

Geographical Dimensions of Islamic Jerusalem





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Edited by

Khalid El-Awaisi



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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This book first published 2008 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-84718-633-5, ISBN (13): 9781847186331

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Arabic	Transcription
ء	'
ا	a
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh

ص	s
ض	d
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	'
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w
ي	y or i

Long	آ	ā
	و	ū
	ي	ī
Doubled	وُ	uww (final form ū)
	يُ	iy (final form ī)
Diphthongs	وَ	au or aw
	يَ	ai or ay
Short	َ	a
	ُ	u

PREFACE

To many contemporary scholars, academics and even laymen *Bayt al-Maqdis* is merely a city with limits that do not go far beyond its ancient walls. Yet, in history, the existence of a region for *Bayt al-Maqdis* (IslamicJerusalem)¹ has been a long-established concept. A region that, according to many accounts such as that of al-Maqdisī, extends to cover in addition to the ancient city, many other cities, towns and villages such as Hebron, Ramla, Zarnuqah, Jaffa, Nablus, Shuwaykah, Jama'in, Jericho, Karak, Zoar and Kuseifa; thus, a region transcending current political boundaries.

The idea of a religious and spiritual region for *Bayt al-Maqdis*, IslamicJerusalem, is conversely relatively new in modern scholarship and one that is beginning to gather momentum. This concept started to resurface with research through the new field of inquiry of IslamicJerusalem Studies. Academic research is beginning to unearth facts well established in history, as well as making discoveries in this new and exciting field.

The region of IslamicJerusalem is not the only one that has been long forgotten or, at best, mixed up with other regions and their terminologies; it is only one of many to which serious scholarship has not been applied in modern times. Regions and terminologies such as the Holy Land or the Land of *Barakah* and the *Haram* regions are not, in many writings, differentiated from one another, much of the time, especially the first two terms.

Having distinct names implies specific connotations and various entities. While early writings differentiate between names, terminologies and connotations, later scholars have assumed these to overlap, and many have considered that some apply to the same entity. This led to further confusion, which is much more apparent in later writings rather than in earlier ones.

¹ IslamicJerusalem was introduced into the English language as a new terminology referring to this wide region. For a full definition, see chapter one.

This calls for the re-investigation of these Qur'anic concepts and their relationship to IslamicJerusalem. This work is an effort made in that direction; it will attempt to shed light on some of these concepts and the way they were perceived in early and later centuries, and will also look at some findings from the latest research in the field of IslamicJerusalem. Although this work does not comprehensively cover all aspects of the subject matter, it is hoped that it will lay the foundations for and raise further questions on further research and scholarship.

With the advancement of technology, we are able to map more precisely what regions we are referring to, a tool early scholars had to work without. This series of studies is a first attempt to try to map regions much talked about within monotheistic religions, however from a Muslim point of view. There have been many biblical studies into the extent and boundaries of the Promised Land and the Holy Land. Although in classical Muslim literatures such discussion has existed, in modern scholarship it scarcely exists.

This book has its origins in the sessions of the ninth IslamicJerusalem Academic conference organised by the Centre for IslamicJerusalem Studies, at the Al-Maktoum Institute in Dundee during June 2007. It is a pleasure to thank each of the contributors for initiating such interesting and intriguing discussions on the geographical dimensions and for their subsequent revisions and updates. Also many thanks to all those who assisted in the publication of this book; colleagues, students and friends. Particular thanks to Amanda Millar from Cambridge Scholars Press for her editorial guidance and comments on earlier drafts and from the Al-Maktoum Institute, Dr Maher Abu-Munshar and John Taylor for their invaluable comments and suggestions. Finally, for his continuous support to IslamicJerusalem Studies, many thanks are due to HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the Patron of the Institute.

INTRODUCTION

KHALID EL-AWAISI

In the seventh century, soon after his Prophethood, Muhammad started to refer to regions far beyond his reach. Qur'ānic verses were making reference to a city far in the north and to the regions around it. This included reference to the concepts as well as to the stories of Prophets who dwelled in its lands. In addition, a few verses highlighted the political situation in that part of the world, namely the Byzantine/Persian Wars. These references were followed by those to the Night Journey into the heart of these regions, into the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque during the Persian rule. There were also numerous Ahādīth during the Makkan period on the history and virtues of that land (El-Awaisi 2007, 88-95). These references continued after the Prophet migrated to Madinah and were translated into taking practical steps towards the region of Islamicjerusalem in particular (El-Awaisi 2005; Omar 2006).

