — misunderstood this state of affairs, and according to Goldziher “could only suppose that the godless Umayyads deliberately altered the times of the salāt.”\(^{130}\) Studies by Goldziher, Kister, Crone, Hinds, Hawting and Robinson clearly attest to this.\(^{131}\)

\(^{127}\)For example, see Rabbat, “The meaning of the Dome of the Rock,” p. 17.

\(^{128}\)Goitein, “Jerusalem in the Arab period,” p.177; idem, “The historical background,” p. 105: “By such a step he would have marked himself as a kāfir, against whom ḥiṣād is obligatory. In addition, Rajāʾ b. Haywa [...] was an intimate friend of ‘Umar b. Abd al-Aziz, and a famous theologian, who could never have given his consent to such a pious fraud, and according to all we know, Abd al-Malik himself was an orthodox and observant Muslim.”


\(^{130}\)Goldziher, op. cit., p. 40.

\(^{131}\)Ibid.; Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*; Kister, “Concessions and conduct”; Hawting, The first dynasty, pp. 5–6 (Introduction) and p. 61; Robinson, ‘‘Abd al-Malik, esp. pp. 90–104. E.g., Goldziher, op. cit., pp. 39–40. “[1] When Ibn ‘Abbās asked the people in Basra to fulfill the duty of the fast alms (zakāt al-fitr), they took counsel and sought to find Medinians who might inform them about this religious duty that was entirely unknown to them. [2] The same community in the first years of
Kister has shown that during the first century AH and the beginning of the second there were contradictory opinions among Muslim scholars regarding the basic principles of faith and ritual. He convincingly argued that the development and changes in modes and religious customs in the Umayyad period were inspired by the caliphs and their governors. One of the subjects expanded upon by Kister is that of the contradicting opinions concerning the rituals and customs during the 

**2) The politico-religious character of the Umayyad caliphate with emphasis on the nature and status of the caliph.**

Another important part will deal with the status of the ‘ulamā’ in the Umayyad caliphate, stressing the relations between them and the government.

Goldziher showed that the Umayyads encouraged unconditional loyalty to their rule. In his discussion of the relations between the rulers and the scholars (a topic directly connected with the issue of ‘Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock), he says:

Even pious doctors of the law belonged to the Murji‘ite party — no doubt those theologians whom we have already met as willing tools and lenient judges of the Umayyad trend. They were expected by the authorities to declare the opponents of the dynasty and their abettors as ‘unbelievers’ and to spread this doctrine with the motivation that ‘those who split the staff,’ break the oath of allegiance, leave the community and thus threaten the security of the Muslims are worthy of the name kāfir.

*its existence had no inkling of how to perform the *salāt*... [3] In Syria in olden times it was not generally known that there were only five obligatory *salāts*, and in order to make certain of this fact it was necessary to find a Companion still alive who could be asked about it. [4]...p. 40: The people had so little accustomed themselves to the Islamic way of thought that at that time the Muslims had to be taught that one could not say *al-salām ‘alā Allāh*. [5] What must have been the state of knowledge of Muslims when it was possible for people to stand in the pulpit and recite Arabic verses, thinking them to be passages from the Koran [6] At the time of al-Hājjaj and ‘Umar II people had no idea of the proper times of prayer and the most pious Muslims were unsure of the quite elementary rules.”

132Kister, “Concessions and conduct”, p. 97: “The great number of diverse traditions, merely hinted at above, clearly indicate that the formation of a normative code of ritual and usage began relatively late.”


134Goldziher, *Muslim studies*, vol. 2, p. 91; Goldziher’s argument that “the belief in unconditional blind loyalty to the government” was supported and nurtured by the political-religious movement/“party” al-Murji‘a seems to be wrong, see W. Madelung, “Murji‘a,” *EI2*, p. 606.
2.1) The ‘ulamā’ and the government

Goldziher’s keen observation seems to be correct. A thorough scrutiny of the sources reveals that a large number of important and famous scholars were involved in the daily life of the caliphate. On the one hand, many of them are described as pious and moral men; some of them even were said to be ascetics (zuhhād); on the other hand, many of them actively participated in politics and held public office. Moreover, men like Khalīd b. Ma’dan (d. 103 or 104/721 or 722),135 Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 117/735–36),136 ‘Ubāda b. Nusayy (d. 118/736–37) (on him see below), Ibrāhīm b. Abī Abla (d. 152/769–70 or 153/770),137 Shahr b. Hawshāb (d. between 98/716 and 112/730–31),138 and especially Rajā’ b. Ḥaywa (d. 112/730)139 and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) held office under a number of caliphs. They were involved in governmental affairs, and were often the rulers’ partners in the formulation of the religious-political structure of the caliphate. They lived in a unique Arab-Islamic state, and worked within it and for it.140

