

The First Islamic Conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem)

**A Critical Analytical Study of the Early Islamic Historical Narratives
and Sources**

By

**Othman Ismael Al-Tel
BA, MA. Islamic History**

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I certify that this thesis is the true and accurate version of thesis approved by the examiners.

Signed... Date... 19.10.2002...
(Director of Studies).

Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to find some concerted scientific historical explanation and interpretation of the many questions which have arisen concerning the reasons behind the inaccuracies and contradictions in the early Islamic narratives and sources with regard to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem). The study attempts to establish new evidence and to develop new evidence for an academic debate concerning the early Islamic history of Aelia. It examines the historical evidence of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia by critically analysing the early historical narratives and sources as well as examining the historical background of some important narrators who related these accounts. It also critically examines the topography and geographical boundaries of the Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) region in order to define its true historical boundaries. These geographical boundaries later become most useful in finding plausible explanations for the reasons behind the inaccuracies in the early Islamic sources regarding many issues relating to the first Islamic conquest.

In order to provide more support for an accurate picture of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) the study further analyses the history of Aelia beginning from the start of the first Islamic conquests in Syria in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D until the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region in 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. This is done in two ways. First, it examines early narratives in order to accurately define the period of time that the Muslim army spent besieging the walled part of Aelia. Secondly, it endeavours to explain and clarify the reasons behind the uncertainty and inconsistency in the identity of the military leader who carried out the siege operation. This has been clearly done by critically analysing the relevant narrations and defining the accurate identity of the

military leaders who lead the conquest of Aelia and dates of the conquest. Further support of the view taken in the basis are provided by discussing the true reason behind 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb first historic visit to Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), analysing the early narrations and sources, linking the reasons mentioned therein with the surrounding contemporary circumstances and explaining the reasons for the inaccuracies of the Islamic sources and accounts. It further highlights the reasons behind the different visits of 'Umar's to Syria and his activities in each visit, and also examined the attitude of Aelia people towards the first Islamic conquest in the light of 'Umar's Assurance of Safety (*amān*) to its people. Lastly, the study examines the early Muslims organisation and administration of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) as well as the clear Islamic interest in the region.

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Convert to Western Calendar

As most of the references to the Islamic conquest are dated according to the Islamic Calendar, the researcher has used the Web Page:

<http://www2.cs.pitt.edu/~tawfig/convert/> to convert them to the Western calendar.

Arabic Transliteration Scheme

The following table shows the system which I have followed in transliterating the letters of 'Arabic alphabet.

ث th	ت t	ب b	ء 'e
د d	خ kh	ح ḥ	ج j
س s	ز z	ر r	ذ dh
ط ṭ	ض ḍ	ص ṣ	ش sh
ف f	غ gh	ع 'e	ظ ḏ
م m	ل l	ك k	ق q
ي y	و w	ه h	ن n
Short Vowels:	َ a	ِ i	ُ u
Long Vowels:	آ ā	إ ī	ؤ ū
Diphthongs:	وَ aw	يَ ay	

Note: َ a final form, at construct form a

Dedication



This Ph.D is dedicated to *His Highness Shaikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum*, the Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Minister of Finance and Industry of United Arab Emirates, for his generous financial support throughout the duration of this work. Words cannot adequately express how vital his support has been to the completion of this thesis.

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Introduction

The first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) in *Jumādā first or second* (March or April), 16 A.H/ 637 A.D, is regarded as a major turning point in history. The significance of this event not only highlights the significance of Jerusalem in Islam, but also its importance in the traditions of the followers of Judaism and Christianity as well. The first Islamic conquest enabled these groups to live together in a holy place, i.e. Jerusalem, under one rule for the first time despite the destruction, killing and displacement that had characterised Aelia's history until then.

Despite the importance of Aelia's (Islamic Jerusalem) history in the early Islamic period, it still has a major negative impact on Islamic studies in the light of the lack of Muslim researchers writing in this important period. In the few attempts which have been made by some Arab and Muslim researchers to study the history of Islamic Jerusalem, their work has tended to cover long periods, in particular until the Crusades, or the history of Jerusalem in the early Islamic period in very short studies. In addition, some of these writers have limited themselves to specific topics, usually the holy aspects.¹ Furthermore, most of the few Arabic and Islamic studies relating to the period of the

¹See: Al-'Azmi, 'Awād Mājid. *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Quds* (Baghdād, 1972). Jāsir, Shafīq. *Tārīkh al-Quds wa al-'Alāqāt Bayn al-Muslimīn wa al-Masyhiyya fihā mundhū al-Fatt h al-Islāmy Hattā al- Hurūb al-Salyībiyya* (Mat ābi' al-Iymān, 'Ammān, 2 nd. ed, 1989). 'Abdullah, Muhammad Ahmad. *Bayt al-Maqdis min al-'Ahd al-Rashidy wa Hattā al-Dawla al-Ayyūbiyya* (Da'irat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'un al-Islāmiyya, al-Quds, 1982). Al-Durī, 'Abd al-'Azīz. *Jerusalem in the early Islamic Period: 7-11 th Centuries A.D* in al-'Asālī, Kāmil Jamīl (ed), *Jerusalem in History* (Scorpion Publishing, Esses, 1989). Al-Durī, 'Abd al-'Azīz. *Fikrat al-Quds fī al-Islām*. Al-Mū'tamar al-Tārīkhī al-Thālith li Bilād al-shām, Filastīn. (Jordan University, 'Ammān, 1980). 'Ārif al-'Ārif. *Al-Mufassal fī Tharīkh al-Quds* (Al-Quds, 1961). El-'Awaisī. *'Umar's Assurance*, op. cit. Al-Qudā, Zakariyyā. *Mu'āhadat fatih Bayt al-Maqdis: Al-'Uhdā al-'Umarīyya*, al-Mu'tamar al-Dawlī al-Rābi' li Tārīkh Bilād al-Shām al-Mun'aqid fī al-Jāmi'a al-Urdunya min 16-22 Adhār, 1985, al-Mujalad al-Thānī, Tahīr Muhammad 'Adnān al-Bakhīt wa Ihsān 'Abbās (Matba'at al-Jāmi'a al-Urdunya, 'Ammān, 1987), Vol. 2, Pp. 271-283. 'Ajīn, 'Alī. *Al-'Uhdā al-'Umarīyya* (Majalat al-Ḥikma, no.10, 1417 A.H), Pp. 67-87.

conquest are mainly based on later sources in the light of a dearth of information in the early sources. However, these later sources are full of legends, myths and non-historical accounts which are products of new conditions and developments in later periods that differed greatly from the time of the first Muslim conquest of Aelia.

On the other hand, the history of Islamic Jerusalem in the early Islamic period has suffered falsification and alteration by many modern researchers. Those researchers, particularly the orientalist, attempt to play down the importance of Islamic sources relating to the period of the conquest, thus undermining the significance of Jerusalem in Islam. 'Abd al-Fattah El-'Awaisi argues that such an approach means the elimination of other viewpoints and writing the history of Islamic Jerusalem from a single point of view.¹ They use the inaccuracies and contradictions in the Islamic sources to cast doubt on the authenticity of these sources in general and on the whole process of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia and the significance of Jerusalem in Islam. They claim that the Arab conquest of Jerusalem is embellished with imaginary myths and legends, and that consequently there remain only a very few authentic accounts of the stages of the Muslim conquest and the early centuries of the city's life under Islamic rule.² Furthermore, they

¹El-'Awaisi, 'Abd al-Fattah. *'Umar's Assurance of Safety to the People of Aelia (Jerusalem): A critical analytical study of the Historical Sources* (Journal of Islamic Jerusalem studies. Vol. 2, winter 2000), p. 52.

²See D. Goitein, Shlomo. *Jerusalem in the Arab period (638-1099)*: in *The Jerusalem Cathedral, studies in the History, Archaeology, Geography and Ethnography of the land of Israel*. Vol. 2, edited by L. I. Levine. (Yad Izhag Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, 1982), p.169. Buss, Herbert. *'Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem: to the first Colloquium "from Jahiliyya to Islam* (Journal of Jerusalem Studies In Arabic and Islam, JSAI, 5, 1984), Pp. 73-199. Ibid. *'Omar's Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem: to the first Colloquium "from Jahiliyya to Islam* (Journal of Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam, JSAI, 8, 1986), Pp. 149-168.

deny the historical fact of the caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb's¹ historic visit to Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem).

Lastly, there are, furthermore, some scholars who have discussed issues relating to the period of the conquest in studies which are not originally related to the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem, but are, rather, studies that deal with the Islamic conquests in general and do not discuss the issue of Aelia in depth.²

Therefore, the researcher has chosen the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) as the subject of his research from the perspective of critical analysis of the early Islamic narratives and sources.

The importance of this study is that, firstly, it is an attempt to address the lack of Islamic academic research in the early Islamic period of Aelia's (Islamic Jerusalem) history. Secondly, this study focuses mainly on the early Islamic historical narratives and sources. This is because these sources compared with non-Islamic ones, are the most

¹One of the famous companions of Prophet Muhammad in Islam, he is the second right guided Muslim caliphs (11-40A.H/ 632-66 A.D) who ruled between 13-23 A.H/ 634-644 A.D. For more details about his life see Al-'Usfurī, Khalīfa Ibn Khayyāt. *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt: Riwayāt Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Al-Azdī*, edited by Suhāil Zakkār (Matābi' Wazārat al-Thqāfa wa al-Irshād al-Qawmī, Dimashq 1966), Vol. 1, p. 48. Al-'Usfurī, Khalīfa Ibn Khayyāt. *Tārīkh Khalīfa Ibn Khayyāt: Riwayāt Baqī Ibn Mikhlād*, edited by Sa'id 'Abd al-Fattah 'Āshūr (Matābi' Wazārat al-Thqāfa wa al-Irshād al-Qawmī, Dimashq 1960), Vol. 1, p.151. Ibn Sa'd, Muhammad. *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (Dār Sādir wa Dār Beirut. Beirut, 1957), Vol. 3, Pp.265-376. Ibn Qutayyba, Abī Muhammad 'Abdullah Ibn Muslīm. *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif*, edited by Tharūat 'Ukāsha. (Dār al-Ma'ārif, Misr, Cairo, 2 nd. ed, 1969), Pp.179-185. Al-Balādhurī, Ahmad Ibn Yahyā. *Ansāb al Ashraf* S. 5, edited by Ihsān 'Abbās (Franz Shnāitr, Shtūdjärt, al-Matba'a al-Kāthūlikiyya, Beirut. 1996), Pp. 345-505.

²See: Levine, L. I. *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Continuum, New York, 1999), Pp.300-310. Donner, Fred McGraw. *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton University press. New Jersey, 1981), Pp.151-152. Gabrieli, Francesco. *Muhammad and the conquests of Islam*, translated from Italian by Virginia Luling and Rosamul Linell (World University library, Milan. Italy, 1968), Pp.154-155. Jandora, John Walter. *The March from Medina: A Revisionist study of the Arab conquest* (The kingdom press, U.S.A, 1990), Pp.73-74. Jenkins, Romily. *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries A.D 10-1071* (The garden city press, Great Britain, 1966), Pp.34-35. Muri, K.C.S.I. Sir William. *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline and fall*, edited by T.H Weir and M.A., D.D (U.S.A, 1975), Pp.135-139. Pp.131-139. W.E. Kaegi, W.E. *Byzantium and the early Islamic conquests* (Cambridge University press, 1992).

important available sources of information on the history of the area in general and Islamic Jerusalem in particular in the early Islamic period. Thirdly, the analytical critical methods that this study is based on are still new method in researching specific topics in early Islamic history, therefore, the researcher hopes that it will be useful and that it will open a new way in dealing with Islamic sources. Lastly, the researcher hopes that this study will help in opening a new approach in researching a host of topics in early Islamic history which still need to be given scientific historical explanations and interpretations, including many questions concerning the reasons behind the inaccuracies and contradictions in early Islamic narratives and sources.

In this study, the researcher focuses mainly on the historical sources and as little as possible on literature and other sources. Most of the material for this research, both in Arabic and English, has been collected from the researcher's own library in Palestine, al-Maktoum Institute For Arabic and Islamic Studies in Dundee, and from university libraries in Scotland, in particular the libraries of the University of Edinburgh and Glasgow University. The researcher also travelled to Jordan and collected sources and important articles from the library of the University of Jordan in 'Ammān and from other private libraries.

Important articles have been collected from the "Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies", "Journal of Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam", "Journal of Near Eastern Studies" and from the publication of the Conferences of the history of *Bilād al-Shām* which was held in Jordan University in the period 1974-1987.

1. The Problems of the Study

The shortcomings of the early Islamic narratives and sources can be seen clearly through any brief investigation of the problems relating to many historical events on the history of Aelia in the early Islamic period.

Islamic sources, in particular the historical one, pay scant attention to the issue of the geographical boundaries of the region of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem). In addition, the geographical sources do not take cognisance of the boundaries of the cities in general. All their attention in this regard is concentrated on the geographical regions. Moreover, the Islamic narrators and historians in general used different terminologies without clear distinctions between the differences or boundaries of the extended Byzantine Aelia, (135-637A.D, 637 A.D/16 A.H) and Bayt al-Maqdis (Islamic Jerusalem). Furthermore, with the emergence of Islam, new terminologies and concepts have emerged such as *al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*, *al-Ard Al-Muqaddasa* and *al-Quds*,¹ which make it hard to distinguish the exact differences between these terminologies. These differences in the use of terminologies led Muslim narrators and historians to fall into many errors,

¹One of the Qur'anic verses reads: "Glory to (Allah) who did take his servant for a journey by night from the sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque whose precincts we did bless, - in order that we might show him some of our signs: for he is the one who heareth and seeth (all things)". (17/1). Throughout this thesis I have chosen to use "*Mushaf al-Madīna An-Nabawiyya, the Holy Qur'an and the English translation of its commentary*", which has been revised and edited by the presidency of Islamic researchers, IFTA, Call and Guidance Saudi Arabia. For more details about these terminologies see Al-Khatīb Muhammad 'Abd al-Hamīd. *Al-Quds: The Place of Jerusalem in Classical Judaic and Islamic Tradition* (Ṭa-Ha Publishers, London, 1999), Pp. 5-22. El-'Awaisī, 'Abd al-Fattāh. *Jerusalem in Islamic History and Spirituality: The Significance of Jerusalem in Islam: An Islamic Reference* (Islamic Research Academy, UK, 1997), Pp.13-17. Al-Maqdisī in Ahsan al-Taqāsīm used the terminology of *al-Quds*. Al-Maqdisī, Muḥammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Abī Bakr al-Bannā' al-Bishārī. *The Best Division for Knowledge of The Regions, A Translation Of Ahsan al-Taqāsīm Fī Ma'rīfat al-Agālīm*, translated by Basil Anthony Collins, reviewed by Muhammad Hāmid Al-Tal (Center For Muslim Contribution to Civilization. Garnet Published Limited, 1994), p.157.

resulted in contradictions of many important historic events, in particular with regard to the identity of the conqueror and the real date of the conquest of Aelia.