The importance of these regions is embedded in the Muslim faith. There has, however, been little study into the geographical extents of these regions and concepts or, even more generally, into the geographies of the Qur'ān. Apart from the odd reference in the books of *Tafsīr*, *Fada'īl*, geography and history, there is a dearth of literature on the subject. Thus, these topics are much in need of research and investigation, entailing within them much that needs unravelling. One Qur'ānic concept and region has, however, been well documented and mapped out for practical juristical reasons, that is, the Ḥaram of Makkah.

Holy sites and regions

It is well known that Islam especially reveres three areas on earth, Makkah, Madinah and Islamicjerusalem. Each housing a place of worship, where rewards are multiple. To many, the existence of a region for the Ḥaram of Makkah is understandable since it had clear-cut boundaries of its extent well before Islam, and these had been reinstated

by Prophet Muhammad and his companions after the conquest of Makkah (8AH/ 630CE). The extent of the boundaries of the Ḥaram of Makkah are literally set in stone; there are nearly a thousand milestones, denoting the limit in every direction (Dhāish 1995). This was because the Ḥaram had specific rulings and restrictions within its sanctuary; these included restrictions on fighting, hunting, cutting trees, amongst other things. The case in Madinah was slightly different, as the extent of the Ḥaram of Madinah was delineated by Prophet Muhammad himself after he settled there (1AH/ 622CE). He specified areas that constituted the outer limits in some directions; there were fewer restrictions and rulings within this newly founded sanctuary.

In the case of IslamicJerusalem, the Prophet planned and began implementing its take-over; he talked of many of the regions around it, but never reached them with his companions. In some of the prophetic traditions it is related that he clearly noted the existence of boundaries for these regions – as is the case of the Aḥādīth narrating the whereabouts of the burial of Prophet Moses *a stone's throw away* from the Holy Land (al-Bukhārī 2000 v.1, 250; Muslim 2000 v.2, 1014).

It is thus clear that these revered areas in Islam had their own distinct religious/spiritual regions. Moreover, around IslamicJerusalem, there are various regions not only one. And unlike the regions of Makkah and Madinah, these did not have the restrictions as those in place in the Arabian Peninsula; they were regions of holiness and Barakah and would thus be discussed more in terms of their virtues and merits.

IslamicJerusalem

Names of towns, cities and regions change from time to time, due to various factors and reasons. This has also been the case for IslamicJerusalem, which has had its own share of name-changing throughout history. Since the Muslims took over the region in the seventh century CE, various names have been attributed to the city and the region. Muslims in the early period continued to use the Arabised version of the name Aelia for some time, together with the name Bayt al-Maqdis. These were gradually replaced by al-Quds, which was officially introduced in the Abbasid period, specifically in the reign of al-Ma'mūn who minted a coin bearing the new name in 217AH/ 832CE. This became the most popular name; moreover, during the Crusades the word

Sharif was affixed to it and it became popular in both the Mamluk and Ottoman periods (El-Awaisi 2007).

When any of the names of Islamic Jerusalem are mentioned, whether *Bayt al-Maqdis*, *al-Quds*, *al-Quds al-Sharif*, most people think only of a small part of it, namely “the Walled City”. This is due to the importance of the Walled City and the religious monuments within it. However, there was another dimension to these names classically, one which has been neglected in modern scholarship, namely, reference to the region as one of the connotations of these names. This is a region that spans a large area, consisting of many cities, towns and villages. Some names have had various additions, such as *Arḍ and Arāḍi* (land/s), annexed to explicitly denote the connotation of a region. However, for much of the time the name would be used on its own to denote the region. The term Islamic Jerusalem has been coined, as one word, to introduce this concept into the English language and try to resolve this confusion, as is explained in chapter one. The concept itself in the early sources is dealt with in great detail in chapter two where many examples are drawn from the sources, showing its abundant use. Chapter five also touches on the usage of the names in the works of a specific writer from the late Mamluk period, Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī.

The Holy Land

The name *al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasah*, the Holy Land, is mentioned once in the Qur’ān and at various times in the tradition of Prophet Muhammad. In the early literature, it referred to a region more or less close to that of the region of Islamic Jerusalem. This can be deduced from the early accounts that specify its extent in some directions. Although linguistically *al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasah* shares much with the root words of *Bayt al-Maqdis* and *al-Quds* in Arabic, it has been used independently (El-Awaisi 2007, 51-77). However, due to the overlap in the terrains and having similar boundaries in various directions, one may ask whether both entities are the same. This is a topic in need of further research and investigation.