135 See Elad, “Community of believers,” p. 263.
139 Rajā’ (d. 112/730–731) is described as a zāhid and an ʿālim, and was a faqīh and muḥaddith. He was a member of one of the families of the southern tribe of Kinda, and held important offices under the Umayyads, from the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik until that of his son Hishām (r. 105/724–125/744). He was from Beth Shean in the province of al-Urdunn. At some stage Rajā’ moved to the province (jund) of Filastin, possibly following his appointment by ‘Abd al-Malik as overseer of the construction of the Dome of the Rock. This move to jund Filastin may be the source of his title Sayyid ahl Filastin, the leader of the people of Filastin. On Rajā’, see Bosworth, “Rajā’,” Gil, Palestine, vol. 1, pp. 100–101, no. 153; Rabbat, “The Dome of the Rock revisited,” pp. 70–71; Elad, “Beth Shean,” pp. 32–33 and the bibliography there; Elad, “Community of believers,” p. 260; Sayyid ahl Filastin: Gil, loc. cit.; Abū Zur’a, Ta’rīkh, vol. 1, pp. 249, 711; Ibn Hibbān, al-Thiqāt, vol. 4, p. 237; al-Ṭabarānī, Ma’jam al-Shāmīyyin, vol. 3, p. 266; Ibn ‘Asākir, Ta’rīkh (Beirut ed.), vol. 24, p. 215; vol. 44, p. 321; vol. 65, p. 57; al-Dhahābī, Sījar, vol. 5, p. 324; al-Mīzān, Tahdhīb (ed. Ma’rūf), vol. 22, p. 106; vol. 32, p. 40.
140 The case of al-Zuhrī was exhaustively dealt with by Lecker, “al-Zuhrī,” pp. 23ff., 33, 37–40; See also the observations of ‘Athāmina, “The ‘Ulamā’,” pp. 159, 166 and Livne-Kafri, “Jerusalem in early Islam,” pp. 51–52 (both quoted by Lecker, op. cit., p. 23, n. 11); see also Donner, “Historiography,” in which he discusses in great detail several important scholars in the Umayyad period and their relations with the regime; Elad, Jerusalem, pp. 19–21; for additional information concerning the relations between distinguished scholars and the Umayyad regime, see Abū Zur’a, Ta’rīkh, vol. 1, pp. 351, 432–433, 370; vol. 2, pp. 700–701; al-Fasawī, al-Mu’ rifî (Beirut, 1981), vol. 2, p. 396; Goldziher, Muslim studies, vol. 2, p. 48; Juynboll, Muslim tradition, pp. 80–81; and especially, Livne, The sanctity of Jerusalem, pp. 32–35 (a detailed discussion on the close relations between the early zuhhād and ‘ulamā’ and the government); Elad, “Community of believers,” pp. 256–267 for many more examples of scholars at the service of the Umayyad government.
This, therefore, is the context in which the building of the Dome of the Rock by Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywā— at ‘Abd al-Malik’s command— should be viewed.¹⁴¹

‘Ubāda b. Nusayy (d. 118/736–737), a member of another family of Kinda, who lived in the province of al-Urdunn,¹⁴² should be regarded in the same way. He was a scholar, a specialist on law, and filled the post of qādī in the district of al-Urdunn.¹⁴³ At the same time he was the governor of the province on behalf of ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65/685–86/705) and ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 99/717–101/720). He was called Sayyīd Abī al-Urdunn or Sayyīd al-Urdunn.¹⁴⁴ ‘Ubāda is even said to have been the ‘arīf of Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywā.¹⁴⁵

Scholars, such as Khālid b. Mardan, Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywā, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī and many others,¹⁴⁶ thought there was nothing wrong with serving the Umayyad government, and information which seems authentic indicates that such scholars were not above earthly matters. This is also true of their predecessors among the Companions.¹⁴⁷

Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), perhaps the greatest scholar of the first and second centuries, arrived in Damascus penniless.¹⁴⁸ At the time

¹⁴¹Rabbat, “The Dome of the Rock revisited,” pp. 70–71 emphasises the crucial role of Rajāʾ in the building of the Dome of the Rock being “the designer of the message that the Dome was meant to convey...”; my interpretation of the meaning of the Dome of the Rock and the intentions of the Caliph and Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywā are different from Rabbat.


¹⁴⁵Elad, loc. cit., following Ibn ‘Asākir, Taʾrīkh (Beirut ed., vol. 26, p. 216); it means that ‘Ubāda was the ‘arīf of the tribal group to which Rajāʾ belonged. This term denotes someone appointed by the government, with civil and military powers (taxation, pensions [al-ʿatāʿ]). Evidence from the beginning of the Muslim period indicates that this official was a commander of a military unit; see Śāliḥ A. el-ʿAli and Cl. Cahen, “ʿArīf,” EI², s.v.

¹⁴⁶See Elad, “Community of believers,” pp. 259–267, for more scholars; this topic merits a thorough study.


¹⁴⁸Since al-Zuhrī’s father fought at the side of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr against ‘Abd al-Malik (Lecker, “al-Zuhrī,” p. 47), this caliph ordered the removal from the Dīwān of the names of the members of this family (Ibn ‘Asākir, Taʾrīkh (Beirut ed.), vol.
of his death he was wealthy, thanks to money and lands he had received from the Umayyad rulers (despite apologetic attempts to present him as poverty-stricken and destitute).  

Most of the scholars mentioned here were Arabs; many belonged to important tribes. This contradicts Donner’s assertion that they were non-Arabs, of base origin, and that “their status within the community was established solely by their piety”. The studies by Monique Bernard and John Nawas also show that there were more Arabs than non-Arabs among the scholars of the first and second centuries.

2.2) The character of the Umayyad caliph

a) The title Khalifat Allāh

Crone and Hinds showed clearly that the Umayyad caliphs (including ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān) bore the official title Khalifat Allāh (God’s Deputy). Hakim has shown recently that this title was also borne by ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 644). This honorific is of great significance and indicates that all religious and political authority was concentrated in the caliphate. In the words of Crone and Hinds:

It was the caliph who was charged with the definition of Islamic law, the very core of the religion, and without allegiance to a caliph no Muslim could achieve salvation.

‘Abd al-Malik and all the Caliphs who succeeded him bore the title Khalifat Allāh. The evidence is rendered by Crone and Hinds, from material (e.g., numismatic) as well as literary evidence.

b) The Umayyad caliphs and the prophets

Moreover, Crone and Hinds convincingly show that the prevalent outlook in the Umayyad period, as learned from the official letters that survived in the Arabic chronicles and from diverse literary sources, was that the Umayyad caliphs claimed that their authority as rulers came


‘Abd al-Malik renewed and even increased the annual pension to al-Zuhri, appointed him as one of the Sha‘bāna of the Caliph, with the salary of that class (Ibn ‘Asikir, op. cit., p. 324; Ibn al-Jawa‘i, op. cit., p. 234; al-Dhahabi, Siyar, vol. 5, p. 331), and paid his debts (Ibn ‘Asikir, op. cit., p. 298 [idem, al-Mukhtasar, vol. 23, p. 241]; al-Dhahabi, op. cit., p. 329).