Early Islamic narratives and sources are full of inaccuracies with regard to the main events of the period 13-16 A.H/ 634-637 A.D. They also not pay scant attention to the history of Aelia in this period. These narratives and sources only furnish scant information on the period preceding the battle of Yarmūk (15 A.H/ 636 A.D), while they provide comparatively more information on the period from the battle of Yarmūk until the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in the walled part of Aelia.

Indeed, early Islamic narratives and sources fall into great error and they are not in agreement with regard to the real date of the conquest, reporting widely different dates extending between the years 15-17 A.H/634-638 A.D. In addition they would mistake the identity of the military leader who conquered the region of Aelia, naming variously Abū ‘Ubayda, ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Ās, Khālid Ibn Thābit al-Fahmī, and the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Lastly, the narratives and sources mention a host of other names of local or tribal leaders claiming that they had participated in the siege and the conquest.

In these sources, the study and discussion of the reasons behind the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) and his historic visit to the city during the first Islamic conquest also gives rise to a number of issues as a result of their differing greatly in identifying these reasons. Some sources, or indeed most of them, make the arrival of ‘Umar personally in Aelia a condition laid down by the inhabitants of the city in return for their surrender. Some other sources link the arrival of ‘Umar in the region to military reasons required specifically by the Palestinian front. There is a third section of these sources, which mention that ‘Umar was present at the conquest of Aelia without

mentioning any reasons for his arrival from Madīna. Finally there are two accounts touched upon by some sources, which can be cited as legendary or non-historical narrations. Each narration mentions that some of the inhabitants of the city informed the Muslim military leaders who besieged them, of the name and characteristics of the only person who would be able to conquer the city. Furthermore, some narratives and sources make Aelia the first stop on the visit. Other sources state that the first place which ‘Umar reached was al-Jābiya. The issue becomes even more complex when the same source mentions more than one account. Some mention Aelia while others mention al-Jābiya as the first stop. These sources sometimes talk simultaneously about both, whether they define one of them as the first stop on the visit or not.

The major activities that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb undertook on his arrival in Aelia may be viewed as some of the most complex historical issues in both the early and later Islamic narratives and sources, in particular the contradictory accounts between the two concerning most of ‘Umar’s activities. The early Islamic sources in general were silent about the activities that ‘Umar undertook in Aelia, in particular concerning the first plan of a mosque (*al-Aqṣā*) in Islamic Jerusalem and the areas that he visited, with the exception of a few short accounts which mentioned that he planned the construction of chamber a *‘Mihrāb*¹. On the other hand, the later sources reported a host of long accounts including his visit to the church of Holy Sepulchre and that he declined to pray inside it fearing that Muslims could take it over from the Christians and convert it into a

¹*Al-Mihrāb* means a mosque. The Qur’ān says “.....Every time that he (Zakariya) entered (her) chamber (*‘Mihrāb*’) to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He Said: “ O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?” She said: “from Allah (God): for Allah provides whom he pleases, without measure”. 3/37. In another verse the Qur’ān says “ While he (Zakariya) was standing in prayer in the chamber (*‘Mihrāb*’): The Angels called upon him: “Allah doth give thee glad tidings of Yahyā, confirming the truth of words from Allah, and (he beside) noble, chaste, and prophet - of the (goodly) company of the righteous”. 3/39.

mosque. In addition it also claimed that, in contrast to his refusal to pray inside the church of Holy Sepulchre, he had shown great interest in praying at the site of David's temple, and had decided to take it over and had ordered the construction of a mosque in its vicinity.

The document that the caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb granted to the people of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), which is known in history as *Al-'Uhda Al-'Umariyya*, may be viewed as one of the results of the first Islamic conquest of the region, if not the major one. Islamic narrators and historians reported many versions of this document while others reported the content of the assurance without any text. Moreover, the narratives neglected the role of this assurance in the relations between the followers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam who were henceforth able to live together in the holy city of Jerusalem for the first time in spite of the previous conflict and discord that had characterised the area's history.

The problem of studying the administration and organisation of Aelia after the Islamic conquest lies in the fact that the Islamic sources give only little information on this subject, not only about Aelia but also about Palestine as one of the administrative regions in Syria.

The differences among the early Islamic narratives and sources are in most issues relating to the period of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem). This has created a division among the modern scholars who have attempted to deal with some of these issues. Some have used these differences in attempts to play down the authenticity and the importance of the Islamic sources relating to the period of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia. Furthermore, they interpreted myths and legends found in later

accounts as facts without taking into account new developments and conditions in later periods which had produced them.

The difficulties of studying the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), on the basis of a critical analysis of the early narratives and sources can be divided into several categories on the basis of time and place.

Firstly, the fact that the history of the period of the Islamic conquest in general was written over 100 years later has complicated the matter further. Thus it depended on verbal narratives, which meant that the narrators needed to be scrutinized as far as their honesty and impartiality were concerned. Furthermore, the narratives were not always in agreement with each another, which resulted in the necessity of extensive efforts in order to analyse the authenticity of both narrators and narratives.

Secondly, a factor which made the task harder and more complex is the diversity of Islamic sources consisting of an enormous number of Hījazī, Syrian, 'Irāqī and even Egyptian accounts narrated by narrators with different tendencies and political or party affiliations, as well as being dispersed between the history school and the Jurisprudence school.¹ In addition to all that, the accounts differ as to how far they are from the event with regard to both time and place. The above gives an idea of the difficulties of conducting research in the face of such divergences and in giving preponderance to some of them over others.

¹It is known that historical writing among the Arab began in two independent schools, the Iraqi school in Kūfā and Baṣrā which is known as the historical school and the Hījazī school in Madīna which is known as the jurist school. For each there were factors contributing to its rise and growth, and both had their own views of history. See Al-Dūrī, 'Abd al-'Azīz. *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, translated by Lawrence I. Conrad, (Princeton University press, 1983), Pp. 152-159.

The third category is that critical analysis studies are still new method in researching specific topics in the early Islamic period such as the history of Islamic Jerusalem. This is in spite of a host of Arabic and non-Arabic studies concerning the methods of studying Islamic history,¹ and the beginnings of historical writing among the Muslims,² most of which focused almost entirely upon the role of politics, different parties, and tribalism of the narrators' narratives without dealing in depth with the

¹There are agreement that these methods are conducted by collecting narratives, examining, comparing, and analysing the materials to make sure that they are authentic and reliable. However, some scholars try to verify narrators according to their political thought and their attitudes towards the political establishment of the time. For more details see for example: 'Uthmān, Hasan. *Manhaj al-Baḥth al-Tārīkhī* (Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 4 ed, th, (ed, eb). Rustum, Asad. *Mustalah al-Tārīkh* (al-Maktaba al-'Asriyah, Beirut, (e,d). Rashād, Khalīl Muḥammad. *Al-Manhaj al-Islāmī fī Dirāsāt al-Tārīkh wa Tafṣīrihi* (Dār al-Thaqāfa and al-Dār al-Baiyāda', Morocco, 1986). 'Uthmān, Fathī. *Adwā' 'ALā al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī* (Dār al-'Urūba, Cairo, n.d.). Khalīl, 'Imād al-Dīn. *Al-Tafṣīr al-Islāmī lil-Tārīkh* (Dār al-'ilm Lilmalāiyyin, Beirut, n.d.). Al-Barādī, Rashād. *Al-Tafṣīr al-Qurānī lil-Tārīkh* (Dār al-Nahḍa al-Arabīa, Cairo, 1973). Hasan, Zakī Muḥammad. *Dirāsāt fī Manāhij al-Baḥth fī al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī* (Majalat Kulliyat al-Adāb. Jāmi'at al-Gāhira, al-Mujalad al-Thānī 'Ashar, Vol. 1, 1950). Sālim, Al-Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azīz. *Al-Tārīkh wa al-Mu'arikūn al-'Arab* (Mu'assasat Shabāb al-Jāmi'ā, Alexandria, 1981). Ḥasan. 'Abd al-Ghanī Muḥammad. *'Ilm al-Tārīkh 'Ind al-'Arab* (Cairo, 1961). Kāshif, Sayyida. *Maṣādir al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī wa-Manāhij al-Baḥth fīh* (Cairo, 1960). Ahamd Shalabī. *Kaif Taktub Baḥthan aw Risāla: Dirāsa Manhajiya li-Kitābat al-Buhūth wa-'Idad Rasā'il al-Mājistāir wal-Duktūra* (Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, al-Taab'a al-Thālitha 'Ashra, 1981). Bādir, Aḥmad. *'Usūl al-Baḥth al-'Ilmī wa Manāhijahu* (Wakālat al-Maḥū'āt, al-Kuwait, 7 th, ed, 1084). Different articles in *Manahij al-Mustashriḡūn fī al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīa* (Al-Munadhma al-Arabīa Lil-Tarbiyya wal-Thaqāfa wal-'Ulūm. Dār al-Thaqāfa, Tunisia, Vol. 1, 1981). Muqadima fī Tārīkh Ṣadr al-Islam, Dār al-Mashriq, Beirut, 4 th. Ed, 1983.

²See for example: Al-Durī. *Baḥth fī Nash'āt 'Ilm al-Tārīkh 'Ind al-'Arab* (Beirut, 1960), (in Arabic). Al-Durī, *Muqadima fī Tārīkh Ṣadr al-Islam* (Dār al-Mashriq, Beirut, 4 th. Ed, 1983). Fred Donner, McGRAW. *The Narratives of Islamic Origins, The Beginnings of Islamic History Writing* (The Darwin Press, INC. Princeton, New Jersey, 1998). Fred Donner, McGRAW. *The Problem of Early Arabic Historiography in Syria*, proceedings of the Ssecond Symposium on the History of Bilād al-Shām During the Early Islamic period up to 40 A.H/640 A.D. The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām (English and French papers), edited by Muḥammad 'Adnān al-Bakhīt. (University of Jordan, al-Yarmūk University, 1987), Vol. 1, Pp.1-27. Rosenthal, Franz. *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leaden, 1952). Hoyland, Robert G. *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey And Evaluation Of Christian, Jewish And Zoroastrian Writing On Early Islam* (Darwin Press, INC. Princeton, New Jersey, 1997). Khanas, M.S. *The Concept of Critical Historiography in the Islamic World of the Middle Ages* (Islamic Studies, XIV, 1975), Pp. 175-185. Julian Oberman. "Early Islam" in the idea of History in the Ancient Near East, edited by Julian, Obermann. (New Haven, 1955), Pp. 237-245. Hamīda, Murtadha. *The Origin of the Muslim Historiography* (Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, XV1. 1968), Pp. 168-180. Dunlop, D.M. *Arab Civilization to A.D 1500* (London, 1971), Pp. 37-48. Al-Fārūqī, Nassār Aḥmad. *Some Methodological Aspects on the Early Muslim Historiography* (Islam and Modern Age, Vol. 1, 1975), Pp. 88-94.

reasons behind the inaccuracies and contradictions such as in the case of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia.

Fourthly, the clear interrelationship between most of the issues relating to the period of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia until the end of the rule of the Umayyad state (41-132A.H/ 661-750 A.D) makes it necessary in some cases to deal with this period in order to follow the development of events at the time. This interrelationship also makes it necessary in many cases to use the same texts for different issues, which might cause some repetition in a few cases.

Lastly, it is essential, as El-'Awaisī argues, to try to adopt a neutral approach in the case of studying the history of a holy city such as Jerusalem, significant to a host of people belonging to different religions and holding different opinions, where the competing claims of the adherents of those religious and international interests met and clashed.

Most of the material for this research, both in Arabic and English, has been collected from the researcher's own library in Palestine, al-Maktoum Institute For Arabic and Islamic Studies in Dundee, and from university libraries in Scotland, in particular the libraries of the University of Edinburgh and Glasgow University. The researcher also travelled to Jordan and collected sources and important articles from the library of the University of Jordan in 'Ammān and from other private libraries.

Important articles have been collected from the "Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies", "Journal of Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam", "Journal of Near Eastern Studies" and from the publication of the Conferences of the history of *Bilād al-Shām* which was held in Jordan University in the period 1974-1987.

1.2. The Aims of the Study

This thesis is an attempt to identify historical explanations and interpretations for many questions concerning the reasons behind the inaccuracies in the early Islamic narratives and sources relating to the period of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem). In addition, some of the factual details of the events of the history of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), will be reported. All the material will be discussed and analysed in an aim to find the real reasons for the inaccuracies in the Islamic sources on these issues. The study also aims to establish new data and to develop real academic debate on the early Islamic history of Islamic Jerusalem.

1.3. Research Methodology

The research will be mainly conducted based on historical methodology. This has been done through several steps. First, early narratives with regard to each topic have been collected. Second, and most important, both the narratives and narrators' chain (*Isnād*) has been critically analysed. Third, the narratives have been analysed in the light of the contemporary context, circumstances and events of the period. Fourth, the narratives and sources have been compared with each other and with other narratives relating to the same period. Fifth, some of the narratives, narrators and sources have been classified according to their times and places. Last, the discussed has proceeded through critically analysing both classical and modern scholars' arguments and views.

1.4. Structure of Thesis

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, the main body of this thesis is essentially divided into eight chapters:

Chapter one contains a literature review of the main narrators, sources and the main modern studies and articles.

Chapter Two attempts to establish the topography and geographical boundaries of the Aelia region, spanning the time when clear limits were set for this region by the Byzantine Emperor Hadrian in 135 A.D when he named it Aelia, until the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb on the eve of the first Islamic conquest of the region in *Jumādā first or second* (March or April), 16 A.H/ 637 A.D.

Chapter Three examines the period of history of Islamic Jerusalem from the beginning of the first Islamic conquests in Syria until the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb which contain the period of the siege of the walled part of the Aelia region. In addition, it examines the reason for the Islamic sources’ not pay attention of the period which preceded the battle of Yarmūk.

Chapter Four explains and clarifies the reasons behind the inaccuracies and contradictions in the early Islamic narratives and sources over the identity of the military leader who carried out the conquest of Aelia. This chapter also examines the reasons behind the large number of characters cited as having played important roles in the conquest. It also attempts to establish the real date of the conquest, in addition to establishing the identity of the real conqueror.

Chapter Five discusses the great mistakes and contradictions in the reasons given in the early Islamic narratives and sources for ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s arrival in Aelia

(Islamic Jerusalem). In addition, this chapter also discusses the reasons behind the different visits that the caliph ‘Umar’s made to Syria and the work that he carried out on each visit. Moreover, through the analysis of the early sources, the researcher in this chapter discusses and analyses the views of some modern researchers who have dealt with this issue.

Chapter Six studies the first reconstruction of a mosque (*al-Aqsā*) in Islamic Jerusalem. It attempts to find some explanation behind the silence of the early sources and the development in the Islamic narratives. It also examines why later Islamic sources reported that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, showed great interest in the site of David’s temple and ordered the construction of a mosque in its vicinity while there are no reports of this in the early sources. In other words, it examines the reasons behind the influences of non-Islamic accounts in the later Islamic sources.