Moreover, later sources confuse the Holy Land with another entity, presuming them to be one and the same. This was so with the Land of Barakah, as is evident in some of the later sources especially from the

Mamluk¹ and Ottoman periods. However, there are differences in their extent in the early sources. This is in addition to the linguistic factor, which denotes that everything that is *Muqaddas* (Holy) is also *Mubarak* (Blessed); but not everything that is *Mubarak* would be *Muqaddas*. Thus the Holy Land is part of the Land of Barakah but not vice versa (El-Awaisi 2007, 55-77).

The Land of Barakah

An entity, of which IslamicJerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque are a central part, is the Land of Barakah. Reference to this region is made five times in the Qurʾān. Again, as with the Holy Land, there has been no Prophetic Ḥadīth delineating its exact extent. Thus many exegetists have given various opinions on the matter, mostly arguing it is the region of Historical Syria (al-Shām). Moreover, contemporary understanding of the word *Hamlab* “surrounded by” (Qurʾān 17:1) sheds new light on the classical understanding of the extent of this area and the radiation of Barakah. This would mean that the Barakah extends in a circular motion covering areas besides al-Shām, extending into parts of Egypt and the Northern parts of Arabia. This idea, of the sacred hierarchy expressed in the Circle Theory of IslamicJerusalem, discussed in detail in chapter six, draws further conclusions regarding the extension of Muslim conquests and their centres.

The centre, Al-Aqsa

Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, Al-Aqsa Mosque, has its share of confusion; again, this occurs mainly in the later stages of Muslim rule. The name Al-Aqsa Mosque has been used in various connotations, the most famous of which reduces it to a single structure rather than the large enclave it actually refers to. This is clearly evident when making comparisons between early and late sources. While the former are precise in the use of the name, the latter muddle its usage, reducing it to less than 3% of the area it refers to. Not only this, the introduction of borrowed terminologies from the sacred sites in the Arabian Peninsula only adds to the confusion.

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¹ Mujir al-Dīn al-Hanbalī is among those who confuse the Holy Land with the Land of Barakah, see chapter five.

The reduction of the name al-Aqsa to structures built during the Umayyad period considerably narrows down the idea of al-Aqsa Mosque. Both the Dome of the Rock and al-Jāmi' al-Aqṣā were only a fraction of the Umayyad work in al-Aqsa Mosque. The Mosque itself was in existence well before the constructions of these two inside al-Aqsa Mosque's enclave. Thus, when reference is made to al-Aqsa Mosque, this does not refer to a single structure within this compound, rather it includes both the Dome of the Rock and al-Jāmi' al-Aqsa amongst the tens of other historical monuments erected throughout history within it. Many would refer to this today as *al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, the Noble Sanctuary; however, this terminology –as alluded to earlier– was borrowed in later periods from the sacred sites in the Arabian Peninsula with their loaded terminologies and mistakenly attributed to sites in Islamic Jerusalem. The introduction of this terminology, while adding to the confusion already in existence, resolved the reference to the larger area of the Mosque. The use of this borrowed terminology was rejected by many scholars of the time (see chapters four and five), but found popularity amongst the masses and was included in certain official governmental titles such as *Nāẓir al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn*, the inspector of al-Aqsa Mosque and al-Ibrahimi Mosque (Hebron), in later periods.

Nevertheless, there have been in existence many links between the regions in Arabia and those around Islamic Jerusalem. The early literature shows strong links between the buildings of the Ka'bah and al-Aqsa Mosque. This is taken a step further in chapter three, which looks at the physical relationship between these two holy places. This idea of a link is forged further when a comparison is struck between the three Mosques in Makkah, Madīnah and Islamic Jerusalem and their direct relationship to the regions around them –and the similarities and differences between these regions– as is discussed in chapter four.

An investigation of terminologies and names is very crucial in understanding their context and meaning. In order to better understand names and terminologies, it is best to revert to their original uses. This will give greater insights into actual meanings and characteristics. In the chapters of this book, by reinvestigating some of these issues, new understandings of these concepts are achieved.

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CHAPTER ONE

ISLAMICJERUSALEM A NEW CONCEPT AND DEFINITIONS

ABD AL-FATTAH EL-AWAISI

As an essential part of introducing Islamicjerusalem, it is important to be clear on what is meant by this new terminology; and a working definition needs to be established. A number of questions need to be raised. Is Islamicjerusalem the same as Jerusalem the city? What sort of Jerusalem are we talking about? Is it simply the area of al-Aqsa Mosque? (This is only one fifth of the Old Walled City.) Is it the Old Walled city of Jerusalem, East Jerusalem, West Jerusalem, Greater Jerusalem, the whole of Palestine or part of Palestine? These all address the question of a definition from a contemporary context. It is important however to link this to a historical context for a definition to be produced.