150 Donner, Narratives, p. 99.


153 Crone and Hinds, God’s Caliph, pp. 1, 5–6.

154 Ibid., pp. 8ff; see also Robinson, ‘Abd al-Malik, pp. 82, 84, 87.
directly from God, and thus they are no lower in rank than the prophets, including Muḥammad. Many traditions record that the Umayyad caliphs and their senior officials regarded Khalīfat Allāh as above the prophets and also above Muḥammad himself.

These traditions are found in the early ḥadīth literature, in the important historical chronicles, recorded through chains of transmitters that end with personal testimonies of different early historians (أُخِبار يوْن) who lived in the period of ‘Abd al-Malik, sometimes essentially different from each other in regard to various circumstances, events and persons connected with these traditions.

Traditions attesting that Khalīfat Allāh is above the prophets and even above Muḥammad

a) Letters from al-Hajjaj b. Yūsuf to ‘Abd al-Malik

1) In a letter to ‘Abd al-Malik, al-Hajjaj b. Yūsuf expressed the opinion that “God held His deputy on His earth in higher regard than His messenger to His living creatures.”

were present before 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān when a letter from al-Hajjāj arrived for him in which he highly praises the caliphate, claiming that the skies and earth exist only because of it and that the caliph in the eyes of God is more distinguished than (the) angels who are (considered) closest to God (al-mala'īka al-muqarrabīn)\(^{159}\) and than the previous Prophets who were sent; the reason for this is that God created Adam with His hand [!] and made the angels bow down to him and lodged him in His Heaven; then He sent him down to earth and appointed him as His deputy and appointed the angels as messengers to him. ‘Abd al-Malik was astonished by this and said: I wish I had with me a man from the Khawārij so that I would be able to dispute him regarding this letter."\(^{160}\)

3) “And his letter to him (= ‘Abd al-Malik): The man’s deputy among his family is held by him in higher regard than his messenger to them; in the same way the position of the caliph, oh Commander of the Faithful, is held in higher regard than the messengers.”\(^{161}\)

b) Al-Hajjāj’s preachings to several prominent scholars (qurrah), expressing the notion that God’s Caliph is superior to the Messenger of God.

b.1) Muṣārīf b. al-Mughāra b. Shu’ba


وقال ابن عباس عن أبيه: إن أول يوم عرف فيه الحجاب - وكان في الشروق بعث عن عبد الملك - إن عبد الملك بعث إلى رفرف بن أبناع معرفة لفرف وأبلغهم بتحجج - وسكنوده بحجة في الجاهلية. His father transmitted from Ghāḍībān b. al-Qatība-thāri al-Shaybānī, who was among those who had access to see the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān when a letter from al-Qatība-thāri al-Mughāra for example, see, e.g., al-Ṭabari, Tafsir (Beirut ed.), vol. 17, p. 56).

\(^{159}\)See Qurān 4:172: the commentators describe these angels as the most important in the eyes of God who carry His throne; some identify them as Gabriel, Isrāfīl and Michael; for example, see, e.g., al-Ṭabari, Tafsir (Beirut ed.), vol. 17, p. 57.

\(^{160}\)Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, al-Iqd, vol. 5, p. 51: “[‘Abd al-Malik] has said: ‘Abd al-Malik to Marwān: when God sent a letter to his servant, he said: The son of the servant of God is more distinguished than the angels who are closest to God. And the previous Prophets who were sent also are distinguished. And it is the Creator’s hand that created Adam in His Heaven. And then He sent him to the earth and appointed him as His deputy. And He appointed the angels as messengers to him. And the man’s deputy among his family is in higher regard than the Messenger of God. And ‘Abd al-Malik was astonished by this.”

\(^{161}\)Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, al-Iqd, vol. 2, p. 353 (only mentioned by Crane and Hinds, op. cit., p. 28, note 15):

And his letter to him (= ‘Abd al-Malik): The man’s deputy among his family is held by him in higher regard than his messenger to them; in the same way the position of the caliph, oh Commander of the Faithful, is held in higher regard than the messengers.”

note the plural again)."¹⁶² The full text runs as follows:

From Ibn ‘Ayyāsh al-Hamdāni [al-Mantūf]:¹⁶³ I was told by al-'Umarī from al-Haytham b. ‘Adī who said: al-Hajjāj arrived to al-Kūfā and was assisted by the children of al-Mughīra [b. Shu'ba [d. 50/670]]; he nominated ‘Urwa as the governor of al-Kūfā...and Hamza b. al-Mughīra as the governor of al-Madā'in.¹⁶⁴ He sent for Muṭarrīf b. al-Mughīra who was a pious man (wa-kāna yata'allahu)¹⁶⁵ and told him one day: “Indeed ‘Abd al-Malik is the deputy of God and he is more esteemed in the eyes of God than His messengers. These words affected Muṭarrīf gravely. He used to believe firmly in disapproving what is disapproved by God, but he did not reach so far as to accept the dogma of the Khawārij. It happened that Shabīb b. Yazīd al-Khārijī passed through al-Madā'in while Muṭarrīf was in the city, and he (Muṭarrīf) discussed with him and disagreed with his (theological) view but he accepted his call to rebel.¹⁶⁶

Two additional alleged sayings in this vein from al-Hajjāj to Muṭarrīf b. al-Mughīra are found in al-Baladhurī's Ansāb; each is related by different transmitters).