Chapter Seven follows the role of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s assurance of safety (*amān*) to the People of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) in the Muslims’ internal policy towards the inhabitants of the region. This chapter also presents Muslim internal policy towards the inhabitants of Aelia, in particular the Jews, who resided there after the conquest.

Chapter Eight studies the administration of Jerusalem after the first conquest and the interest that the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb showed in the region. It also discusses the modern researcher claiming that the Muslims, in particular the caliph ‘Umar did not show any special interest in Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem).

Chapter One

Sources and Historical Background

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Introduction

Despite the importance of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), it occupies a minor place in studies which discuss the history of the early Islamic period in general. It can be argued that modern studies can be divided into two schools, the first school casting doubt upon the authenticity of the early Islamic sources and denying their importance, describing the first Islamic conquest of Aelia as legend or myth. Those who view it in this way are the Israelis Shlomo D. Goitein and Herbert Busse, Moshe Gil and others.¹ The writers of the second school acknowledge the authenticity of the early Islamic sources in general, yet they mention it in only a few brief lines or pages to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia. The scholars who belong to this school are Levine, F. Donner, F. Gabriele, J. Jandora, F. Peters, R. Jenkins, W. Mure, W.E. Kaegi, and others.²

This review aims to examine the historical evidence of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) and the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's in this region. In other words, it will deal with the historical evidence of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) drawing upon the early historical narratives and sources which support this thesis as well as examining the historical background of some important narrators who related these accounts. Furthermore, it will discuss the arguments of some

¹D. Goitein. *Jerusalem in the Arab period*, p. 169. Busse. 'Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭab in Jerusalem, Pp.73-119. Busse. 'Omar's Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem, Pp. 149-168. Gil, Moshe. *Palestine During the first Muslim period (634 – 1099)*, (Tel – Aviv, 1983), (in Hebrew). p. 43 cited in: 'Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn: Min al-Fattḥ al-Islamī ḥatta al-Qazū al-Firanjī: 634 – 1099* (Muassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filastīniyya , Beirut, 2000), p. 118.

²Levine. *Jerusalem*, Pp. 300-310. Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Pp.151-152. Gabrieli, Pp. 154-155. Jandora, Pp. 73-74. Peters, F.E. Jerusalem: *The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginning of Modern Times* (Princeton University press, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1995), Pp. 176-177. Jenkins, Romily. *Byzantium, The Imperial Centuries (A.D 10-1071)* (The garden City press, Great Britain, 1966), Pp. 34-35. Muri, Pp. 131-139. D. Goitein. *Jerusalem in the Arab Period*, p.169.

modern researchers with particular attention to those who deny that the visit took place and allege that the Islamic sources are full of myths and legends which aim to replace the Christian character of the city with an Islamic character. In addition, the main Islamic studies and articles will be reported.

1.1. Early Primary Sources

After examining the Islamic sources relating to this thesis, the researcher found that there was a consensus among both the early and later sources which confirm the events of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) and the historic arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region. Moreover, this consensus is further supported by the agreement of other non-Islamic sources, which refer to the same period.

Among the early Islamic sources, which mention the historical fact of the first Islamic conquest and the historic arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region are the following: Abū Yusūf. (d. 182 A.H/ 798 A.D),¹ Muhammad Ibn ‘Umar al-Wāqidī (d. 207 A.H/ 822 A.D),² Abī ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām (d. 224 A.H/ 836 A.D),³ Muḥammad Ibn Sa’d (d. 230 A.H/ 845 A.D),⁴ Khalīfa Ibn Khayyāt al-‘Uṣfurī (d. 240

¹*Taxation in Islam*. English translation of *Kitāb al-Khrāj* Li Yahyā b. Adam al-Qurashī, translated by B. Ben Shemesh, LL.M. Forword by S. D. Goitein (E. J. Prill, 1958), Vol, 1, p. 31, 44. Al-Balādhurī, Ahmad Ibn Yahya. *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, edited by Badwān Muhammad Badwān (Al-Matba‘a al-Misriyya bil-Azhar, Cairo, 1932), p. 265.

²Al-Wāqidī, Muhammad Ibn ‘Umar. *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Shām Wabihāmishi Tuḥfat al-Nazīrina fī man Hakama Misr min al-Wūlā wal-Salātina li ‘Abdullah al-Sharqāwī* (Maktabat wa Matb‘at al-Mashhad al-Husayynī, Cairo, (ed), Vol. 1&2, S, 1, Pp. 144-154.

³Abī ‘Ubayd, Al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām. *Kiāb al-Amwāl*, edited by Muhammad Ḥamid al-Fiqqī (Cairo, 1303 A.H), Pp. 153-154.

⁴Ibn Sa’d, Vol, 3, p.283.

A.H/ 854 A.D),¹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257 A.H/ 817 A.D),² Imām Aḥmad Ibn Yahyā Al-Balādhurī (d. 279 A.H/ 892 A.D),³ Abī Zir‘a al-Dimashqī (d. 281 A.H/894 A.D),⁴ al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 284 A.H/ 897 A.D),⁵ Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H/ 922 A.D),⁶ Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī (d. 314 A.H/ 926 A.D),⁷ and Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdullah al-Azdī (d. 430 A.H/ 1039 A.D).⁸

1.2. Later Sources

These are followed by later sources such as Ibn al-Murajjā,⁹ Ibn al-Qayyīm al-Jawziyah, (d. 751 A.H/ 1350 A.D),¹⁰ Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī,¹¹ Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 539 A.H/

¹ Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol, 1, p. 124

²Ibn ‘ab al-Ḥakam, ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn ‘Abdullah. *Futūh Miṣr wa Akhbarihā*, edited by Sharls Tūrī, (Leaden, 1920), Pp.164-170.

³Al-Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 144-145.

⁴Abī Zir‘a, Al-Dimashqī. *Tārīkh Abī Zir‘a al-Dimashqī*, edited by Shukrullah Ibn Ni‘matullah al-Qūjānī (AMAṭba‘at Majma‘ al-Lughah al-‘Arabīa bi-Dimashq), Vol. 1, Pp. 176-177.

⁵Al-Ya‘qūbī, Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ya‘qūb Ibn Wahab Ibn Wadih. *Tārīkh al- Ya‘qūbī* (DārṢādir and Dar Beirut, Beirut 1960), Vol. 2, Pp. 146-149.

⁶Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr. *The history of al-Ṭabarī (Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk)*, Vol. X. 11, *The Battle of al-Qadisiyya and the conquest of Syria and Palestine*, translated and annotated by Yahanan Friedman (University of New Yourk press, 1992), Pp. 187-197.

⁷Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, Abī Muḥammad Ahmad. *Al-Futūh* (Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1986), Vol, 1&2, Pp. 222-231.

⁸Al-Azdī, Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdullah. *Thārīkh Futūh al-Shām*, edited by ‘Abd al-Min‘im ‘Āmir. (Mūassasat Sijil al-‘Arab 1979), Pp. 246-262.

⁹Ibn al-Murajjā, Abūal-Ma‘ālī al-Musharraf. *Faḍā‘il Bayt al-Maqdis wa al-Khalīl wa Faḍā‘il al-Shām*, edited by Livnī, ‘Ujīr (Shfā‘amir, Palestine, 1995), Pp. 44-58.

¹⁰Ibn al-Qayyīm al-Jawziyah, Muḥammad Ibn Abi Bakir. *Aḥkam Ahl al-Dhima*, edited by Subhy al-Sālih, 9Beirut, 2 nd. ed, 1981), Vol. 2, Pp.275-280.

¹¹Al-Ḥanbalī, Mujīr al-Dīn. *Al-Uns al-Jalīl bi Tārīkh al-Quds wal-Khālīl* (Maktabat al-Muḥtasib, ‘Ammān, 1973).

In non-Islamic sources, ‘Umar’s visit to Jerusalem is mentioned by Theophanes,¹ the Patriarch of Alexandria Eutychius Sa‘īd Ibn al-Bitrīq² who died in 284 A.H/ 897 A.D, the Syriac chronicler Michael the Syrian³ and the chronicler Agapius (Mahbūb) of Minjib.⁴ Finally, mention can be found of the event in the Jewish manuscript of Cairo Geniza, which dates from the eleventh century A.D.⁵

1.3. Early Islamic Narrators

As for the most prominent early Islamic narrators who confirm the historical fact of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) and the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region were the Hijāzian narrators such as ‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubāir (d. 94 A.H/ 713 A.D),⁶ Sālim Ibn ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb (d. 106 A.H 724 A.D),⁷ Muhammad Ibn Ishāq (d. 150 A.H / 767 A.D),⁸ ‘Adī Ibn Sahil,¹ ‘Adī Ibn Suhaīl,² and

¹Theophanes. *The Chronicle of the Theophanes: An English translation of anni mundi 6095 (A.D 602-813)*, translated by: Harry Turtledove (University of Pennsylvania press, 1982), p. 39.

²Ibn al-Bitrīq, Sa‘īd. *Al-Tārīkh al-Majmū‘ ‘Ala al-Tahqīq wal-Tasdyq* (Beirut, 1905), p.16 cited in ‘Abd al-Fattah el-‘Awaīsī. *‘Umar’s Assurance*, p. 49.

³See: El-‘Awaīsī. *‘Umar’s Assurance*, p. 49.

⁴Ibid, p. 56.

⁵See: Moshe, Gil. *The Jewish Quarters of Jerusalem (A..D. 638-1099), According to Cairo Geniza Documents and Other Sources* “Journal of Near Eastern Studies, Continuing the American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures. Vol. 4, January-October, 1982, Ninety-Ninth Year. (The University of Chicago press, Chicago, Illinois), Pp. 261-278. Ibid, *A History of Palestine: 634-1099* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), Pp. viii & xiv.

⁶Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 102. For more details about ‘Urwa life see: Ibn Sa‘d., Vol. 5, Pp. 125-201. Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 124. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, Pp. 186-187.

⁷Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, p. 98. (on the authority of Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq). For more details about Sālim life see Khalīfa. *Tabaqāt* Vol. p. 34. Ibn Sa‘d. Vol. 3, Pp. 137-149. Vol. 6, Pp. 12-13. Balādhurī, Ahmad Ibn Yahyā. *Ansāb al-Shrāf*, s. 5, , edited by Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Franz Shnāitr, Shtūdijart, al-Maṭba‘a al-Kāthūlikiyya, Beirut. 1996). Pp. 83-99. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, Pp. 241-244.

⁸Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 191-193. For more details about Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq life see Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. Ibid, *Tabaqāt*, Vol.,2, p. 660.

Muhammad Ibn Muslim Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 A.H/ 742 A.D).³ There are several other accounts also mentioned by the Syrian narrators such as Khālid Ibn Mī'dān al-Kilā'ī al-Shāmī (d. 103 or 108 A.H/ 721 or 726 A.D),⁴ 'Ubāda Ibn Nusayy (d. 118 A.H/ 736 A.D),⁵ whom known also as Khālid and 'Ubada,⁶ Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawah, al-Kindī (d.112 A.H/ 730 A.D),⁷ Abī Ḥafṣ al-Dimashqī,⁸ Sa'īd Ibn 'Abd al-Azīz al Tanūkhī (d. 167 or 168. A.H / 784 or 785 A.D),⁹ Hishām Ibn 'Ammār (d. 180 A.H/

¹Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 191-193.

²Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. III, p. 103.

³Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, S.5. p. 383. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 3, p. 283. For more details about al-Zuhrī life see Khalīfa. *Tabaqāt*, Vol. 2, Pp. 389-390. Ibid, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 652. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma'a'āri*, p. 536.

⁴For more details about Khālid Ibn Mī'dān see Khalīfa, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 495. Ibid, *Tabaqāt*, S.2. p. 794. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, p. 455.

⁵For more details about 'Ubāda Ibn Nusayy see Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 516. Ibid, *Tabaqāt*, S.2. p. 794. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, p. 456.

⁶Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 191-193.

⁷Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, P. For more details about Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawah see Khalīfa. *Tabaqāt*, Vol. 2, p. 793. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma'a'ārif*, Pp. 472-473. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, Pp. 454-455.

⁸Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 144-145.

⁹Abī 'Ubayd, p.154. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 144. Abī Zir'a, Vol. 1, p. 176. For more details about 'Adī Ibn Sahīl see Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, p. 468. Abī Zir'a, Vol. 2, p. 273.

796A.D),¹ Yazīd Ibn ‘Ubayda (d. 147 A.H/ 764 A.D),² Abū Maryam al-Filastīnī,³ ‘Abdullah Ibn Šāliḥ (d. 223 A.H/ 838 A.D), al-Laiyyth Ibn Sa‘d (d. 165 A.H/ 782 A.D), Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb (d. 128 A.H/ 746 A.D), and al-Wāqidī (d. 204 A.H/ 819 A.D),⁴ as well as the famous Syrian historian and narrator Abī ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām (d. 242 A.H/ 839 A.D).⁵

In addition to such Hijāzī and Syrian scholars, the above events are also related by ‘Irāqī narrators such as Muhammad Ibn al-Sā‘ib al-Kalbī (d. 146 A.H/ 763 A.D),⁶ Abū Mikhnaf Lūṭ Ibn YaḥYā (d. 157 A.H/ 774 A.D),⁷ and Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamīmī (d. 180 A.H/ 796 A.D).⁸ Finally, the conquest is also mentioned by the famous Egyptian narrator Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb (d. 128 A.H/ 746 A.D).⁹

¹Abī ‘Ubayd, p.154. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 145. Abī Zir‘a, Vol. 1, p. 175. For more details about Hishām see Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 7, Pp.77, 374.

²Abī Zir‘a, Vol. 1, p. 177. For more details about Yazīd Ibn ‘Ubayda see Khalīfa. *Tabaqāt*, Ibid, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 654.

³Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 193-194. Abū Maryam al-Filastīnī belonged to al-Azd tribe. In Islamic Sources, however, there are inaccuracies between several persons who named Abū Maryam. See Ibn Hajar, Vol. 7, Pp. 308-309.

⁴Wāqidī. *Futūh*, S. 1.Pp.146-154. Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 770. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, p. 518.

⁵Abī ‘Ubayd, p. 153, 154, 155.

⁶Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol, 1, p. 125. For more details about Ibn al-Kalbī see Khalīfa. *Tabaqāt*, Vol, 2, Pp. 389-390. Ibid, *Tārīkh*, Vol, 2, p. 652. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, p. 536.

⁷Ibn Kathīr. *Bidāya*, Vol. 7& 8, S.7. p. 57. For more details about Abū Mikhnaf see Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, p. 537.

⁸Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 191.

⁹Abī ‘Ubayd, p. 153. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 145. (on the authority of Abī ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām). For more details about Yazīd see Khalīfa. *Tabaqāt*, Vol. 2, p. 756.

1.4. Main Narrators Historical Backgrounds

From examining the backgrounds of some of those who confirmed the historical fact of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s arrival in Aelia region, the researcher found that they were among the most famous narrators of Islamic history at the eve of the beginning of historical writing among the Muslims. On the other hand, these narrators lived in different regions such as Hijāz, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. They, or at least some of them, belonged to different historical, jurisprudence and intellectual schools. They are also characterized by their vast knowledge, especially in the field of the origin and development of the first Islamic state as well as the history of the Islamic conquests.