In addition to introducing new definitions of Islamicjerusalem and Islamicjerusalem Studies, this chapter discusses the background of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies, and also highlights some of the latest research on Islamicjerusalem.

Background¹

The establishment of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem was a journey that took nearly a decade, 1994-2003, adopting the principle of gradual development and travelling through several stages. It also went through a number of stages on the road to its establishment through an integrated programme which included a number of new academic initiatives and practical steps which include both developing institutional framework and the modes of delivery of the new field.

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¹ This background of the new field of inquiry is based on Al-Ahlah 2004.

As part of his vision for the new field, the founder (author) paid particular attention to establishing the concept of IslamicJerusalem Studies in the building of its foundations. From the initial stages he was keen to provide practical steps to deliver the essential contributions of knowledge in the new field to the world of learning, and to encourage young researchers to specialise in this field. These have been delivered mainly through organising an annual international academic conference on IslamicJerusalem Studies (ten to date), the *Journal of IslamicJerusalem Studies*, and the securing of a good number of postgraduate research studentships in IslamicJerusalem Studies. These elements were very significant in creating the new frame of reference for the study of IslamicJerusalem. Indeed, both the annual conference and the *Journal* have successfully “highlighted the gap in the available literature” on IslamicJerusalem Studies, provided the “necessary knowledge” to develop the field, and have become an international discussion forum for scholars who are interested in the field (Al-Ahlas 2004, 35).

Other serious practical steps were needed to institutionalise the development, integration and promotion of the field. These were initiated by developing the first new unit entitled “Islamic Jerusalem”, which the author taught at undergraduate level at the University of Stirling. This unit has been developed into a taught Master's programme at Al-Maktoum Institute. Indeed, to pioneer the field, Al-Maktoum Institute embodied the founder's vision by inaugurating the first and unique taught Master's programme in IslamicJerusalem Studies worldwide. After the establishment of Al-Maktoum Institute came the creation of its first academic post, the first chair in IslamicJerusalem Studies. The Centre for IslamicJerusalem Studies was founded to focus all its efforts, and to play a key role in developing the new field. This was a natural progressive development aimed at structuring the research and teaching of IslamicJerusalem Studies.

Shaikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum's passion and commitment ensured the development of this new field. In its initial and crucial stage of development, Shaikh Hamdan played an essential part by providing scholarships for young scholars to pursue IslamicJerusalem Studies at postgraduate level. His second major involvement was when he established Al-Maktoum Institute. Aisha al-Ahlas argued that the “main reason behind the success” of establishing the new field of inquiry of IslamicJerusalem Studies was the “uniquely close relationship between the

two elements, knowledge and power” (Al-Ahlas 2004, 80). This formal model of relationship between ruler and scholar is absent in Arab and Muslim countries. Indeed, as stated in the *Dundee Declaration for the Future Development of the Study of Islam and Muslims* on 18 March 2004, one of “the crises in the contemporary Muslim world is the absence of co-operation between knowledge and power.”

Definitions

In the first few years of establishing the new field, a number of Arab and Muslim scholars were very concerned about this new terminology, especially the word “Islamic”. Their main worry was that the use of this word could open up hostility and non-acceptance by some Western scholars. At that time, the author's main counter-argument was that, without the term Islamic, the whole terminology would lose its niche, meaning and definition. In addition, if it were to be only Jerusalem without the term Islamic, which Jerusalem would we be talking about? There were also already many researches and teaching programmes in Jerusalem Studies which meant that our contribution to knowledge would be very limited. However, Islamicjerusalem opened up a new area of specialisation with a new frame of reference. Probably the term Islamic could be the right term to shock, cover new ground, promote serious dialogue and initiate debates that may shed light on new lines of explanation and new horizons of critical thinking.

After the initial research on ‘Umar's Assurance of Safety to the people of Aelia, the author started from 2000 to develop his new findings. In 2004 this helped to define both Islamicjerusalem and Islamicjerusalem Studies. Indeed, ‘Umar's Assurance was the jewel of the first Muslim *Fath* (i.e., introducing new stage and vision) of Aelia, and the beacon for developing Islamicjerusalem's unique and creative vision and nature.

Islamicjerusalem

Aisha al-Ahlas argued that the fifth international academic conference on Islamicjerusalem Studies held on 21 April 2003 was “a turning point” in the history of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies (Al-Ahlas 2004, 32). Although he was the one who in 1994 had invented this new terminology of Islamicjerusalem, a coherent definition was not possible when the author was trying, especially between 2000 and 2005,

to come to an understanding of what he specifically meant by Islamicjerusalem. This is due to the complex nature of the concept.