4.1) “‘Abd Allāh b. Sāliḥ [b. Muslim al-Ijlī al-Kufī, 143/760–761-211/826–827 or ca. 211/826–827 or ca. 221/835–836] transmitted to me from Hāmza [b. Hābīb b. ‘Umārī al-Muqri al-Kufī d. 156/772–773 or 158/774–775] al-Zayyāt. The former heard him saying, mentioning al-Hajjāj who sent for Muṭarrīf b. al-Mughīra b. Shu'ba who was a pious person and said to him: Oh Muṭarrīf, who is more esteemed in your eyes, your messenger or your deputy of your family? He said: indeed my deputy is more dignified. Al-Hajjāj said: Indeed Abd al-Malik is God’s deputy among his worshippers and he is held in higher regard by God than Muḥammad...
and the other Messengers. These words affected Muṭarrif greatly, but he concealed it and said (in his heart): By God, jiḥād against you is preferable to jiḥād against the Byzantines, so he rebelled against him.”\(^{167}\)

According to this text, ‘Abd al-Malik’s position is higher than that of Muḥammad and of the other prophets. Muṭarrif b. al-Mughīra b. Shu‘ba was a senior member of al-Ḥajjāj’s court and the governor of al-Madī’in on the latter’s behalf. He rebelled against al-Ḥajjāj in 83/683.\(^{168}\)

4.2) “[A]l b. Al-Mughīra al-Atḫram [d. 230/845 or 232/846]\(^{169}\) related to me [that is, al-Baladhurī] from Abū ‘Ubayda [Ma’mar b. al-Muḥammad, 110/728-209/824-25]\(^{170}\) who said: Muṭarrif heard al-Ḥajjāj saying: “Who is more esteemed in your eyes, your messenger or your deputy?” He kept silent and said: I swear by God: he is an unbeliever, killing him is lawful.”\(^{171}\)

b.2) Al-Rabī’ b. Khālid al-Ḍabbī

5) The earliest text is Abū Dāwūd’s Sunan transmitted through the following isnād:

“Īsḥāq b. Ismā‘il al-Talāqānī and Zuhayr b. Ḥarb both transmitted from < Jurār < al-Mughīra [b. Muṣṣim al-Kūfī, d. 133/750-51 or 134/751-752 or 136/753-54]\(^{172}\) < al-Rabī’ b. Khālid al-Ḍabbī [d. 83/683]\(^{173}\) who said: I heard al-Ḥajjāj giving a sermon; he said in his

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\(^{167}\) Al-Baladhurī, Ansāb (ed. al-‘Azm), vol. 12, p. 360, ll. 2-7:

حَدْثِي عَلَيْهِمْ أَفْلَمْ يَصِلُوا عَلَى أَنْ يَكُونُواٌ وَذَٰكَرَ الْحَجَاجَ أَنَّهُ أَرَسَلَ إِلَى مَطْرُعْبِهِ نَبِيّاً أَمْ لاَ يُحَدَّثُهُمْ أَفْلَمْ يُحْكِمَ بِهِ أَمْ لاَ يُحَدَّثُهُمْ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُفْتَرَى إِلَى نَبِيّ أَمْ لَا يُفْتَرَى بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُمْكِنُ أَلاَّ يُعْرَفُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُمْكِنُ أَلاَّ يُعْرَفُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ لَا يُقَدِّرُ بِهِ أَمْ L

\(^{168}\) See al-Baladhurī, Ansāb (ed. al-‘Azm), vol. 6, pp. 507-516.


\(^{170}\) See al-Baladhurī, Ansāb (ed. al-‘Azm), vol. 6, pp. 507-516.


\(^{173}\) On him, see Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Jarh (Beirut ed.), vol. 8, p. 228; Ibn Hajar,
sermon: Would any member of the audience prefer a messenger sent on his behalf for any need, over his deputy who is in charge of his family? I said to myself: I swear by God that I shall never pray behind you [as the Imam] and in case I find people who will fight you I shall fight you with them. Ishāq added in his ḥadīth saying: he (al-Rabi‘) fought in (the battle of) al-Jamājīm until he was killed.”

b.3) Jabala b. Zaḥr

6) A similar story is narrated by al-Maqrīzī, but this time the scholar is Jabala b. Zaḥr, who as the two latter scholars, al-Rabī‘ b. Khālid and Muṭṭarīf b. al-Mughira was one of the Qur’ān readers, joined the rebellion of Ibn al-Ash‘ath, and was killed in the battle of al-Jamājīm in 83/683.175 Once again al-Hajjāj asks while standing on the minbar asking the rhetorical question: “Who is more distinguished and superior, your messenger on your behalf or your deputy? Meaning that ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam is more distinguished than the Messenger of God sal‘āman. When Jabala b. Zaḥr heard him he said: I swear by God, I shall not ever pray behind him. And if I see someone who will fight him, I shall fight with him against al-Hajjāj. So he rebelled with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ash‘ath and was killed with him.”176

Tahdīḥ (Beirut, 1984), vol. 2, p. 86; al-Mizzi, Tahdīḥ (ed. Ma‘rūf), vol. 9, p. 70.


176Al-Maqrīzī, al-Nizā‘ wa-l-thikāhām (ed. G. W. Voel), Leiden, 1888, p. 29; cf. also 5) al-Jāhiz, Risāla fi l-Nabiṭa, vol. 2, pp. 16; 6) Ibn ʿAsakir, Taḥdīḥ (ed. ‘A. Q. Bādīrān and A. ʿUbayd, Damascus, 1911–1932), vol. 4, p. 7. See also al-Badālūrī, Ansāb (ed. al-ʿĀzm), vol. 12, p. 362: “And in the course of a Friday oration he is said to have asked the rhetorical question whether any member of the audience would prefer his messenger over his deputy.” The authors also quote the following sources: 1) al-Mazūdī, Fath (ed. P. A. Pellat), vol. 3, & 2094 (the same smā‘, minor changes); 2) Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, al-Iṣbā‘, vol. 5, p. 320; 3) Abū Dāwūd, Sunan (Cairo 1952), vol. 2, p. 514; 4) al-Maqrīzī, al-Nizā‘ wa-l-thikāhām (ed. G. Vos, Leiden, 1888), p. 29; cf. also 5) al-Jāhiz, Risāla fi l-Nabiṭa, vol. 2, pp. 16; 6) Ibn ʿAsakir, Taḥdīḥ (ed. ‘A. Q. Bādīrān and A. ʿUbayd, Damascus, 1911–1932), vol. 4, p. 7. See also al-Badālūrī, Ansāb (ed. al-ʿĀzm), vol. 12, p. 362: “And in the course of a Friday oration he is said to have asked the rhetorical question whether any member of the audience would prefer his messenger over his deputy.” The authors also quote the following sources: 1) al-Mazūdī, Fath (ed. P. A. Pellat), vol. 3, & 2094 (the same smā‘, minor changes):
It is clear from these traditions that al-Ḥajjāj was much criticized by some scholars already during his life time; this is true also of later periods and modern times.\(^{177}\) He was even regarded by some as a kāfir. It stands to reason that since he was a governor appointed by ʻAbd al-Malik, this attitude was also directed towards the caliph. Religio-political movements surely regarded al-Ḥajjāj as ʻAbd al-Malik’s instrument. One must remember that many socio-political changes made by ʻAbd al-Malik were immediately perceived by his opponents as an attack on the sacred principals of Islam. Be that as it may, the majority of scholars supported the caliph and the caliphate.