Furthermore, a number of these narrators are considered to be close to historic events with regard to both time and place. In other words, they were contemporaries of those who took part in the events at the time of the Islamic conquest of Syria in general and Aelia in particular. For instance, Muhammad Ibn al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī was well known as a genealogist (Nasāba),¹ and Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb, was considered one of the most prominent historians and scholars of jurisprudence specialising in Sharī‘a Law. Such specialised knowledge was used in conquered lands to elicit the type and amount of taxes to be collected. Such taxes were leveled according to the nature of the conquest whether

¹See Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma’ārif*, Pp. 535-536. Ibn Khallikān, Abī al-‘Abbās Shams al-Dīn Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abī Bakr. *Wafayāt al-A’yān wa Anbā’ al-Zamān*, edited by Ihsān ‘Aabbās (Dār Sādir, Beirut, (ed)), Vol. 4, Pp. 309-311.

it be by treaty (*Sulh*) or by force (*'Unwa*).¹ In addition, Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb was among those who opposed the State's ruling on the administration of the conquered lands. He represented the opinion of the native people who were the owners of these lands.² It was well known that the lands of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), like other conquered lands, were under the same administration. Therefore, it can be argued that Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb represented an independent point of view that was divorced from partisan affiliations, conflicts and personal interests, with respect to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem). As for the Syrian narrators such as Abī Ḥafṣ al-Dimashqī, Sa'īd Ibn 'Abd al-Azīz and Hishām Ibn 'Ammār, it is sufficient to say that they are counted among the most prominent narrators of the history of the first Islamic conquests of Syria and their accounts are largely relied upon in writing the history of the conquered lands, specifically the conquest of Syria.³

¹For more details about the meaning of *'Unwa* in Islamic history see: Jūdī, Jamāl. *Al-Sulh wa al-'Anwa Ladā 'Ulmā' al-Amsār fī Sadr al-Islām* (Majalat al-Najāh lilabhāth, al-Mujajad al-Thānī, al-'Adad al-Thāmin, 1994), Pp. 58-98. Ibid. *Al-'Arab wa al-ard fī al-'Irāqadr al-Islām* (Al-sharika al-'Arabiya Liltibā'a wa al-Nashir, 'Ammān, 1979), Pp. 119-122. Al-Qādī, Widād. *Madkhal Ilā Dirāsāt 'Uqūd al-Sulh al-Islāmiya zaman al-Futūh bi Bilād al-Shām*, al-Nadwa al-Thānīa min a' māl al-Mu'tamar al-Dawlī al-Rābi' li Tārīkh Bilād al-Shām al-Mun'aqid fī al-Jāmi'a al-Urdunya min 16-22 adhār, 1985, al-Mujalad al-Thānī, tahrīr Muhammad 'Adnān al-Bakhīt wa Ihsān 'Abbās. (Matba'at al-Jāmi'a al-Urdunya, 'Ammān, 1987), Pp. 193-248. Al-Dūrī, 'Abd al-'Azīz. *Tandhīmāt 'Umar Ibn al-Khatāb: al-Darā'ib fī Bilād al-Shām fī Sadr al-Islām*, al-Nadwa al-Thānīa min a' māl al-Mu'tamar al-Dawlī al-Rābi' li Tārīkh Bilād al-Shām al-Mun'aqid fī al-Jāmi'a al-Urdunya min 16-22 adhār, 1985, al-Mujalad al-Thānī, tahrīr Muhammad 'Adnān al-Bakhīt wa Ihsān 'Abbās. (Matba'at al-Jāmi'a al-Urdunya, 'Ammān, 1987), Pp. 466-467. Denit, Denial. *Al-Jizya wa al-Islām*, translated by Fahmī Jādallah, (Manshūrāt Dār al-Hayāh wa Muassasat Frānklin, Beirut wa New York, 1959).

²Jūdī, Jamāl. *Al-Sulh wa al-'Anwa*, Pp. 65-66.

³Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 117, 130, 132, 134, 135, 138, 144, 145, 164, 150, 156, 159, 162, 163. For more details about the depend of al-Balādhurī on Syrians narrators see Donner. *The problem of Early Arabic Historiography in Syria*, Vol. 1, p. 2.

In addition, the two Hijāzī narrators, Sālim Ibn ‘Abdullah and ‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubāir, are followers of the school of Hadīth which was established in Madīna.¹ We also find the two Iraqis, Abī Mikhnaf Lūṭ Ibn Yaḥyā and Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamīmī who are counted among the pioneers of the school of history which was established and developed in Iraq. This school is considered to be the first nucleus of the origin of the science of Arabic and Islamic history. Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamīmī (d. 180 A.H/ 796 A.D), is one on the most famous historians and narrators in the field of Islamic conquests as was indicated by the modern historian ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dūrī.²

As for Sālim and ‘Urwa, in addition to being the followers of the school of Hadīth, it is well known that Sālim directly belonged to the family of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb who was his paternal grandfather.³ This means that his information was derived from an original source which depended on the authority of ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb (d. 74 A.H/ 693 A.D). ‘Urwa, the brother in-law of ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb, who was the earliest narrator to mention the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s visit to Aelia, provided no details about the reasons behind that visit or the circumstances which surrounded it.⁴

To conclude, the researcher can say that this great multitude of sources, from Muslim and non-Muslim narrators who lived in different times and in distant regions,

¹See Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, p. 185, Pp. 186-187. Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 5, Pp. 195-201. Al-Dhahabī. *Al-Tārīkh wa al-Tabaqā*, Vol. 4, p. 115.

²See al-Dūrī, *Baḥth fī Nash‘at ‘Ilm al-Tārīkh ‘Ind al-‘Arab*, Pp. 140-154.

³Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, Pp. 186-187. Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 5, Pp. 195-201. Al-Dhahabī. *Al-Tārīkh wa al-Tabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 115.

⁴Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 4, Pp. 167-168.

would make it difficult if not impossible for any impartial researcher to assume that all this multitude agreed to lie about the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) and the historic arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region. It may be true that these sources and narrators differed with regard to the details related to the reasons and circumstances surrounding the conquest, the result it led to and what actually took place, but the historical aspect and the occurrence of the event remain an issue, which is difficult or even impossible to cast doubt upon or deny in any case. However, early Islamic narratives and sources contain a lot of inaccuracies and errors, with regard to a host of problems relating to the historical facts about the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem.

1.2.1. Modern Studies

Despite this general consensus, some modern researchers cast doubt upon and even deny the historical fact of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) and the historic visit of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab to the region. It appears to the researcher that such allegations denying the occurrence of the visit in history are primarily based on attempts to cast doubt on the accounts of Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamīmī with regard to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia.

This happens despite the fact that Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamīmī is counted as one of the most famous and highly-regarded narrators who deal with the early Islamic conquests,¹ particularly the conquest of Iraq and, to a lesser degree, of Syria.

¹See al-Dūrī. *The Rise*, Pp. 140-154.

Some scholars, among them Wellhausen and D. Goitein, accuse Sayf of a lack of reliability and authenticity. Sayf was sharply criticised by de Goeji, Wellhausen, and others as M. Donner argued.¹ Wellhausen accuses Sayf of somewhat hastily tilting many historical events in favor of his school of thought and his theories of history.² D. Goitein also claims that his work lacks authenticity and that he shows both irresponsibility and ignorance towards Palestinian issues. He made this accusation with regard to Sayf report about the town of al-Ramla which was founded seventy years after the Islamic conquest of the region. He used this to cast doubt on the historic fact of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab’s visit to Aelia. Furthermore, D. Goitein used this to throw suspicion upon both the Islamic sources and the first Islamic conquest of the city. He stated with regard to Sayf’s report about al-Ramla and ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab’s visit to Jerusalem:

This information “no Jews shall live with them -i.e. the Christians in Jerusalem (Aelia)” can be found in only one of the Muslim sources, the Iraqi Sayf, whose lack of reliability is well-known and whose irresponsibility and ignorance about Palestinian matters are illustrated by reports about the conquest of Ramla, a town founded by the Muslims only seventy years later!.³

D. Goitein continues his denial, he alleges that the Islamic sources contain many legends and myths which aim at raising the holy status of Jerusalem in the hearts of

¹Donner. *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, p. 244.

²Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten Heft*, cited in Israel Ben Zeev (abu Zuaib), *Ka‘ab al-Ahbār: Jews and Judaism in the Islamic Tradition*, prepared for publication by Mahmud ‘Abbāsī (Jerusalem, 1976), P. 37.

³D. Goitein. *Jerusalem in the Arab period*, p.171.

Muslims by depicting its conquest as a major central event and caliph ‘Umar himself the hero of that event. He concludes that the Islamic accounts about the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem came under the influence of the Israeli narrations and were taken from one of the Torah interpretations, namely (ha-midrash) which indicates that Jerusalem will only be conquered by a king who is fit to be called a mighty one.¹

The Isra’eli, H. Busse, follows in the footsteps of D. Goitein and mirrors his theories. He alleges that what is narrated by the Islamic sources about the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem is no more than a legend, imagined by Muslim historians. According to him, the plan of such historians is to portray the city with a holy Islamic character in order to exclude and replace its Christian character. In his manifest attempts to discount the Islamic sources, H. Busse deliberately ignores and denies them, as is the case in the Jewish document of Cairo Geniza. He concludes that the Arab narrators and historians made many errors regarding the name of the real conqueror of Jerusalem, mixing up the identity of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ (d. 42 AH)² with caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb as a result of the similarity of letters in both names.³

Another Isra’eli researcher, Moshe Gil, differs from his predecessors, i.e. D. Goitein and H. Busse, in some matters and agrees with them on others. He argues that the Islamic sources and narrations have exaggerated and magnified the role of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb with regard to the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem in order to present that

¹Ibid, p. 169.

²For more details about ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ life see Khalifa. *Tabaqāt*, Vol. 1, p. 57. Ibn Sa’d, Vol, 4, Pp. 254-261. Vol. 7, P.493-494. Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S.5. Pp. 337-340. Ibn Qutaybah. *Ma’ārif*, Pp. 285-286.

³Busse. *‘Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem*, Pp. 73-119. Ibid. *‘Omar’s Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem*, Pp. 149-168.

event in a state of religious holiness and glorification.¹ However, in Moshe Gil's opinion, the reasons given by D. Goitein are not enough to deny the value and historic fact of the Islamic narrations of the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem. This is because of the visits which 'Umar paid to the city on a number of other occasions, which are not related to the first conquest.² With regard to his opinion of the Islamic sources, Gil adds that it is not fair to cast doubt on sources, which were written about more than a thousand years ago. According to him, Caliph 'Umar himself upon his visit to Jerusalem acknowledged the importance of the Jews in Palestine and he allowed them to settle in the city. He states:

We have seen how Goitein, in his attempt to overcome this contradiction, expressed doubt as to the authenticity of the treaty's version as transmitted by Sayf ibn 'Umar. But there seems to be little justification for this very stringent attitude towards a source that has been preserved for more than a thousand years.³

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Gil, like his predecessors, accuses Sayf Ibn 'Umar and al-Ṭabarī himself, stating that one of them might have deliberately added some passages to 'Umar's Assurance to the people of Aelia after it was conquered, as al-Ṭabarī, on the authority of Sayf, states.⁴ He made this allegation despite the fact that the language of the text and its information appear to be authentic and in agreement with what was known about Jerusalem at that time. He says:

¹Gil. *Palestine During*, p. 43 cited in: 'Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 118. See also: Gil. *A History of Palestine*, p. 73.

²Gil. *A History of Palestine*, p. 73.

³Ibid, p. 73.

⁴Ibid, p. 73.

The version itself seems to be reliable; it is possible that the passage, in which the year (15) is incorrect, was added by Ṭabarī, or perhaps by Sayf himself. The names of the witnesses mentioned therein, all of whom were important figures in the Muslim command, seem artificial.¹

He further adds:

But the language of the covenant and its details appear authentic and reliable and in keeping with that know of Jerusalem at that time.²

From the analysis of the reasons put forward by these researchers especially the Israelis, it appears that such researchers cast doubts on and deny the historic fact of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s visit to Aelia and the Islamic sources related to the first Islamic conquest of the Aelia region. They do not depend on any strong analytical scientific argument. For instance, D. Goitein and Welhauzen base their doubts on their accusation of Sayf because of his report about the town of al-Ramla or perhaps because Sayf is known for his bias towards his own tribe, Tamīm, and gave it a distinguished role in the Islamic conquests. The researcher argues that, those who base their argument on al-Ramla town being founded seventy years after the Islamic conquest depend on an individual narration from al-Balādhurī without any clear transmission chain (*Isnād*). In that narration, al-Balādhurī indicates that the Umayyad caliph, Sulaymān Ibn ‘Abd al-

¹Ibid, p. 56.

²Ibid, p. 73.

Malik (ruled 96 - 99 AH/ 715-718 A.D)¹ when he founded al-Ramla destroyed the town of al-Ludda.² These researchers took this narration as an established fact without any examination or intentional or unintentional scientific criticism. They took it as a reason and basis for attacking Sayf and casting doubt on his reliability with regard to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) as well as casting doubt upon the Islamic sources which refer to the same period.

With regard to doubts cast on the founding date of al-Ramla and on the reliability of Sayf, I should like to indicate the following facts:

There are narrators other than Sayf, who long before him dealt with al-Ramla in the period related to the first Islamic conquest. Al-Ṭabarī, in a narration on the authority of Sālim Ibn ‘Abdūllah, indicates that ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ was unable to conquer either Aelia or al-Ramla.³ He also indicates that when ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb arrived in Aelia, he appointed ‘Alqama Ib Mujziz (d. 20 A.H/ 641 A.D),⁴ as governor of Aelia and ‘Alqama Ibn Ḥakīm⁵ as governor of al-Ramla.⁶ S. W. Mure who seems to accept what is narrated in the sources in relation to this issue argues that during his visit to Jerusalem, ‘Umar

¹For more details about Sulayymān Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. p. 426. Ibn Qutaybah. *Ma‘ārif*, Pp. 360-361.

²Balāduriī. *Futūh*, p. 149.

³Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 185, 193.

⁴Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad Ibn ‘Alī. *Al-Isāba fī Ma‘rifat al-Sahāba*, edited by ‘Ādil Ahmad ‘Abd al-Jauād, Muhammad Mu‘awwad, introduce by Muhammad ‘Abd al-Min‘im al-Barī, ‘Abd al-Fattāh Abū Sitta and Jum‘a Tāhir al-Najjār (Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1995), Vol. 4, Pp. 460-461. Ibn al-Athīr, Abī al-Hasan ‘Alī Ibn Muhammad al-Jarzī. *Usd al-Qāba fī Mar‘ifat al-Sāhaba*, edited by Muhammad Ibrahim al-Bannā and Muhammad Ahmad ‘Āshūr and Mahmud ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Fāyyid (Dār Ihyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1970), Vol. 4, p. 87.

⁵Ibn Hajar, Vol. 5, Pp.105-106.