On 21 April 2003 in the fifth international academic conference on Islamicjerusalem “Islamicjerusalem: Prophetic Temples and al-Aqsa Mosque Demystifying Realities and Exploring Identities”, the author presented a keynote speech on “Exploring the identity of Islamicjerusalem”. Here he publicly admitted that “It took me nearly three years to come to the working definition which I would like to present to you today”. He added “We need to start with a working definition. So, what do we mean by Islamicjerusalem? ...”.

Although the author did not at that time present his final definition of Islamicjerusalem, his presentation contained the key elements: “There are three elements of this working definition. Its geographical location (land), its people (i.e.: who live or used to live there) and its vision to administer or to rule that land and its people. It is not possible to separate these three elements as they are interlinked. In addition, they are linked with their historical context.” (For the author, if geography is the theatre, history is the play) For the first time, he argued that Islamicjerusalem is not a mere city or another urban settlement, but a region which includes several cities, towns and villages. From this definition, it can be seen that Islamicjerusalem is to be described as a region with three key interlinked elements. Identifying the centre of the *Barakah* led him to develop a new significant innovative theory, “the *Barakah* Circle Theory of Islamicjerusalem”.² This theory is based on new interpretations of the core Muslim sources and history. He also made the same point when he presented his public lecture at the Academy of Islamic Studies at the University of Malaya on 24 September 2004. However, what is presented here is the revised definition which takes into consideration the discussions the author has had since then, and the new definition of Islamicjerusalem Studies.

Islamicjerusalem is a new terminology for a new concept, which may be translated into the Arabic language as *Bayt al-Maqdis*. It can be fairly and eventually characterised and defined as a unique region laden with a rich historical background, religious significances, cultural attachments, competing political and religious claims, international interests and various aspects that affect the rest of the world in both historical and

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² See chapter six.

contemporary contexts. It has a central frame of reference and a vital nature with three principal intertwined elements: its geographical location (land and boundaries), its people (population), and its unique and creative inclusive vision, to administer that land and its people, as a model for multiculturalism³.

The term *Bayt al-Maqdis* has been used in the past in both core and early Muslim narratives and sources to refer to the Aelia region (Al-Tel 2003, 291). It may be claimed that Prophet Muhammad was the first to use the term *Bayt al-Maqdis* to refer to that region. Indeed he used both terms, Aelia and *Bayt al-Maqdis*, in many of his traditions. However, one can argue that the Arabs before the advent of Islam may also have used the same term to refer to the same region. Although the Prophet did use *Bayt al-Maqdis*, the author cannot be certain who was the first to use the term⁴.

The word-for-word translation of the Arabic term *Bayt al-Maqdis* could be “the Holy House”. This might be understood from a theological point of view, but it would definitely be difficult to understand from historical and geographical contexts. In addition, the use of the term *Bayt al-Maqdis* does not represent the definition which has been presented in this section. This is especially true after it became obvious that IslamicJerusalem is a new concept which carries historical, geographical, religious, cultural, and political backgrounds. In addition, it is also not only al-Aqsa Mosque nor the Walled City of Jerusalem, as some outdated arguments might suggest. Indeed, it is not just a city nor yet another urban settlement, but a region which includes several villages, towns, and cities which has an inclusive multicultural vision. In short, the new terminology of IslamicJerusalem cannot be understood without placing it in historical, geographical and religious contexts.

However, the terminology IslamicJerusalem was a new concept which appeared and was used in its comprehensive sense for the first time originally in the English language by this author, as has been documented,

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³ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, terminology means a “set of terms relating to a subject”; term (s) means “a word or phrase used to describe a thing or to express an idea”; concept means “an abstract idea”; abstract means “having to do with ideas or qualities rather than physical or concrete things”; nature means “the typical qualities or character of a person, animal, or thing”; and vital means “absolutely necessary”.