Three persons, a pious “noble” governor (Muṭarrif b. al-Mughūra), a hadith scholar, al-Rabī’ b. Khālid (both also Qurʾān readers), and another pious Qurʾān reader, decided to rebel because of al-Ḥajjāj’s “blasphemous” speeches. Now the Arabic sources often have a tendency to explain historical events by focusing on specific persons. There are many examples of this phenomenon. One well known example is the way they depict the reasons for the rebellion of Ibn al-Ash’ath himself against ʻAbd al-Malik.\(^{178}\) These three scholars took part in Ibn al-Ash’ath’s rebellion, and according to the sources quoted above, the reason for their antagonism towards the Umayyad regime and their rebellion was the specific sentence allegedly related by al-Ḥajjāj.

Hishām b. ʻAbd al-Malik is superior to the Prophet

Parallel versions of the above mentioned tradition are attributed to a different governor of al-ʻIrāq and a different caliph, e.g., Khālid b. ʻAbd Allāh al-Qasrī and Hishām b. ʻAbd al-Malik.

7) Al-Tabarī records (most probably from al-Haytham b. ʻAdī, d. 206–207/821–823 or 209/824–825) a tradition in which Khālid b. ʻAbd Allāh al-Qasrī [d. 126/743] the famous governor of al-ʻIrāq on behalf


of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik writes to the caliph describing how Ibn Shufayy, stood in front of the caliph saying to him “Commander of the Faithful, who is more distinguished in your eyes: your deputy in your family or your Messenger; the Commander of the Faithful said (continues Ibn Shufayy): But (of course) my deputy in my family; so Ibn Shufayy said: But surely, you are God’s deputy and Muḥammad is His messenger, peace be upon him…”

8) This version was recorded by al-Ṭabariz without mentioning its source, i.e., al-Haytham b. Abd al-Malik. But in a parallel tradition (with some omissions — mainly the first sentence — and important additions) recorded by al-Baladhuri he is mentioned as the latter’s direct source: amir al-mu’minin is khalīfat Allāh, and he is more distinguished in God’s eyes than His Messenger; for you are a khalīfa and Muḥammad, peace be upon him, is a messenger.”

9) Another version is recorded by Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī through the following isnād: ...ʿUmar b. Shabba [172/789–262/876] < ʿUbayd-
Khālid al-Qasrī is also reported to have delivered a similar speech in Mecca in the year 79/698–699, when he was the governor of the city on behalf of al-Walid b. ʿAbd al-Malik.186

The traditions discussed above on Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasrī's sermon in Mecca and his letter to Hishām b. Abd al-Malik; such traditions may have become a literary convention. On the other hand, the various versions of the traditions, their transmitters and the circumstances of their transmission show that the matter noted in them was mentioned and discussed before the Umayyad caliph and that they are not just literary anecdotes. Several other traditions are reported on the allegedly disrespectful (even contemptuous) attitude Khālid al-Qasrī demonstrated towards some of the most sacred places to Islam, e.g., the Ka'ba and the Zamzam well.187 These traditions are part of the extensive Arabic literature that developed in the early period (from the end of the 1st/7th century-beginning of the 2nd/8th century) on the Umayyads. A significant part of this literature was woven around the

See also Kister, “Some reports,” p. 91 (quoting the MS of al-Fākhi, Akhbār Makka [= al-Fākhi, Akhbār Makka, vol. 3, p. 60]); (Crone and Hinds, loc. cit., quoting Kister).187 Al-Isfahānī, al-Aghānī (Dār al-Kutub ed.), vol. 22, p. 16 (Zamzam); p. 17 (Mecca); Kister, loc. cit. These are traditions in the spirit of Ḥajjāj's words that reflect the frame of mind, the opinions and political-religious thinking prevalent in the Umayyad caliphate.

184 He lived in Ḥalab, where he was nominated by caliph al-Ma'mūn as the qāḍī of the town. See Ibn Hibbān, al-Thaqāf (Beirut, 1975), vol. 8, p. 432; Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Jarḥ (Beirut ed.), vol. 5, p. 404; Ibn al-Najjār, Dhayl taʾrīkh Baghdād, vol. 2, p. 120 (nominated as a qāḍī); he learned (ḥadīth) from ʿAtaʾ b. Muslim and transmitted to Umar b. Shabba; see, for example, al-Baladhurī, Ansāb (ed. Madelung), vol. 2, p. 135; Ibn Shabba, Taʾrīkh al-Madīna, vol. 4, p. 1222; Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīkh (Beirut ed.), vol. 14, p. 233; al-Mizzī, Tahdhīb (Maʿrūf ed.), vol. 6, p. 441; al-Isfahānī, al-Aghānī (Dār al-Kutub ed.), vol. 11, p. 4.