⁶Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 193.

divided Palestine into two provinces, one being Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) and the other being al-Ramla.¹

It is more probable that al-Ramla was a Byzantine town that existed before the first Islamic conquest of the region, as many geographical and historical sources indicate.² Sulaymān Ibn ‘Abd Al-Malik only renovated it after the Islamic conquest when it lost its administrative significance to the neighbouring town of al-Ludda. It is well known that the Umayyad rulers (*Emīrs*) and their successors often used to spend time in the Syrian desert where they built many palaces.³ Some sources and narrations indicate that Sulaymān Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, who was Crown Prince, took residence in al-Ramla when his brother Caliph al-Walīd Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik died (he ruled between 86 - 96 AH).⁴ From there he headed towards Jerusalem to take the people’s allegiance for a new Caliph.⁵ In addition to that, there are narrations which indicate that the renovation and rebuilding of al-Ramla was only completed during the reign of Hishām Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, who ruled between 105-125 A.H/ 723-743 A.D,⁶ and who completed the building of its mosque. This in effect means that Sulaymān did not find al-Ramla as a new town. All he did was to rebuild and renovate the old Byzantine town which used to bear the

¹Muri, p. 132.

²See: ‘Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 75.

³See Twqān, Fawāz Ahmad. *Al-Hā’ir Fī al-‘Imāra al-Umawīyya al-Islāmiyya*, al-Mutamar al-Dawli li Tārīkh Bilād al-Shām (Jordan University, ‘Ammān, 1974), Pp. 71-75.

⁴For more details about al-Walīd Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik see Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 413. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, p. 359.

⁵Mu’alif Majhūl. *Al-‘Uyūm wal-Hadāiq*, edited by M. Y. De Goige (Leaden Press, 1869), Vol, 3, p. 16. See also: Ibn Al-Murajjā, p.262.

⁶For more details about Hishām Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik life see Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol, 2, p. 533. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, p. 365.

same name. He might have started rebuilding the town in the later years of his rule or it might have been that the work was slow because the process was nearly completed some considerable time after his death.¹ This makes him appear to be the founder of the town not merely the man who put forward the idea of rebuilding it.

As for the exaggeration and glorification by Sayf of the role of his tribe, the Tamīm, and giving it priority over other tribes with regard to the Islamic conquests, the researcher did not find anything to indicate this, neither in the narrations of Sayf nor in all the narrations mentioned in the Islamic sources. In other words, nothing was mentioned about the contribution of Tamīm, or any of its members, to the conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem). Even if Sayf exaggerated the role of Tamīm in contributing to the Islamic conquests, this still remains an issue outside the domain of this research. If this had actually taken place, it would indeed have been true for Iraq, where the Tamīm contributed to the conquests, but not for Syria. Therefore, to accuse Sayf of ignorance and the attempt to cast doubt on the Islamic sources as well as upon a major historic event such as the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), while there is no evidence to indicate any gain for Sayf or any other narrator emphasis the role of the caliph ‘Umar in this event and this can only be understood as distortion displaying bias against Islamic sources.

With regard to the attempts by some people such as D. Goitein, H. Busse and Gil to allege that the Islamic sources are legends whose aim is to erase the Christian character of Jerusalem and replace it with an Islamic character; the researcher would like to make

¹Al-Maqdisī. *The Best*, Pp. 150 – 151.

the following point. Moshe Gil who alleges that the Islamic sources have greatly exaggerated and glorified the role of Caliph 'Umar in the first Islamic conquest of the city, concedes that when the Muslims arrived and laid siege to Jerusalem in order to conquer it, it was not new or strange to them since it was their first *qibla* (direction of prayer) and the place to which Prophet Muhammad was taken in the night journey.¹ The researcher found no indications which revealed that the Muslims attempted to change the Christian character of Jerusalem. On the contrary, the archaeological excavations indicate and confirm that the process of building churches continued immediately after the first Islamic conquest.² Al-Maqdisī indicates that at his time (d. 390 A.H/ 1000 A.D) the Jews and the Christians were a majority in Jerusalem and they controlled most of the public services.³

In opposition to the above allegations, the famous English historian, Karen Armstrong who is well known for her generally serious and moderate studies on Jerusalem, argues that the Muslims did not attempt to build any mosque in the Christian quarter of Jerusalem. They also did not show a desire to create facts on the ground until after the Crusades, which totally demolished the relations between the three religions. Up until the time of the Crusades, Jerusalem was generally a Christian city and the Muslims were a minority.⁴

¹Gil. *A History of Palestine*, Pp. 65 - 66.

²See: al-Hamāmī, Sālih. *Al-Masīhiyya fī Ard al-Shām fī Awā'il al-Hukm al-Islāmī*, al-Mutamar al-Dawli li Tārīkh Bilād al-Shām (Jordan University, 'Ammān, 1974), p. 557.

³Al-Maqdisī, p. 152.

⁴Armstrong, Karen. *Sacred Space: the holiness of Islamic Jerusalem* (Journal of Islamic Jerusalem studies, Vol. 1, N 1, Winter 1997), Pp. 14-15.

Finally, from this analysis and discussion of the views of some modern researchers especially D. Goitien and H. Busse, whom deny the historical fact of the role of the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s in the conquest, cast doubt on the significance of the Islamic sources relating to the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem, and casting doubt on the whole process of the Islamic conquest, one can only wonder of their attitude. One can say that, they develop arguments, which aim at the abolition of the history of a whole nation by relying upon individual narrations without any examination or investigation. It appears that there are reasons, which prompt such researchers to adopt such attitudes. El-‘Awaisī argues that the reasons behind these biased studies, which are based neither on academic logical analysis nor historical criticism, are rooted in the religious and political rationale of the war being waged at present by the governing establishment in Israel. The aim of this establishment is to impose total control over Jerusalem. Therefore, the attempt by some Israeli academics and orientalist to generally minimise the significance of the Islamic sources relating to the period of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia and the importance of the region to Islam in particular, is aimed at the abolition of facts and the rewriting of the history of Islamic Jerusalem from a single viewpoint.¹

Although the reasons put forward by El-‘Awaisī might in fact be sufficient, the researcher would like to draw attention to another reason, which is no less important. These researchers are generally governed by the belief in the so-called historic rights of the Jews in the land of Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular. They depend upon this right to justify their control of the Islamic Jerusalem and to legalise the attempts to change both its Islamic and Christian characters and replace them with a Jewish

¹El-Awaisī. *‘Umar’s Assurance*, p. 52.

character. In other words, these attitudes are part of the conflict and the war, which has been waged over the city. They direct all their efforts towards rewriting the history of the city from a single viewpoint and depend upon the exaggeration of anything, which supports their view.

Chapter Two

The Topography and Geographical Boundaries of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) Region

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Introduction

From a historical point view, Aelia was not a small city surrounded by walls with an area less than 800 square meters, as one would first imagine these days,¹ but was totally different from this assumption. It seems that Aelia, before the first Islamic conquest and probably for a considerable time after it, was considered a region and not just a mere city.

The issue of studying the geographical boundaries might seem to be of no great significance for someone who studies history, especially when the matter is related to the boundaries of a region, which have been defined for more than 1850 years before these days. However, the matter is different with Islamic Jerusalem, especially when we study it during the early Islamic period; it is important, and indeed necessary, to know the boundaries of this region and its topography. This will provide answers to many questions related to the causes of inaccuracies and even contradiction in the Islamic sources on the first Islamic conquest. These issues include the siege of the region, and the military commanders who took part in conquering the region, in addition to the date of the conquest.

The difficulty of studying the geographical boundaries of a region or a specific city in the early Islamic period is represented by the fact that the Islamic sources,

¹For more details about the boundaries of *Al-Aqṣā* Mosque area and the old city of Jerusalem at present time see al-Khaṣāwnī, Sāmī Karyīm. *Qadiyat al-Quds fī litār al-Taswīyya al-Siyāsīyya lil-Sirā' al-'Arabī al-Israēlī 1948-1998* (Risālt Mājistāir, University of Jordan, 'Ammān, (unpublished)), Pp.3-4. 'Ārif al-'Ārif, Pp. 303-306. Najim, Ra'if. *Al-Ma'ālim al-Tārikhiyya lil-Quds* (Majalat Shu'ūn 'Arabīa, no, 4, Tunisia 1984), Pp.29-30. Maḥmud Masāliha claims that the Muslims own only 2 Km in present-day Jerusalem which means he believed that this area is all the expanded boundaries of Islamic Jerusalem. Masāliha, Maḥmud. *Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā al-Mubārak wa-Hayykal Banī Israēl. Sirā' al-'Adyān baīna al-Yahūdīa wal-Islām 'Alā Makān Haīkal Sulayymān* (Jerusalem, 1418 A.H/ 1997 A.D), p. 84.

especially the historical ones, pay scant attention to such issues. In addition, the early geographical sources did not take cognisance of the boundaries of the cities in general. The matter becomes increasingly difficult when we study the geographical boundaries of Palestine in general and Aelia in particular. This is because, with the emergence of Islam, new terms and concepts emerged such as the Blessed Land, the Holy Land and the Sacred Land. In order to distinguish between these concepts one would have to conduct specific and lengthy studies. This is primarily because the sources have inaccuracies many issues relating to these new concepts and to the boundaries of the Aelia region before the advent of Islam.

The researcher did not find anyone, especially among Muslim researchers, who paid attention to studying the geographical aspect of Aelia, either before the first Islamic conquest or after. However, there have been a few attempts by some orientalisks, especially the Israelis, to study the history of Palestine before or after the Islamic conquest. Their aim was to delineate the boundaries of the region, in which the Byzantines prevented the Jews from residing after the war of Bār Kūhba (132 – 135 A.D). The majority of these studies have depended on the Bible as their main source. They contain many contradictions and inaccuracies, and they therefore are not necessarily to be taken as undisputed fact. When they are subjected to criticism and discussion, these contradictions become self-evident.

The aim of this chapter is to attempt to establish the topography and geographical boundaries of the Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) region. This spans the time when clear boundaries were set for this region by the Byzantine Emperor Hadrian in 135 A.D when he named it Aelia, until the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in it on the eve of

the first Islamic conquest of the region. This knowledge will be useful later on when we attempt to find some explanations for the reasons behind the contradictions in the Islamic sources regarding many issues related to the first Islamic conquest.

2.1. Historical Accounts

Before examining the geographical sources related to the topography and geographical boundaries of the Aelia region, it is important to point out that the Islamic sources especially the historical sources, for a very long time after the conquest, continued to use the Byzantine name for the region (Aelia). The name is sometimes followed by a semi-note, which indicates that this region is the region of Bayt al-Maqdis.¹ This gives us a very strong indication that the Muslims preserved this region as it was before the Islamic conquest. In other words, they did not introduce any major changes to the geographical boundaries of the region, which continued to be the same for a long time after the first Islamic conquest. The evidence for this is that the name the Muslims used to call the region, i.e. Bayt al-Maqdis, was only used individually in later eras. However, the Muslim historians did not pay any attention to distinguishing between the different eras of the Byzantines and the Muslims and thus they fell into many inaccuracies and contradictions because of their use of different terminologies such as Aelia, Bayt al-Maqdis, al-Quds and others, as we shall see later.

Although neither early nor late Islamic historical sources gave credence to the issues of geography and boundaries, it is important to draw attention to an important

¹See for example: Ibn Sa'd. Vol. 1, p. 47, 251, 259. Vol. 3, p. 516. Al-Balādhurī. *Futūḥ*, p. 144. Ibn A'tham, Pp. 222, 223. Al-Azdī, p. 162. Ibn al-Athīr. *Al-Kāmil*, Vol. 2, Pp. 47, 249.

account, which related to Aelia and its region. Both Abī ‘Ubayd (d. 224 A.H/ 839 A.D) in *Kitāb al-Amwāl* and al-Balādhurī (d. 279 A.H/ 892 A.D) in *Futūḥ al-Buldān* and the later source Ibn al-Murajjā (442 A.H/ 1050 A.D) in *Fadā’il Bayt al-Maqdis wa al-Khalīl wa Fadā’il al-Shām* give this account, with the same transmission chain on the authority of ‘Abdullah Ibn Ṣālih (d. 223 A.H/ 838 A.H) on the authority of al-Layyṭh Ibn Sa’d (d. 165 A.H/ 782 A.D) on the authority of Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb (d.128 A.H/ 746 A.D). They mentioned that:

حدثني القاسم بن سلام قال، حدثنا عبد الله بن صالح عن الليث بن سعد عن يزيد ابن ابي حبيب أن عمر بن الخطاب بعث خالد بن ثابت الفهمي الى بيت المقدس في جيش، و عمر يومئذ بالجاييه فقاتلهم فاعطوه ان يكون لهم ما احاط به حصنها على شئ يؤدونه، و يكون للمسلمين ما كان خارجا منها، فقال خالد: قد بايعناكم على هذا ان رضي به امير المؤمنين. وكتب خالد الى عمر يخبره عن الذي صنع الله له، فكتب اليه " ان قف على حالك حتى اقدم عليك " فوقف خالد عن قتالهم، و قدم عمر مكانه ففتحوا له بيت المقدس على ما بايعهم عليه خالد بن ثابت: قال فبيت المقدس سمي فتح عمر بن الخطاب.¹

Abī ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām said: ‘Abdullah Ib Ṣālih told him from al-Layyṭh Ibn Sa’d from Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb Khālīd Ibn-Thābit al-Fahmī was sent by ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb, who was at that time in al-Jābiya at the head of an army to Bayt al-Maqdis. After Khālīd fought its

¹Abī ‘Ubayd, p. 153. Baladhurī. *Futūḥ*, Pp. 144-145. Ibn al-Murajjā, Abū al-M‘ālī al-Musharraf. *Fadā’il Bayt al-Maqdis wa al-Khalīl wa Fadā’il al-Shām*, edited by Livnī, ‘Ufir (Shfā‘āmir, Palestine, 1995), 54. (In another account both of Abī ‘Ubayd and Ibn al-Murajjā reported that the ‘Umar sent a man from the Judāila tribe to Aelia), Abī ‘Ubayd, Pp. 152-153. Ibn al-Murajjā, p. 52.

inhabitants, they agreed that the part surrounded by the walls should remain in their hands upon payment to the Muslims (*Jizya* tax), while the part outside the walls would be in the hands of the Muslims. Khālīd said to them, we have agreed to make peace with you on this, provided that the Commander of the Faithful (‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb) accepts it. He then wrote to ‘Umar and informed him about what had happened with him (*Mādhā Šana ‘a Allah Lahū*). ‘Umar wrote back to him: hold your position until I reach you. Khālīd stopped fighting them and ‘Umar came. When ‘Umar arrived, the inhabitants of Bayt al-Maqdis handed it over to him (‘Umar) on the basis of the peace treaty concluded with Khālīd Ibn-Thābit. Therefore, it is said that Bayt al-Maqdis was re-named ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s conquest.