⁴ The use of this terminology *Bayt al-Maqdis* needs further research.

characterised and defined in this chapter. It should be noted that IslamicJerusalem is one word not two separate words, i.e. Islamic and Jerusalem. It should also be made clear that IslamicJerusalem is not the same as Jerusalem or Islamic Quds, *al-Quds al-Islamiyyah*. It is also different from Muslim Jerusalem as in Jewish Jerusalem and Christian Jerusalem. The historical period when the Muslims ruled IslamicJerusalem for several centuries should be called Muslim Jerusalem and not IslamicJerusalem. IslamicJerusalem is a new concept, whereas Muslim Jerusalem refers to the periods when Muslims ruled IslamicJerusalem. To illustrate this point, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb's *Fath* of the region is the first Muslim *Fath* of IslamicJerusalem. Indeed, this should also apply to the later Muslim period up to 1917 and to any Muslim rule of IslamicJerusalem in the future. In addition, contemporary Muslim Jerusalem is shaped in part by dialogue with the concept of IslamicJerusalem, the classical and modern history of Muslims, and in part by response to external interests and influences in the region. Accordingly, contemporary Muslims seek to relate their heritage in Muslim Jerusalem from the concept of IslamicJerusalem and the Muslim past to the radical situation of today.

It is worth mentioning that, since its launch in the winter of 1997, the *Journal of IslamicJerusalem Studies* has also carried the Arabic term *Al-Quds al-Islamiyyah* or Islamic Quds. However, the author's new findings on 'Umar's Assurance of Safety to the people of Aelia have led to a change in the use of that Arabic term. The change of the Arabic title of the *Journal of IslamicJerusalem Studies* from *Al-Quds al-Islamiyyah* to *Bayt al-Maqdis* occurred in the summer 2000 issue. This was the same issue of the *Journal* which published the author's article on 'Umar's Assurance in both the English and Arabic languages.

The last part of the definition has been partly borrowed from the political science theory of the three elements of any state, but replaces the concept of sovereignty with the vision of inclusivity and plurality of IslamicJerusalem. Indeed, this unique creative vision of IslamicJerusalem is more important than the issue of sovereignty in the case of IslamicJerusalem. It could be argued that the final product is normally the issue of sovereignty. However, the agenda for IslamicJerusalem should not be the desire to achieve colonial goals of ruling lands and people which could be based either on economic ambitions or on racist nationalist and theological claims, or on any other interests and claims. If there is no vision, or a vision of exclusivity, in IslamicJerusalem,

sovereignty would naturally lead internally to oppression, divisions in society and its communities, and externally to the involvement of external powers to try to resolve these internal troubles and problems, which would lead to instability and barriers to the steady progress and prosperity of the region. Indeed, the unique aspect of IslamicJerusalem is highlighted through its vision, which presents a model for peaceful co-existence and a way for people from different religious and cultural backgrounds to live together in an environment of multiculturalism and religious and cultural engagement, diversity and tolerance.

This understanding of IslamicJerusalem as a model for multiculturalism was presented by the author, for the first time, in his public lecture on “IslamicJerusalem as a Model for Multiculturalism” at the Academy of Islamic Studies at the University of Malaya on 24 September 2004. It was based on the findings of his research on ‘Umar’s Assurance in 2000.

IslamicJerusalem Studies

The sixth international academic conference on IslamicJerusalem Studies organised on 31 May 2004 celebrated the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the new field of inquiry of IslamicJerusalem Studies. This was another significant event in the history of the new field. Indeed, in his keynote speech, the founder presented for the first time his definition of IslamicJerusalem Studies. However, what is presented here is the revised definition of IslamicJerusalem Studies, which has taken into consideration more recent discussions and the new definition of IslamicJerusalem.

IslamicJerusalem Studies can be fairly eventually characterised and defined as a new branch of human knowledge based on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. It aims to investigate all matters related to the IslamicJerusalem region, explore and examine its various aspects, and provide a critical analytic understanding of the new frame of reference, in order to identify the nature of IslamicJerusalem and to understand the uniqueness of this region and its effects on the rest of the world in both historical and contemporary contexts.

Indeed, IslamicJerusalem Studies is a field of inquiry which covers several disciplines, such as the study of Islam and Muslims, history and archaeology, art and architecture, geography and geology, environment and politics, and other related disciplines. Accordingly, it has

interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches which include historical and theological, theoretical and conceptual, empirical and cultural approaches. The new field also adopts the policy of escaping the trap of reacting to others and trying to engage with them through creating a new agenda, dialogue and debate on the subject which will lead to more constructive dialogue between scholars in several disciplines.

The new field will not only provide an understanding of IslamicJerusalem but will examine the new frame of reference within which Muslims approach IslamicJerusalem. Several questions will be key to addressing this point: What are the reasons for Muslims having close links to and concern with IslamicJerusalem? What is the significance of IslamicJerusalem to Islam and to Muslims? Does IslamicJerusalem have any special status compared with any other region?