186 Al-Ṭabarī, Taʾrīkh, 2nd series, p. 1199 (Crone and Hinds, God's Caliph, p. 29, note 19):

وَفِي هِذِهِ السَّنَةِ لَوَلَّيَّ خَالِدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْفَسَرِيَّ مَكَّةَ فَيَمْكُرُ وَيَزَادُ وَذَكَرَ أَنَّ عُمَرَ بْنَ صَالِح

حَلَدَهُ مِن نَافَعٍ مُولِّيٍّ بِهِ عِزْوَةٍ قَالَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ خَالِدٌ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ يِقْلُلُ عَنْهُ كَمَا كَفَرَ عَلَى مَلِكَةٍ وَهُوَ يَعْطِبُ أَبِيَ

نَاسَ بِأَمْرِ أَعْمَامٍ أَخَافِيَةِ الرَّجُلِ عَلَى أُهْلِهِ أَقْصَى أَبَا يُطِمُّ [−].

187 Al-Isfahānī, al-Aghānī (Dār al-Kutub ed.), vol. 22, p. 16 (Zamzam); p. 17 (Mecca); Kister, loc. cit. These are traditions in the spirit of Ḥajjāj's words that reflect the frame of mind, the opinions and political-religious thinking prevalent in the Umayyad caliphate.


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The Prophet’s grave and the palace of amīr al-muʾminīn

11) A different version of the “Deputy versus Messenger” motif is recorded by Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd: “Al-Ḥajjāj delivered a sermon in al-Ḵūfa in which he mentioned the Muslims who visit the grave of the Messenger of God ʿalā ṣalʿām in al-Madīna. He said: May they perish, they merely circumambulate wood and decayed and rotten bones; is it not better for them to circumambulate the palace of Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAbd al-Malik? Do they not know that the deputy of the man is better than his messenger?” Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd records that he copied from a book entitled: كِتَاب افْتِراق هَاتِئم وَعَبِيدْ خَمْس لَأُبي الْحَمْسِيْمَيْنِ حَمْدَيْنِ بِنْ عَلِيِّ بْنْ نَصْرِ الْمَوْرُوفِ بَاْبِنِ أَبِي رَؤِيَةِ الدِّبْسِ.

So far I was not able to find any information about the book. Very little is known of its author, Ibn Abī Ruʿba who died in 320/932. It is possible that the tradition about al-Ḥajjāj’s sermon in al-Ḵūfa is also taken from the same work, but it is not clearly attested to by Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd.

188 Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ, vol. 15, p. 242:

وَخَطَبُ الْمُحَاجِينَ بِالْكُوفَةِ فَذَكَرَ الَّذِينَ يُزَوَّرُونَ فِيِ رِسْوَلِ اللَّهِ صَلِّي اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَصَلَّى مَنْ أَلْفَيْنِهِمْ قَالَ: فَكَيْنَاهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُطْعِمُونَ بِأَمَوَاتِ وَرَمَةٍ بَالَّيْةٍ هَلَا طَافَهُ بِنَصُرِ أَمَامَةِ عِبْدِ اللَّهِ أَلَّا يَلْقَوْنَ أَنْكَهَيْنَاء

Crone and Hinds, God’s Caliph, pp. 28–29, note 17 paraphrasing: “He [= al-Ḥajjāj] was also of the opinion that those who circumambulated the tomb of Muhammad in Medina should rather circumambulate the palace of ‘Abd al-Malik, since one’s deputy is [p. 29] better than one’s messenger.” They add that Ibn Abīd Rabbihi (ʿIqd, vol. 5, p. 51) “has part of this story, not the scandalous suggestion regarding ‘Abd al-Malik’s palace” see also Robinson, ‘Abd al-Malik, p. 90.


191 Several of the paragraphs between pp. 240 and 242 opens with the word ʿaṭla, which may denote that Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd quotes the work of al-Dabbās.
In this tradition a new motif is added, namely, the strong reservation of circumambulation of the grave of the Prophet. It is recorded by other sources as well, e.g.:

12) Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi who records it in a special chapter entitled “Those who claimed that al-Hajjāj was an infidel” (من زعم أن الخجاج كان كافرًا). It runs as follows: “Among the things that caused the scholars to call al-Hajjāj an infidel was his words while seeing people circumambulating the Prophet’s sal’am grave and his minbar: They circumambulate pieces of wood and decayed bones.”

As Crone and Hinds noticed, the end of the tradition about the preferred place of circumambulation is missing, but it is not because it is “scandalous” as they put it. The rest of the tradition in al-Iqd is no less “scandalous.”

Another parallel text (not mentioned by Crone and Hinds) is recorded by several sources, e.g.:

13) Al-Mubarrad (d. 286/900) explains the expression كعظم الامة in Jarir’s verses, incorporating the tradition about al-Hajjāj and the circumambulation of the Prophet’s grave.

13.1–13.2) The tradition is mentioned in other medieval works. Noteworthy is the discussion of the well-known Egyptian Shafi’i scholar, Muḥammad b. Muṣṭa al-Damār (d. 808/1405), who quotes and severely criticizes the tradition recorded in al-Mubarrad’s work. His views and arguments undoubtedly reflect the attitude of many of the Muslim scholars to the Umayyads in general and to al-Hajjāj in particular.

It is related in al-Kāmil of al-Mubarrad, that one of the reasons of the jurisconsults considering al-Hajjāj an infidel is, that he once saw some people circumambulating the chamber of the Prophet, upon which he said: “You are circumambulating the grave of the Prophet, and you say ‘Allah is sufficient for us and we do not need a master’ (وَمَا كَفَّرَ بِعَمَلِهِ الْخَجَاجُ قَوْلُهُ وَرَأَى الْآتَى يَطْلُفُونَ بِقُرْرِ سُلْطَانِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَنْ يَقُولُنَّ ‘اللَّهُ مُكْفِرُ وَلَسْتُمْ بِالْمَهْدِ’).
bulating timbers and decayed bones!” I say that they have considered him an infidel for this, because there is in these words what falsifies the statement of the Prophet; we seek refuge with God from believing that! It has been proved satisfactorily that the Prophet said: “Verily, God has caused it to be unlawful for earth (dust) to consume the bodies of the prophets.

Abū Dāwūd has extracted it, and Abū Ja’far al-Dāwūdī has mentioned this tradition and extended it by giving the statements of several witnesses, learned men, and callers to prayer—quite a wonderful extension. Al-Suhaylī states, that al-Dāwūdī was a jurisconsult and a learned man.