Al-Azdī (d. 430 A.H/ 1039 A.D) also cites evidence from which we can understand that the Aelia region, before the first Islamic conquest, extended over a vast area towards present day Jordan. In a message sent by ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āš to Abū ‘Ubayda before the battle of al-Yarmūk, he informed him that a large number of the people of Aelia and many others among the people of Jordan had breached the peace treaty they had made with him when a new Byzantine force arrived in Syria, in addition to the Muslim withdrawals from many areas they had previously conquered.¹ The fact that ‘Amr, when he had sent his message, had gathered the people of Jordan and some of Aelia people, warned them and asked them to accompany him to Aelia,² greatly emphasis

¹Azdī, p. 162.

²Ibid, Pp. 162-168.

and verifies 'Amr's presence in the Jordan area at that time and shows that a section of the people of Aelia were close to him. In other words, these people are considered among the inhabitants of Aelia and the Aelia region used to cover or include these areas. Therefore, we can say that 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ, at that time and prior to it had concluded a peace treaty in which those inhabitants of Aelia who resided outside the walled part and further from it were considered to be inhabitants of its region.

This important text message sent by 'Amr runs as follows:

أما بعد فإن أهل إيلياء وكثيرا ممن صالحناهم من أهل الأردن
قد نقضوا العهد فيما بيننا وبينهم وذكروا أن الروم اقبلت إلى
وأنكم قد خليتم لهم عن الارض الشام بقضها وقضيضها
وخرجتم منها وأقبلتم منصرفين عنها، جرأهم ذلك علي
وعلى من قبلي من المسلمين وقد تراسلوا وتواثقوا
وتعاقدوا، ليسرن إلي.....

The people of Aelia and many others among the people of Jordan, with whom we concluded peace covenants, have breached the covenant we made between us. They mentioned that the Byzantines have arrived in great armies and that you (the Muslims) withdrew from the land and left it for them. This has made them more daring and aggressive towards me and the Muslims under my command. They exchanged correspondence and made a deal to advance towards my stronghold.¹

This message shows that 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ had conquered peacefully the part outside the walls of the Aelia region after the battle of al-Yarmūk (15 A.H/ 636 A.D).

¹Azdī, p. 162.

For several reasons, which will be discussed later, the researcher totally dismisses the fact that Khālid Ibn Thābit was the conqueror of Jerusalem or that he was the person who concluded a peace treaty with its inhabitants. However, al-Balādhurī and al-Azdī accounts contain a very strong indication which supports my assumption that Aelia, on the eve of the Islamic conquest, was not merely the region that lay inside the walls, but rather a vast region which extended for longer distances outside these walls. In other words, the area outside the walls was considered an inseparable part of Aelia and the Muslims dealt with it on this basis.

2.2. Examination of the Geographical Accounts

The information supplied by the early Islamic geographical sources about the Aelia region and its boundaries before the first Islamic conquest, is to some extent, general information. It sheds light on the sacred sites in the walled part, as well as giving some description of the topography of the region outside the walls. Ibn Khurdudhāba (205 – 280 A.H/ 820-893 A.D) in *al-Masālik wal-Mamālik*, al-Hamadhanī (d. 290 A.H/ 903 A.D) in *al-Buldān*, and al-Ya'qūbī (d. 292 A.H/ 905 A.D) in *al-Buldān* have mentioned the issue of the sacred sites.¹

Although the information about the Aelia region and its boundaries, supplied by the early Islamic geographical sources is somewhat general, the successive sources give a

¹See: al-'Asalī, Kāmīl Jamīl. *Bayt al-Maqdis fi Kutub al-Rahalāt 'Ind al-'Arab wa al-Muslimiyyin* ('Ammān, 1992), Pp. 22-23. Guy, Le Starnge. *Palestine Under The Muslims* (Cambridge University Press, 1890), Pp. 83-137, 138-172, Pp. 173-223. Elad, Amikham. *Medival Jerusalem and Islam Worship* (E.J Brill, Leaden. New York, 1995), Pp. 4-6.

description of and information about the Aelia region before the first Islamic conquest, detailing its topography and geographical boundaries. We notice this from Ibn Haūqal (d. 376 A.H/ 986 A.D) in *Ṣūrat al-Ard*; al-Maqdisī (d. 390 A.H/ 1000 A.D) in *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm*; Yāqūt al-Ḥamāwī (d. 626 A.H/ 1229 A.D) in *Mu'jam al-Buldān*; al-Tifāshī (d. 651 A.H/ 1253 A.D) in *Surūr al-Nafs bi Madārik al-Hawās al-Khams* who is quoted by many of the successive sources, such al-Qalaqashandī (d. 665 A.H/ 1257 A.D) in *Subḥ al-A'sha fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'* and Ibn Fadlullah Al-'Amrī (d. 749 A.H/ 1348 A.D) in *Masālik al-Absār Fi Mamālik al-Amsār*, and others.¹

Al-Maqdisī (d. 390 A.H/ 1000 A.D) and al-Tifāshī (d. 651 A.H/ 1229 A.D) are the only scholars who have mentioned specific estimates of the area of the Aelia region before the first Islamic conquest. They have estimated that this extended to 40 miles.² At the same time, they presented a description, which seems to be more accurate than the description presented by other scholars about the topography of this region and its boundaries from the four directions. Al-Maqdisī describes part of the city of Jerusalem and its region. He says that there was not among the towns of the provinces (meaning Syria or Bilād al-Shām) one bigger than Bayt al-Maqdis, it was smaller than Makka and wider than al-Madīna. Furthermore, the Bayt al-Maqdis area was a mountain, its hills covered with trees and within it there were three ponds: Birkat Banū Isra'īl, Birkat

¹Ibn Haūqal, Abī al-Qāsim Ibn al-Nisyybī. *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Ard* (Manshūrāt Dār Maktabat al-Hayāh, Beirut, (ed), Pp. 158-159. Al-Maqdisī, *The Best*, Pp. 138-166, Pp.151-155, Pp.167-171. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn 'Abdullah al-Rumī al-Baqdādī. *Kitāb Mu'jam al-Buldān*, edited by al-Jindī, Farīd 'Abd al-'Azīz (Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1990), Vol. 5, Pp. 195-201. Al-Qalaqashandī, Abī al-'Abbās Ahmad Ibn 'Alī. *Subḥ al-'Ashā fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'* (Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, 1922), Vol. 4. Pp. 100-103. See also Al-'Amrī, Shihāb al-Dīn 'Alī Ibn al-'Abbās Ahmad Ibn Yahyā Ibn Fadlullah. *Masālik al-Absār Fi Mamālik al-Amsār: Daūlat al-Mamālīk al-Aūlā*, edited by Durotya Krafuliski (Al-Markaz al-Islāmī Lil-Buhūth, Beirut, 1986), p.123.

²Al-Maqdisī, *The Best*, p. 157. Al-'Amrī, p. 123.

Sulaymān and Bikat ‘Iiyād.¹ According to him, this region was divided into four zones, the second zone where Bayt al-Maqdis lay was mountainous country, wooded, with villages, springs, and cultivated fields. The main cities situated here were: Bayt Jibrīn, Bayt al-Maqdis, Nāblus, al-Lajjuū, Kābūl, Qādis, al-Biqā’, and Antākya (Antioch).²

This description is mentioned by Yāqūt al-Ḥamāwī (d. 626 A.H/ 1229 A.H), who mentions a similar text,³ and who also thinks that Hebron used to be part of the Aelia region.⁴ Furthermore, al-‘Amrī (d. 749 A.H/ 1348 A.D) thinks that Nāblus also lay on the same mountain as the Aelia region,⁵ which, before the first Islamic conquest, used to be called Aelia.⁶

Ibn Fadlullah al-‘Amrī (d. 749 A.H/ 1348 A.D) and al-Qalaqashandī (d. 665 A.H/ 1267 A.D) distinguish between two regions in Palestine. The first region was after the advent of Islam, the sacred land (*al-Ard al-Mubāraka*). The second was before the first Islamic conquest of Aelia. Thus they avoided many inaccuracies which could have been caused by the use of such terminologies. Al-‘Amrī mentions that *al-Quds al-Sharīf* or *al-Ard al-Muqddasa* included the city of Jerusalem and the area around it up to the Jordan River which was called al-Sharī‘a and up to Palestine which was called al-Ramla. It also

¹Ibid, Pp.151-152.

²Ibid, Pp. 169-170.

³Yāqūt, Vol. 5, Pp. 195-196.

⁴Ibid, Vol. 2, p. 245.

⁵Al-‘Amrī, p. 124.

⁶Ibid, p. 123.

extended from the Syrian Sea (the Mediterranean Sea) to the cities of Lūt in breadth. Mountains and valleys covered most of this region except for its edges.¹

This is the same text, which is cited by al-Qalaqashandī when he deals with the Sacred Land.² As for Islamic Jerusalem or Aelia as it was known before the first Islamic conquest, al-‘Amrī narrating from al-Tīfāshī states:

قال التيفاشي في كتاب "سرور النفس بمدارك الحواس الخمس ذكرت الرواة ان هذه الارض التي بارك الله فيها وحولها أربعون ميلا في أربعون ميلا عرضا في تدوير بيت المقدس، والبيت المقدس في وسطها. وكان اسمها في الزمن الأول إيلياء، وقول الله تعالى يحقق ان بيت المقدس في وسط تربيع الارض المقدسة التي بارك الله فيها.

Al-Tīfāshī said in his book *Surūr al-Nafs bi Madārik al-Ḥawās al-Khams*, that the narrators mentioned that this is the Land which Allah blessed, around forty miles in length by forty miles in breadth. Al-Bayt al-Muqadas (*Al-Aqsā* mosque). Jerusalem lies in its centre. It used to be named Aelia in ancient times (before the first Islamic conquest). The saying of Almighty Allah, confirms that Bayt al-Maqdis lies at the centre or the middle of the Land that Allah blessed.³

¹Al-‘Amrī, Pp. 208-209.

²Qalaqashandī, Vol. 4, Pp. 104-105.

³Al-‘Amrī, p. 123.

He further adds that Nāblus used to be part of this region and was included within its boundaries.¹

Al-Maḡdisī (d.390 A.H/ 1000 A.D) who was born in the region, lived there for many years and traveled widely as a geography scholar, is considered the first scholar to give an estimation of the distance through which the Islamic Jerusalem region (known as Aelia before the first Islamic conquest) extended.

At the same time, he gave a good and detailed description of this region. However, it appears that there is a contradiction between the estimate he gave for the extension of this region (40 miles) and the description and the geographical boundaries he mentioned for the same region. From his description it seems that this region extended much farther than 40 miles. He claims:

وحد القدس ما حول إيلياء الى أربعين ميلا يدخل ذلك:
القصة ومد نها. واثنا عشر ميلا في البحر وصغر ومآب
وخمسة أميال من البادية ومن قبل القبلة الى ما وراء
الكسيفه وما يحاذيها ومن قبل الشمال تخوم نابلس وهذه
الأرض مباركة كما قال الله تعالى مشجرة الجبال زريعة
السهول من غير سقي ولا أنهار وكما قال الرجلان لموسى
بن عمران وجدنا بلدا يفيض لبنا وعسلا.

The limit (boundary) of the Holy City (*Al-Quds* i.e, Jerusalem) extends over the area around Jerusalem (Aelia) for forty miles, including the capital and independent towns, twelve miles of the seashore, the towns of Sughar and Ma'āb, and five miles of desert (from the *Bādīa* i. e,

¹Ibid, p.124.

semi-desert). To the south (to the qibla) it extends to beyond al-Kusayfa and the land parallel to this. To the north it reaches the limits of Nābulus. This land is "blessed", as God-may he be exalted-has declared; the hills are covered with trees, the plains are cultivated, needing neither irrigation nor the watering of rivers. As the two men reported to Moses the son of 'Imrān: "We came on a land flowing with milk and honey".¹

From the analysis of this text, it becomes clear that there is inaccuracy in the distances he mentioned in his text regarding the extension of the Aelia region. For instance, the real distance from the centre of Islamic Jerusalem to the nearest spot on the edge of the sea (Dead Sea) was 18 miles and this distance reached 30 miles up to Mu'āb from the east. As for the west, we notice that al-Maḡdisī does not mention anything at all, unless he covers this by saying, "and five miles of the *Bādiya* (semi-desert)".

Furthermore, as for the north the real distance from the centre of Islamic Jerusalem to the boundaries of Nāblus, (which was the 'Aqraba area) for which al-Maḡdisī does not give an estimation of its distance, was 30 miles. To the al-Kusayyfa² area and the area parallel to it from the south the distance exceeded 40 miles. This means that the region extended more than 70 miles from the north to the south (from 'Aqraba to al-Kusayyfa) and 35 miles from the east to the west (from Mu'āb to Gāzar and 'Imwās up to five miles from the *Bādiya*(semi-desert).

¹Al-Maḡdisī. *The Best*, p. 157. It can be noticed that the translator did not use either the name Aelia which is mentioned in the Arabic text or the word *qibla*. Therefore, the researcher put them between brackets to confirm that they do exist in the Arabic text mentioned by Al-Maḡdisī.

²Al-Kusayyfa still keeps its name until the present day, it is a town that lies at the start of the northern Negev desert in present Palestine. See 'Arāf, Shukrī. *Jundā al-Urdun wa Filastīn fī al-Adab al-Guḡhrāfī al-Islāmī* (Matba'at al-Sharq al-'Arabīā, Jerusalem, n.d), p. 188.

From this discussion it becomes clear to what extent there is a contradiction between the estimate mentioned by al-Maqdisī for the extension of this region and the description he mentioned about its geographical boundaries. Thus the researcher can draw up two different maps for this region. In the first map, the Aelia region (Islamic Jerusalem) extended forty miles in length by forty miles in breadth where its extension from the centre of Islamic Jerusalem would have been as follows:

To the east, it extended to the edge of the seashore (18 miles).¹ This means that the region extended 22 miles to the west, i.e. up to the boundaries of Gāzar and ‘Imwās. To the north it extended up to the district of Guphna (short of the limits of Nāblus). To the south it extended to the northern boundaries of Hebron, i.e. the areas of Halhūl and Sa‘īr.²

In the second map, the extent of Aelia region (Islamic Jerusalem) would have been as follows:

To the east it extended to Mu’āb (30 miles). This means that it included parts of the sea and five miles to the west. To the north it extended to the boundaries of Nāblus, i.e. the area of ‘Aqraba (30 miles). To the south it extended to beyond al-Kusayyfa and the land parallel to it (40 miles).³

When we take into account the description mentioned by different sources which are in agreement that the topography of the Aelia region (Islamic Jerusalem) was

¹The researcher use the Roman mile which the same that used by Al-Maqdisī.

²See the map, p. 53.