In-depth discussion of the various aspects and dimensions of IslamicJerusalem will open up new horizons for those interested in understanding its vision, nature and the reasons for its distinctness from other regions. For example, the study of the inclusive vision of IslamicJerusalem should not only be restricted to its people's religions and cultures, it should also include "equal measures" of the roles of its two genders, male and female. A young promising Egyptian scholar, Sarah Hassan, argues that:

Women as much as men left their marks in the beginning of the Muslim history of, and the physical attachment to, IslamicJerusalem, and both genders played a role in asserting its inclusiveness to religions and genders. [Only] when this crucial element of inclusiveness is sufficiently taken into account, can IslamicJerusalem become a model for "multiculturalism" in practice (Hassan 2005, 69).

As "gender" has become "a useful category of historical analysing" (Scott 1999, 28-50), the author agrees with Sarah Hassan's argument that "the usage of gender as a tool of analysing both its (IslamicJerusalem) past and present is a necessity for the completion and advancement of this new field of inquiry (of IslamicJerusalem Studies)".

In order to demonstrate this inclusive vision, there is a need to use gender as a tool of analysis in approaching the study of IslamicJerusalem through examining the active role played by Muslim women and their vital contributions in underpinning and demonstrating the significance of

IslamicJerusalem. This calls for a re-examination of the interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses, the Aḥādīth that were narrated, and the Muslim juridical rulings that were made by Muslim women and compare them with those made by Muslim men regarding IslamicJerusalem. Also Muslim women's participation should be compared and their role reinstated in the making of IslamicJerusalem history in all its periods. For example, Sarah Hassan claims of the Mother of Believers, Ṣafīyyah Bint Ḥuḡayy Ibn Akḥṭab that her “life story in general, and her visit to IslamicJerusalem in particular, illustrate vividly, how the whole process of negotiating her Jewish background and her Muslim religion culminates in IslamicJerusalem” (Hassan 2005, 54).⁵

In addition, this new field could be argued as consolidating the Qur'ānic, Ḥadīth and Muslim historical disciplines by shedding light on new lines of explanation. Numerous verses revealed about IslamicJerusalem in the Qur'ān, and about the frequency with which the Prophet spoke about IslamicJerusalem (El-Awaisi 1998, 49), lead one to argue that the new field has revealed greater insights into several disciplines such as the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the Aḥādīth. In addition, it has clarified several contradicting historical events and resolved a number of problematic historical issues.

Finally, one could argue that a definition should be short, precise and to the point, yet these definitions of IslamicJerusalem are very long. However, what has been provided for the first time is a scholarly presentation of what can be fairly eventually characterised and defined of IslamicJerusalem and its field. So the definition is not only the definition but also the characteristics of these definitions. Moreover, these definitions which appear for the first time in this format try to shock, confuse, and throw doubt on some of what has been taken for granted in the past by scholars representing various schools of thought, trends, and approaches. Such definitions also aim to raise questions and provide researchers and scholars in the field with the key aspects of IslamicJerusalem.

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⁵ In the conclusion, Sarah Hassan presented her dissertation as “merely the cornerstone for a whole range of possible further gender studies on IslamicJerusalem. The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches that characterise IslamicJerusalem Studies must be utilised in further discussions and examinations of gender in IslamicJerusalem.” (Hassan 2005, 69).

Although these definitions are the author's most important contributions to the field, they should be considered as working definitions, to set the scene for the field's future development. They by no means claim to be theological or divine definitions which cannot be changed or developed. They are, as in the case of IslamicJerusalem Studies, characterised and defined as a new “branch of human knowledge”. Indeed, there are human explanations and interpretations of new concepts and terminology which are continually subject to change and development based on the latest scholarly research in the field.

Latest Research on IslamicJerusalem Studies

Al-Maktoum Institute has developed unique teaching programmes, based on current and progressive research, which take into consideration the needs and preferences of our local, national and international students, so that they can appreciate and understand the various schools of thought within a specific line of study. This has produced waves of postgraduate students with a first Master's degree in IslamicJerusalem Studies⁶, students who hopefully now have a thorough grounding in the new field.

In addition, the Institute has trained qualified students and created a team of young scholars in a variety of disciplines in IslamicJerusalem Studies and has conducted high quality research either at taught Master or PhD levels. For example, the following list contains some of the latest research on IslamicJerusalem Studies:

1. Othman Ismael al-Tel wrote his PhD thesis (2002) on *The first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem): A critical analytical study of the early Islamic historical narrations and sources*. (July 2003)
2. Haithem Fathi Al-Ratrout wrote his PhD thesis (2002) on *The architectural development of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Islamic Jerusalem in the early Islamic period: Sacred architecture in the shape of the “Hoby”*.
3. Maher Younes Abu-Munshar wrote his PhD thesis (2003) on *A historical study of Muslim treatment of Christians in Islamic Jerusalem at the time of Umar Ibn al-Khattab and Salah al-Din with special reference to the Islamic values of justice*. (Nov 2003)

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⁶ The total number to date is twenty six.