But it is related on the authority of, and regarding the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, that he saw al-Ḥajjāj in a dream after his death in the condition of a stinking corpse and asked him, “What has God done to you?” and he replied, “God has killed me once for every person I have slain, except in the case of Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, for in his case He has killed me seventy times.” ‘Umar then asked him, “What did you expect?” and he replied, “What all believers in the unity of God expect.” This takes away from him the charge of infidelity and proves satisfactorily that he died a believer in the unity of God. But God knows what his belief was, and also knows best the truth of it.”

‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān and Jesus

Other traditions emphasize that ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān was equal to Jesus, who is mentioned in the Qur’ān; the parallel here is to the Umayyads in general and to ‘Abd al-Malik in particular.

14) Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849–850) records the following tradition:

Mālik b. Ismā‘īl related to us saying: Ja‘far b. Ziyād [d. 165/781–782 or 167/783–84] transmitted to me from ‘Aṭā’ī

196It seems that the expression زيارة غريبة here means: and obscure, unfamiliar extension of the tradition; حديث غريب denotes a tradition that is related by one transmitter.


198A pro-Imāmī transmitter who was respected as a transmitter also by the Sunnis (he is called ṣadiq shī‘ī, or ṣāliḥ shī‘ī). He was arrested in Khurāsān by order of
b. al-Sā‘īb [d. 136/754] who said: I was sitting with Abū al-
Bukhturi al-Ta‘ū while al-Hajjāj was delivering the Friday
sermon saying: “The description and condition of Uthmān
in the eyes of God is similar to that of Jesus the son of Mary.”
He raised his head then uttered a long moan and said: [(And
remember) when Allah said: O Jesus! Lol!] “I am gathering
thee and causing thee to ascend unto Me, and I am cleans-
ing thee of those who disbelieve and I am setting those who
follow thee above those who disbelieve until the Day of Res-
urrection.” Abū al-Bukhturi said: I swear by the Lord of
the Ka‘ba, he became an unbeliever.

14.1) A parallel tradition with the same isnād is recorded by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi from ‘Atī b. al-Sā‘īb < Abū ‘l-Bukhturi.

14.2) Abū Dāwūd records in his Sunan a similar tradition but from
different transmitters and a different eye witness: “We were told by Abū Zafar ‘Abd al-Salām (d. 224/838–839) < Ja‘far [b. Sulaymān al-Dabā‘i, d. 178/794–95] < ‘Awf [b. Abī Jamīla al-‘rābī, d. 147/764–65] the ending is different: the eye witness’ report is related without expressing any moral judgment.


201Qūrān 3:55 (not completed; Pickthall’s translation).


204A famous Ba‘ra‘an scholar, who was accused of being both Qadarī and Shī‘ī; see al-Dhahabī, Mu‘tāz (Beirut, 1995), vol. 5, p. 368; Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdīb (Beirut 1404 AH), vol. 8, p. 148; al-Mizzī, Taḥdīb (Ma‘rūf ed.), vol. 22, pp. 437–440.

These traditions are part of a vast corpus asserting that the Umayyads inherited their legitimacy to rule from ‘Uthmān.\(^{206}\)

It is noteworthy that this specific Qur’ānic verse about Jesus was also used in the hadīth literature to denote Abū Bakr\(^{207}\) and ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭalīb.\(^{208}\)

The non-crystallized, primordial, and contradictory state of the Muslim prescriptive laws and rituals in the period in which the Dome of the Rock was built; the absolute rule of the caliph who wields complete political-religious authority and is the supreme decision-maker and the ultimate judge in every religious and political matter; the character of the Muslim scholars who frequented the caliph’s court and acted on behalf of the Umayyad government, all these enabled ‘Abd al-Malik to establish a uniquely sacred centre in Jerusalem.

**Conclusions**

An upsurge in research on the subject of Jerusalem after the end of the Six-Day War greatly advanced the research on “Erez Yisrael”/“Palestine” in the Muslim period in general and on Jerusalem in particular. In 1971, Sivan wrote his “The beginning of the Fadā‘il al-Quds literature”; Kister and his students Hasson and Livne initiated path-breaking research concerning “The Merits of Jerusalem” (fadā‘il al-quds) literature. Contrary to Sivan, Kister has shown that the sanctified status of Jerusalem in Islam was determined already in the first half of the 8th century. There is testimony from the first decade of the 2nd/8th century putting Mecca and Jerusalem on the same level of importance.\(^{209}\) The conclusions emerging from Kister’s studies accord with at least some of Goldziher’s conclusions. Continuing this line of work, I substantiate and develop Goldziher’s conclusions in this article. Examining both Goldziher’s and Goitein’s arguments, I was able to make use of many important sources that were not available to either scholar. These included mainly the “Literature in Praise of Jerusalem”, the monumental book of Ibn ‘Asākir, and many diverse Arab sources.

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\(^{206}\) See the exhaustive discussion of this topic by Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, pp. 31–32.


\(^{209}\) Kister, “The three mosques”; *idem*, “Tradition in praise of Jerusalem.”
The huge construction projects in Jerusalem in the Umayyad period, inspired by, and with the initiative and the active encouragement of the Umayyad caliphs, the testimonies on the ritual ceremonies in