³See the map, p.54.

a mountainous one,¹ as well as Yāqūt's assumption that Hebron and Nāblus were parts of it, we will have then a new and different map. In this map the Aelia region (Islamic Jerusalem) extends as follows:

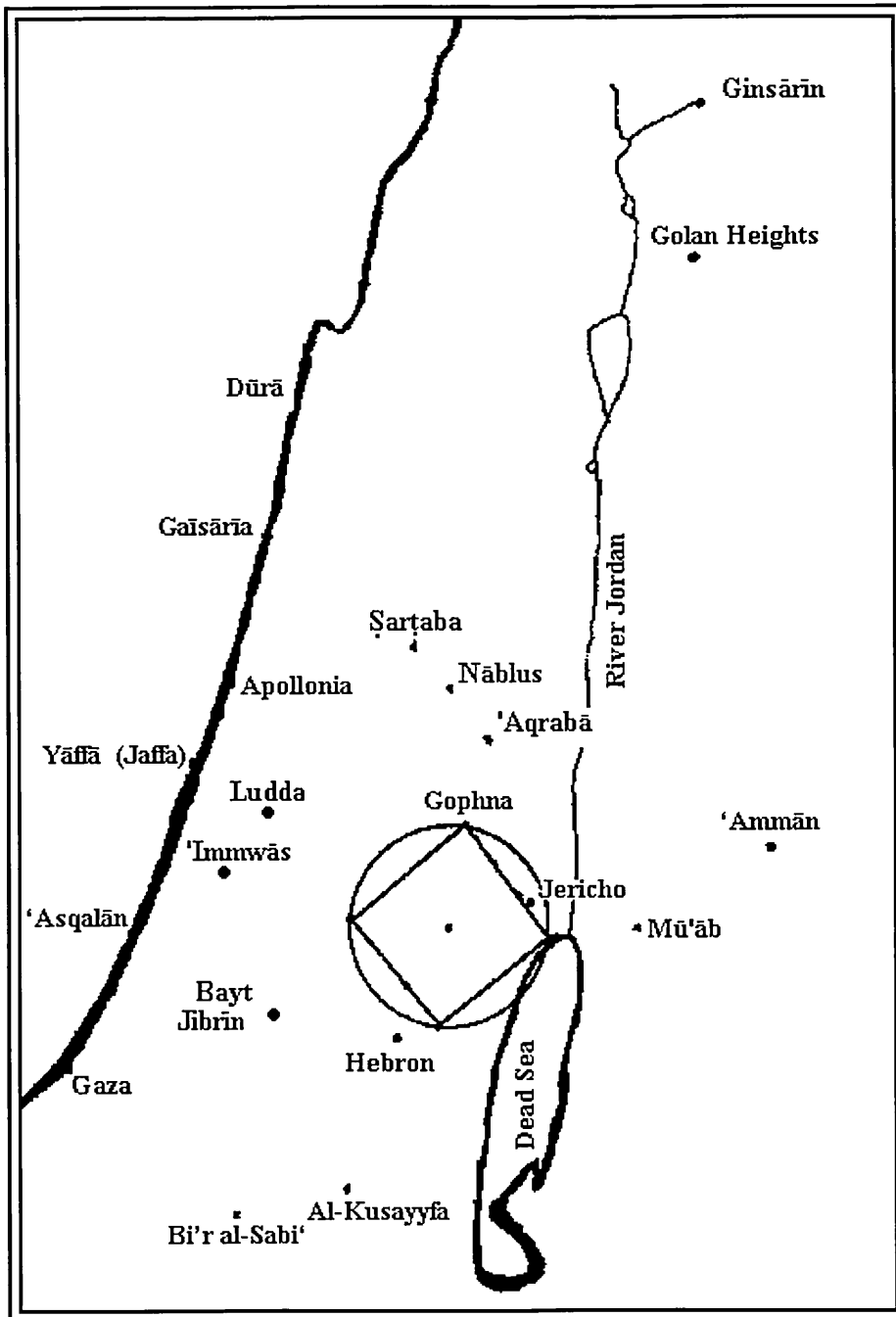
It extended from Mu'āb in the east to Ludda, Bayt Jibrīn and 'Imwās in the west. It extended from the northern boundaries of Nāblus, i. e. the area of Ṣartaba in the north to al-Kusayyfa and the area parallel to it in the south.²

The researcher argues, despite the great difficulty of identifying accurate boundaries for the extension of the Aelia region before the first Islamic conquest, we can say that descriptions cited by the sources contain a significant accuracy.

¹See Al-Maqdisī. *The Best*, Pp. 151-157. Ibn Haūqal, Pp. 158-159. Al-'Amrī, Pp. 208-209. Yāqūt, Vol. 5, P.193-201. Qalaqashandī, Vol. 4, Pp. 101-103. Ibn Shaddād, 'Iz al-Dīn Abī 'Abdullah Muhammad Ibn 'Alī al-Ḥilabī. *Al-A'lāq al-Khatīrā fi Umarā' al-Shām wa al-Jazīyyra: Tārīkh Lubnān, Sūriyya wa Filstīn*, edited by al-Dahān, Sāmī (Dār Ṣādir and Dār Beirut, 1962), p. 198. Al-Qizwīnī, Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd. *Athār al-Bilād wa Akhbār al-'Ibād* (Dār Ṣādir wa Dār Beirut, n. d), p. 77.

²See the map, p. 56.

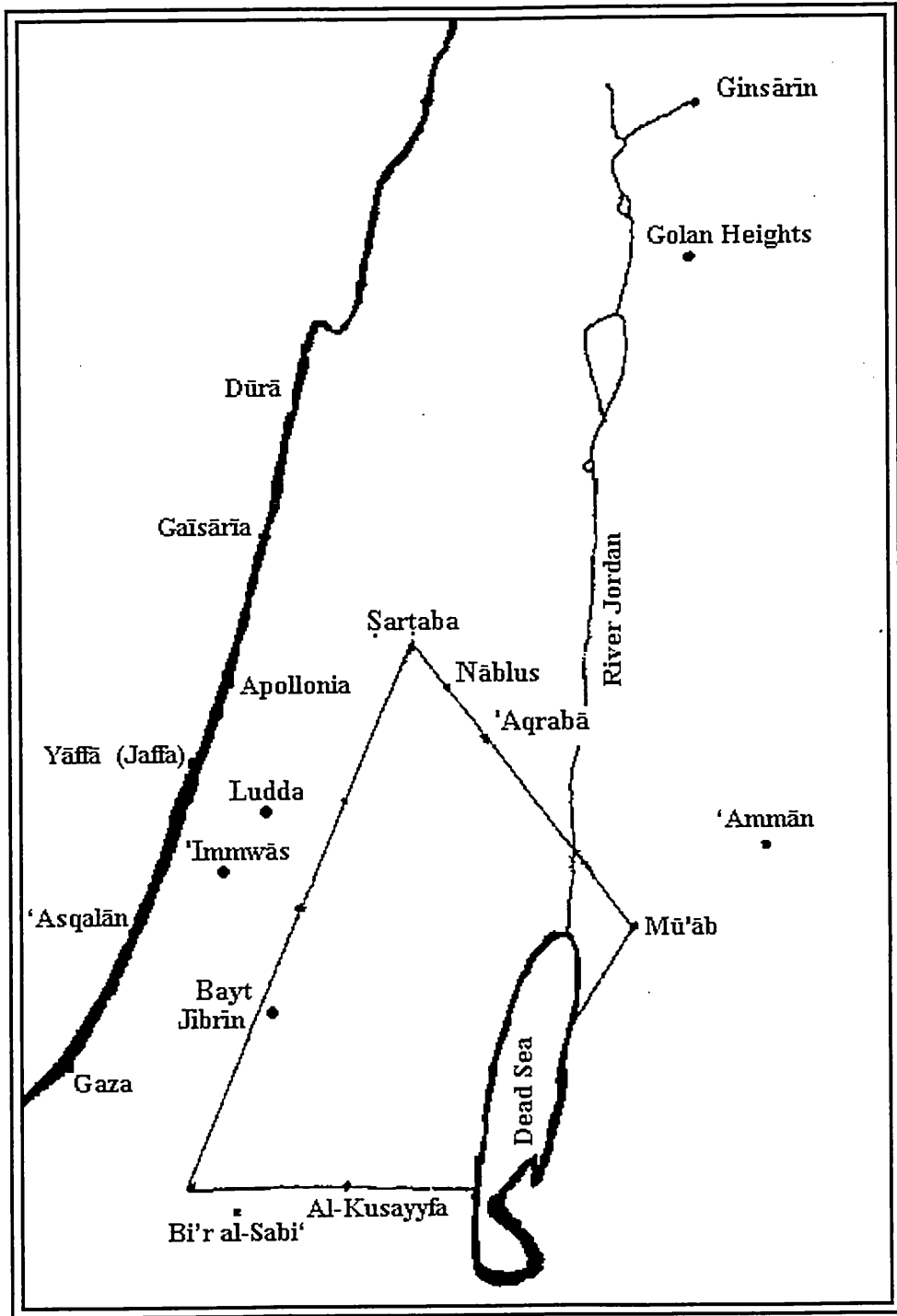
0 10 20 30 Kilometres
 0 5 10 15 20 Miles



Map (1)

This map has been drawn up on the basis of the estimation of al-Maqdisi (The Best Division for Knowledge of the Regions)). A Translation of (*Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fi Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm*), translated by Basil Anthony Collins, reviewed by Muhammad Ḥamid al-Tal (Center for Muslim Conurbation to Civilization, 1994), p. 157.

0 10 20 30 Kilometres
 0 5 10 15 20 Miles



Map (2)

This map has been drawn up on the basis of the description of geographical sources of the Aelia (Jerusalem) region's extended boundaries before the first Islamic conquest. Among these sources are: Al-Maqdist, Ibn Haūqal, Yāqūt al-H amawī, Ibn Fadlullah Al-'Amrī, al-Qalaqashandī and others.

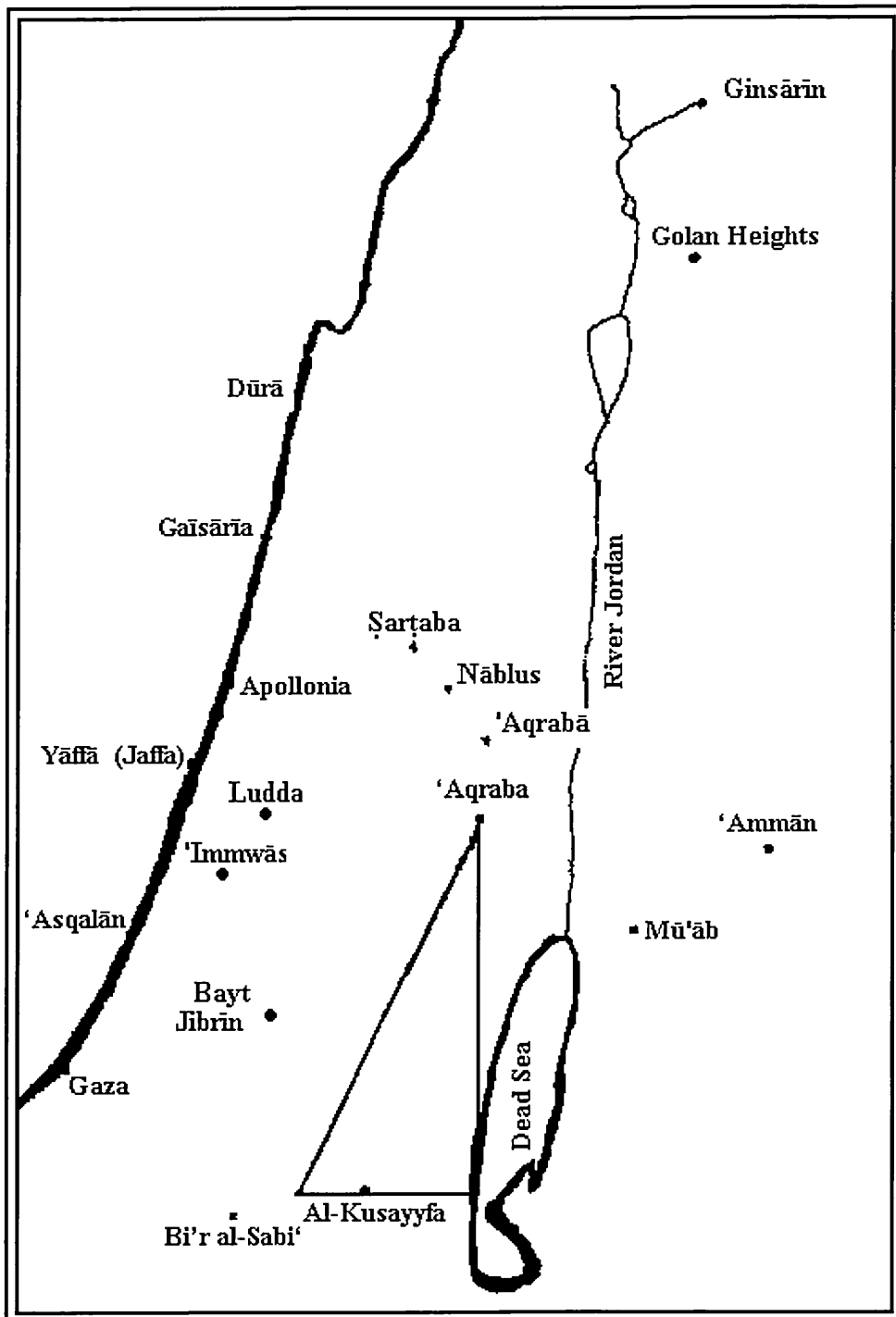
Geographically, it is well known that the area which extended from Nāblus to al-Kusayyfa in addition to the area of Ludda, Gāzar, ‘Imwās, Bayt Jibrīn and the other areas west of Jerusalem, except for the eastern side which was a low area, all have the same topography that lies on the same mountain range. This range starts from Mu’āb and al-Karak and continues in the direction of Nāblus, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron. From the south of Hebron, it starts to gradually decline until it totally disappears in al-Negve desert close to Bi’r al-Sabi’.¹ In other words, these mountains disappear in al-Kusaiyyfa area and the area parallel to it. This is the same area, which is cited by al-Maqdisī as the boundaries of the Islamic Jerusalem region from the south. He also called it *al-Jabal* (mountain) region and mentioned the names of other areas, which lay within.

From ‘Amr’s message to Abū ‘Ubyda we understand that the peace treaties up to that time were concluded with an element of the people of Aelia and a section of the people of Jordan and not with all of them. In other words, they were concluded with the people of Aelia who resided in the area close to the area where ‘Amr was. Even Ibn ‘Asakir (d. 539 A.H/ 1144 A.D) when he talked about the place where ‘Ubāda Ibn al-Ṣāmit (d 34 A.H/ 645 A.D),² died he mentioned that ‘Ubāda died in al-Ramla at Bayt al-Maqdis. This means that he made al-Ramla part of Bayt al-Maqdis (Islamic Jerusalem).

¹See Jibāra, Tayysīr. *Dirasāt fī Tārīkh Filasṭīn al-Ḥadīth* (Mu’assasat al-Baṭādir al-Sahafīyya, Filasṭīn, al-Quds, 2 th, 1986), p.4.

²See Khalīfa. *Tabaqāt*, Vol, 1, p. 220. Vol, 2, P.776. Khalīfa, *Tārīkh*, Vol, 1, p. 180. Ibn Sa’d, Vol, 3, p. 546, 621. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma’ārif*, p. 255. Ibn Ḥajar, Vol, 3, Pp. 505-507. Ibn Al-Thīr. *Uṣd*, Vol, 3, Pp160-161.