4. Mohammad Roslan Mohammad Nor wrote his PhD thesis on *The significance of Islamic Jerusalem in Islam: Quranic and Hadith perspectives*. (Dec 2005)
5. Aminurraasyid Yatiban wrote his Master's dissertation (2003) on *The Islamic concept of sovereignty: Islamic Jerusalem during the first Islamic conquest as a case study*. He also wrote his PhD thesis on *Muslim understandings of the concept of Al-Siyada (sovereignty): an analytical study of Islamic Jerusalem from the first Muslim conquest until the end of the first Abasid period (16-264 AH/ 637-877CE)* (April 2006).
6. Ra'id Jabareen wrote his PhD thesis on *Muslim juristic rulings of Islamic Jerusalem with special reference to Ibadat in Al-Aqsa Mosque: A critical comparative study* (April 2006).
7. Khalid Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi wrote his Master's dissertation (2003) on *The Geographical boundaries of Islamic Jerusalem*. He also wrote his PhD thesis on *Mapping Islamic Jerusalem: The geographical extent of the land of Bayt al-Maqdis, the Holy Land and the Land of Barakah* (Aug 2006).
8. Fatimatu Zahra' Abd Rahman wrote her Master's dissertation (2004) on *Political, social and religious changes in Islamic Jerusalem from the first Islamic conquest until the end of Umayyad period (637 to 750CE): An analytical study*. She is now writing her PhD thesis on *The Muslim concept of change: An analytical study of the political, social and economic changes in Islamic Jerusalem from the first Muslim conquest till the end of the Fatimid period (637-1099CE)*.
9. Abdallah Ma'rouf Omar wrote his Master's dissertation (2005) on *Towards the conquest of Islamic Jerusalem: the three main practical steps taken by Prophet Muhammad – Analytical study*. He is now writing his PhD thesis on *The Prophet's plan for Islamic Jerusalem*.
10. Mahmoud Mataz Kazmouz wrote his Master's dissertation (2006) on *The Ottoman implementation of the vision of Islamic Jerusalem as a model for multiculturalism with a special reference to Sultan Suleiman I, the magnificent (1520 – 1566)*. He is now writing his PhD thesis on *Islamic Jerusalem as a model for multiculturalism*.

11. Aisha Muhammad Ibrahim Al-Ahlas wrote her Master's dissertation (2003) on *Islamic Research Academy (ISRA) 1994-2003: background, activities and achievements with special reference to the new field of inquiry of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*.
12. Sarah Mohamed Sherif Abdel-Aziz Hassan wrote her Master's dissertation (2005) on *Women: active agents in Islamising⁷ Islamicjerusalem from the Prophet's time until the end of the Umayyad period*.
13. Ramona Ahmed Ibrahim wrote her Master's dissertation (2005) on *Islamicjerusalem as a model of conflict resolution: a case study of the negotiations between Salab al-Din and Richard the Lionheart (1191–1192CE)*.
14. Fadi Al-Rabi wrote his Master's dissertation (2007) on *Islamicjerusalem the First Qiblah*.

In short, with determination and clear vision the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies was founded, together with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, and a new frame of reference on Islamicjerusalem was established. Through the establishment of Islamic Research Academy (ISRA), the founder (author) planned that research and scholarship take place in building the foundation stones of his vision for the field. In addition, through taking practical steps, he institutionalised the development, integration and promotion of the new field within academia, especially within the British higher education establishments.

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⁷ The author strongly disagrees with the usage of this terminology, “Islamising Islamicjerusalem”, in the context of Sarah's dissertation. Indeed, it goes against the recent historical findings, the historical nature of Islamicjerusalem, and its vision at the time under discussion in her dissertation. After she submitted her dissertation, the author felt bound to discuss this issue with Sarah at length. He also raised the point that, on examination of the dissertation, it was revealed that she did not mean “Islamising Islamicjerusalem”. In addition, he pointed out that she used phrases such as “underpinning the significance of Islamicjerusalem”, “demonstrating the significance of Islamicjerusalem”, “making the significance of Islamicjerusalem”, and “developing the significance of Islamicjerusalem”. Sarah agrees that this is not the appropriate terminology to use in this context.

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