210 The Umayyad building programme in Jerusalem included not only the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqṣā Mosque, but many other domed buildings on the Haram including the four large buildings discovered during the excavations south and west of the Haram. Nine of the Aphroditó Papyri clearly show that during the reign of al-Walid b. ʿAbd al-Malik (86/705–96/715) (and perhaps even during his father’s reign), there was widespread construction in the Haram and outside its walls. Jerusalem is mentioned in these papyri 30 times; the Mosque is mentioned 21 times (Küchler, "Moschee und Kalifenpaläste," p. 125; Morelli, "Palazzi e moschee," pp. 175–178: an annotated list of the relevant papyri). In one papyrus (London 1403, written between 709 and 714), "skilled workers and labourers for the mosque of Jerusalem and the palace <<Greek: αὐλή [of the Caliph]>>, are mentioned. The Greek transcription of amīr al-muʾāminin (Αὐλὴ τοῦ Ἀμιρᾶτος) is a completion of Bell and Küchler. It does not specifically tell that the palace is also in Jerusalem although the heading of the letter says “Concerning labourers and skilled workmen for Jerusalem” (Küchler, op. cit.: text and translation; Bell, “Translation,” Der Islam 2 (1911), p. 383; Morelli, “Palazzi e moschee,” p. 180 also believes that the palace mentioned is in Jerusalem). The Mosque of Jerusalem appears in Papyrus London 1414 several times. Küchler and Bell completed the missing words in the Greek text: “For the cost of oil and salt for the maintenance of labourers employed on the mosque of Jerusalem and the palace of the amīr al-muʾāminin. K¨u” (K¨u,” op. cit.: p. 132: Greek text, ll. 24; and 76; ibid., p. 133: translation of line 24; p. 134: translation of line 76: “Für: Kosten von Ö]l und Salz, Un terhaltskosten der Arbeiter, die sich abmüh]en an der Moschee von Jerusalem und dem Pala]st des Amīr al-Muʾāminīn”); Personens]. Monate [ ] . … [Αὐ]λὴ τοῦ Ἀμιρᾶτος; the usual short form of the Arabic term, amīr al-muʾāminin, in the papyri); Morelli, op. cit., p. 180, also believes that the palace is in Jerusalem). Papyrus London 1433, ll. 102, 154 and 202, mentions four times “The new building of Amīr al-Muʾāminin in Jerusalem” (Küchler, op. cit., p. 135: Greek text; p. 136: translation, e.g., l. 30: “Für einen Arbeiter, 12 Monate, betreffs die neue Gründung des Aυλῆ τοῦ Ἀμιρᾶτος in Jerusalem...”): Bell, op. cit., Der Islam 2 (1911), p. 370 (translated only line 30): “For I labourer for 12 months, for the new building of the amīr al-muʾāminin at Jerusalem...”). Now in the same papyrus (P. Lond. 1433), l. 286, another (different) building is mentioned “The [Pal]ace of amīr al-muʾāminin in Jerusalem.” ([Αὐ]λὴ τοῦ Amīr al-Muʾāminīn in Jerusalem...”), see Küchler, op. cit., p. 135: Greek text; l. 136: translation: “Für einen Arbeiter und die Unterhaltskosten desselben, 12 Monate, betreffs den [Pal]ast des Amīr al-Muʾāminīn in Jerusalem...” This papyrus was dated by Küchler between 706 and 707, due to the Arabic section in which the governor of Egypt, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Malik who governed Egypt between 706 and 709 is mentioned and the date of the letter (887/706–707): ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Malik who governed Egypt between 706 and 709 is mentioned and the date of the letter (887/706–707): ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Malik who governed Egypt between 706 and 709 is mentioned and the date of the letter (887/706–707): ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Malik who governed Egypt between 706 and 709 is mentioned and the date of the letter (887/706–707): ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Malik who governed Egypt between 706 and 709 is mentioned and the date of the letter (887/706–707); the term αὐλή (aulē), was translated by Bell as “palace” but see the comments of Abū ʿAlī, who argues that in several bilingual papyri where the address of the letter is written in Arabic the term αὐλή (aulē) of Amīr al-Muʾāminin is rendered in Arabic as Dār Amīr al-Muʾāminin, see Abū ʿAlī, Bardiyāy Qurrā b. Sharīk, p. 279: quoting papyri no. 1342 (see the discussion ibid., p. 280), 1362 (discussed on pp. 280–282), 1378 (discussed on p. 282), 1378 (discussed on p. 282) and 1403 (discussed on p. 277); Küchler, “Moschee und Kalifenpaläste,” p. 125 also noticed the bilingual papyri (he mentions papyri no. 1342, 1362 and 1378 and concludes that the term aulē should be translated as palace (of the Caliph), and from the examples of the papyri that mention Damascus
the Dome of the Rock and on the Haram, the abundant traditions on the Praises of Jerusalem and, among them, the specific Qur’anic verses, the historical traditions on “Umar’s activities” in Jerusalem, and particularly on the conquest of the city and the peace treaty with it, all attest to an unusual status that the first Umayyads bestowed upon Jerusalem.

On the local level it appears that the city was the administrative political center of the Palestine district (jund) for a period of several decades. Although we have no specific written testimonies on Jerusalem being the capital city of the Palestine district, these tremendous efforts that the Umayyads made in the various realms in Jerusalem attest to this.

On the general Islamic level, it seems that the intention of the Umayyads was to develop a political-religious center in Jerusalem which, if not surpassing Mecca and nullifying its sanctity, would at least equal it.

Accepting this line of thought does not contradict two additional considerations that ‘Abd al-Malik was faced with while developing Jerusalem and the Muslim “Temple Mount”: one is the connection to the Last Day and the other is the connection of the Dome of the Rock to Solomon’s temple.

In summary, the immediate reason for building the Dome of the Rock was the struggle with ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr. Nevertheless, ‘Abd al-Malik wanted to emphasize the central place of Jerusalem within the religious-political landscape of early Islam. Polemics with Christians and Christianity is emphasized in the gilded mosaic inscriptions within the Dome of the Rock, though it seems that this matter should not be isolated and turned into a decisive factor for the building of the Dome of the Rock. The picture is broader and more complex. In my view, there is no contradiction between the argument that ‘Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock on the location of Solomon’s temple as a symbol of the Last Day and of Paradise and the argument that the Dome of the Rock was built as a rival to Mecca, which at the time was under the exclusive control of the rival caliph, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr.

\footnote{\textit{and al-Fuṣṭāt}, adds Küchler. \textit{Dār Amīr al-Muʾminūn is Dār al-Imāra.} This is also accepted by Morelli, “Palazzi e moschee,” pp. 185–186. I wonder if this identification is correct. \textit{Dār al-Imāra} is the governor’s abode.}
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