0 10 20 30 Kilometres
 0 5 10 15 20 Miles



Map (3)

This map has been drawn up on the basis of the description of al-Maqdisī (The best Division for Knowledge of the Regions). A Translation of (*A h. san al-Taqāsīm fi Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm*), translated by Basil Anthony Collins, reviewed by Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Tal (Center for Muslim Conurbation to Civilization, 1994), p. 157.

Since the region of Islamic Jerusalem was a vast area which extended to Mu'ab, Bayt Jibrīn and 'Imwās and included Nāblus in the north and al-Kusaiyyfa in the south, why did al-Maqdisī (d.390 A.H/ 1000 A.D) and al-Tifāshī (d. 651 A.H/ 1253 A.D) after him estimated that the extension of this region was forty miles and then describe a region whose boundaries extended much farther that?

In order to answer this question and explain the reason behind these inaccuracies, the researcher noticed that the Muslim geographic scholars did not use the mile as a unit for measuring distances except in very rare situations. In general, they used other terms in their estimations such as *al-Farsakh*, *al-Barīd*, *al-Yaūm* (a day's journey); and *al-Marḥala* (a stage) as the Arab geographic historian, Nicola Ziyāda, indicated.¹

In fact, we do not exactly know the terms which al-Tifāshī used for estimating distances because his book did not reach us. However, when we examine al-Maqdisī's writing we notice that he used the concepts and terms *al-Barīd*, *al-Yaūm*, *al-Marḥala* and *al-Farsakh*. He did not use the mile except in a few cases but not in his comments about Syria. This means that there is a strong indication that al-Maqdisī quotes this estimation from an earlier source without mentioning that source and without knowing exactly the length of the mile. However, the description he gives for the region would appear to be far more accurate than his estimation for the extension of the boundaries of the Islamic Jerusalem region. Al-Tifāshī then quoted this estimate from al-Maqdisī or from someone

¹Ziyāda, Nicola. *Gughrafiyyat al-Shām 'Inda Gughrafiyyū al-Qarn al-Rābi' al-Hijrī*, al-Mutamar al-Dawli Li Tārīkh Bilād al-shām, *Tārīkh Bilād al-shām Min al-Qarn al-Rābi' li al-Qarn al-Sābi' 'Ashar*, Jordan University, 'Ammān, 1974, edited by Muḥammād 'Adn ān al-Bakhīt, 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Durī and 'Umar al-Madanī (Al-Dār al-Mutaḥidah Lil-Nashir, Beirut), Pp. 151-152.

else without mentioning the source he quoted from. However al-'Amrī (d. 749 A.H/ 1348 A.D) clearly indicated that he was quoting al-Tifāshī (d. 651 A.H/ 1253 A.D).

In addition, the Muslim geographic scholars displayed a significant degree of accuracy when they used their own terms and concepts for measuring or estimating distances. Using the mile, however, caused them to make some errors. In fact, the concepts of *al-Barīd*, *al-Yaūm*, *al-Marhala*, *al-Farsakh* and others greatly suited the Arab nature of travelling from one place to another and the estimation of the time that they took to cover these distances. For instance, al-Maqdisī estimates the distance from al-Ramla to Jerusalem, Bait Jibril, 'Asqalān in every case as *Marhala* (one stage) and from Jerusalem to Bait Jibril, Masjid Ibrahim (mosque of Abraham in Hebron), Arīhā (Jericho); in every case as *Marhala* (one stage).¹

Furthermore, similar estimates were reported by Ibn Ḥaūqal (d. 376 A.H/ 986 A.D). He calculated the distance from al-Ramla to Jerusalem *Yaūm* (a day's journey), from Jerusalem to Masjid Ibrahim (Hebron), either *al-Yaūm* (a day's journey), from Jerusalem to Arīhā (Jericho) *Marhala* (a stage), and from Jerusalem to al-Balqā' *Marhalataīn* (two stages).² In fact, the distances from Jerusalem to these areas were very similar. They were close to each another, especially when we take into account the nature of the old roads, which linked them. This agrees with the geographical estimation mentioned above.

¹Al-Maqdisī. *The Best*, p. 175.

²Ibn Ḥaūqal, Pp. 170-171.

When the Byzantine Emperor Hadrian destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple in 135 A.D, he ordered the Jews to be excluded from residing in Jerusalem and gave it a new name (Aelia).¹ Part of this decree reads:

It is forbidden to all the circumcised persons to enter or stay within the territory of Aelia. Any contravening of this prohibition shall be put to death.²

It seems that the area that they were prohibited from entering was also clearly defined. However, it can be argued from Hadrian's decree that the area in which the Jews were prohibited from residing was not merely a city, but rather a large territory. This point can be understood by the fact that when Abu Baker sent the Muslims to conquer Syria, he sent 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ to two regions which were Palestine and Aelia with the words of Abū Bakr "You are assigned the task of conquering Palestine and Aelia " *'Alaika bi Filastīn wa Iilyā*" "عليك بفلسطين وإيلياء"³

2.3. Discussion of Modern Scholars Arguments

Avi Yonah and J. Wilkinson argue that the prohibition area included the districts of Guphna, Herodium and an area west of Jerusalem called Orine or "Hill country".⁴ Furthermore, Yonah states that this was the area which witnessed the fighting during the

¹See Peters, Pp. 124-130.

²See Yonah, Avi. *The Jews of Palestine. A political history from the Bar Kohba war to the Arab conquest* (Basil Blackwell. Oxford. 1976), p. 19. Wilkinson, John. *Jerusalem under the Rome and Byzantium: 63B.C-637 A.D* in al-'Asalī, Kāmīl Jamīl. *Jerusalem in History*, p. 88. Khān, Zhifir Islām. *Tārīkh Filastīn al-Qadīm 1220 B.C-1395 AD: Mundhū Awwal Khazū Yahūdī Hattā Aakhir Khazū Saiīti* (Dār al-Nafā'is, Beirut, 6 th, ed, 1992), Pp. 90-93.

³Al-Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol, 1&2. S. 1, p. 8.

⁴Yonah, p. 17. J. Wilkinson. *Jerusalem Under*, p. 88.

war of Bār Kūhba (132-135 A.D), when the war took place in Judaea, the 'King Mountain,' (Har-ha-Me-lekh; in Greek Orine), the area between Bethel in the north of Jerusalem, Kfar Lekita'a and 'Imwās on the Bayt Jibrīn-Hebron road south of Jerusalem.¹ Hadrian, therefore, prevented the Jews from residing in the area, which extended to Judaea, Orine, Herodium and 'Agraba. It must be noticed these areas extended far beyond the area which witnessed the fighting during the war of Bār Kūhba.

A modern study has been prepared by fifty scholars of history and archaeology from a dozen different countries, from Palestine to the Near East. This study reveals that the Aelia area which was defined by the Byzantines in 135 A.D included or extended to the Dead Sea in the east and to Bethlehem and 'Imwās in the west. To the north it extended to the limits of Guphna and Šartaba, which was considered part of Nāblus. To the south, this area touched the edge of the Dead Sea and continued in a zigzag manner to the Geliah area between Herodium and al-Dārūm.² It is interesting to note from the geographical boundaries mentioned in these studies that the Aelia region after 135 A.D was approximately the same region which al-Maqdisī estimated as being forty miles by forty miles.

The issue of these boundaries is related to Yonah's claim that the whole population of Palestine on both sides of the Jordan River at that time has been estimated as about two and a half million and the Jews among these as 1,300,000. However this number declined to between 700,000 and 800,000 after the war of Bār Kūhba. Among

¹Yonah. *The Jews of Palestine*, p. 19.

²*The Times Atlas of Bible*, edited by James B. Pritchard (Times books, London, 1987), p. 157.

those, between 300,000 and 400,000 were concentrated in Galilee.¹ After the war and Hadrian's decree in 135 A.D, the Jews remained living in three main areas, the Jordan valley near the Dead Sea; al- Dārūm; Ludda and Sharon and Bath. However, most of them resided in the Hipaus and Susitha, east of the Sea of Galilee.²

The researcher argues that there is a significant contradiction between the number of Jews mentioned by Yonah and between the extended boundaries of the area that the Jews were prevented from residing in after 135 A.D as reported by Yonah, Wilkinson, and the Atlas of the Bible. If that number were approximately 1,500,000 before the war of Bār Kūhba, then it is natural to assume that most of these Jews were living in the same region in which they were prevented from residing after the war. When we add this number to the other people, who lived in the same region such as the Arabs, Byzantines, Greeks and others, the Jews were 3/5-4/5 of the whole population living in an area which covered 40 miles by 40 miles. According to this, only 1/5-2/5 of the population was living in the remaining region of Palestine and Jordan, an area exceeding 70,000 square miles.

Thus it becomes very difficult to accept the number estimated by Yonah. Consequently, the researcher can say that either there is an exaggeration in the number of Jews in Palestine as estimated by Yonah or that the area of the region in which they were prevented from residing after 135A.D was far greater than the area of the region which he mentioned. In other words, the area of this region had to be large enough to accommodate

¹Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, Pp. 19, 241. In contrast, J. Wilkinson argues that "the population cannot in fact be counted, since we do not know the total. Let us guess that it was about two million, as it about in Palestine of 1947. In fact there are two easy (and to that unreliable) ways to judge the religious in a list published in 337 AD. The second is to count the number of religious buildings of the Roman and Byzantine periods which have been excavated". Wilkinson. *Jerusalem Under*, p. 96.

²Yonah, p. 16, 240.

both the large number of Jews and other sectors of the population. Therefore, it is more likely to assume that the traditional conflict between the Byzantines and the Jews in the Jerusalem region until Hadrian's era prompted Hadrian to expand the area in which the Jews were prevented from residing. It is understood that this area included a vast region, which extended for a long distance from the centre of Jerusalem.

The researcher argues that the bloody conflicts which the Aelia region witnessed between the Jews and the Byzantines until the time of Emperor Hadrian prompted him to expand the zone of the area the Jews were prevented from entering and residing in.

The Atlas of the Bible mentioned King David's kingdom (1000-961 B.C). This is the Israeli kingdom, which the Jews attempted to renew after their return from enslavement in Iraq, in 539 B.C. The area of that kingdom did not exceed more than the area of al-'Aī sawiyya, al-'Ayzariyya, Abū Dīs and Ralib in the east to Bayt 'Ūr al-Fūqā, Bayt Sūrīk and 'Aīn Kārim in the west. To the north that area extended to Guphna, 'Aīn Yabrūd, Daīr 'Ijrīr Herodiom and Daīr al-Banāt in the south.¹

As can be seen, this is too smaller than the area that the Jews were prevented from entering and residing in in 135 A.D, which enhances the researcher's belief that Emperor Hadrian had expanded and added new territories to the Aelia region.

Furthermore, the same bloody events seem to have reduced the number of Jews to a very great extent after 135 AD. This is confirmed by thorough investigation of the Islamic sources relating to the first Islamic conquest of the region. For instance, in many peace covenants which were concluded between the Muslims and the local population,

¹*The Times Atlas of Bible*, p. 73.

there was nothing to indicate that there were any peace treaties being concluded with the Jews in Palestine. This was contrary to those being concluded with other sects such as the Sammrīts, al-Jarjūma and the Christians of Banū Taghlib, who were treated as an independent sect.¹ Al-Balādhurī related, on the authority of Abī Hafṣ al-Dimashqī, that the Jews were under the control of the Christians; therefore they entered with them in the peace treaty.² This indicates that they were a very small minority, totally submissive to the local administration in the regions in which they resided. This situation has prompted H. J. Wils in his book, *Mūjaz al-Tārīkh* to say that:

The life of Jews (in Palestine) resembles the life of a man who insists on living in the middle of a busy street where the minibuses and trucks continuously run him over. From the start to finish their (kingdom) was not more than a transient event in the history of Egypt, Syria, Assyria and Phoenicia. That history was greater and more majestic than their history.³

The Jews joined the Persian who entered Palestine in 614 A.D and destroyed most of the churches of Aelia.⁴ Therefore, Emperor Hercules renewed Hadrian's decree and issued a decree in which he allowed the killing of the Jews wherever they were.⁵ Yonah claims that after 135 A.D the Jews continued to reside in Jericho and al-Dārūm, which

¹See Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 162-163, Pp.163-167, Pp. 185-187.

²Ibid, p. 13.

³H. J. Wils. *Mūjaz al-Tārīkh*, cited in Zifir al-Islām Khān., p. 97.

⁴See Wilkinson. *Jerusalem Jerusalem under the Rome and Byzantium*, p. 102. Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, p. 266. Raby, Julian and Johns, Jeremy. *Bayt al-Maqdis: 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, part one, (Oxford University Press, 1992), Pp. 3-5. Kaegi, p. 177.

⁵See Zhifir al-Islam, Pp. 132-133.

were the only two areas that lay within the domain of Aelia region. However, Yonah did not produce any strong evidence that goes back to original sources in order to support his claim about their existence here. If this existence turned out to be true, that does not necessarily mean that these two areas were outside the Aelia region where the Jews were prevented from residing in 135 AD. It seems that the Byzantines were lenient at some historical stages after Hadrian and therefore they did not strictly apply his decree. Wilkinson argues that:

Constantine's policy was the same as Hadrian's towards the Jews. They were not allowed to live in Jerusalem, but they made pilgrimage to the Western Wall of the Temple, and once a year on the Ninth of Abs' they were allowed into the Temple site to lament its destruction.¹

Zif al-Islām Khān argued that Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who ruled 200 years after Hadrian, allowed the Jews to enter Jerusalem for prayers.² Wilkinson argues that the Byzantines felt that the Jews no longer represented any kind of danger due to the paucity of their numbers and their total submission to the Byzantine authority.

Conclusion

In short, one can say that establishing the accurate geographical boundaries of the Aelia region before the first Islamic conquest is an extremely difficult task. However, it is clear that this region, which was re-named by the Byzantine Emperor Hadrian in 135 A.D, as Aelia, was in fact a region at that time. Therefore it is appropriate to call it a

¹Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Under Rome and Byzantium*, Pp. 94-95.

²Zif al-Islam, p. 93.

region rather than a city. This was the region, which the Islamic sources described, in clear and accurate terms. However, there are inaccuracies in the sources: al-Maqdisī and al-Tifāshī who followed him, in particular, estimated the extension of this region to be forty miles and, like other sources gave a description of a region which was far longer.

The reason for this inaccuracies can be attributed to the fact that al-Maqdisī did not use the mile as a unit for measuring distances. It is thus more likely that he quoted a previous source without examining it. Hence he fell into error and inaccuracies, which also applies to al-Tifāshī. This is clear from the accuracy displayed by Arabic geographic scholars who used their own terms and units when measuring terms of distance, such as *al-Farsakh*, *al-Barīd*, *al-Yaūm* (a day's journey) and *al-Marḥala* (a stage).

Chapter Three

Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) between 13-16 A.H/ 634-638 A.D

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Introduction

The period from the beginning of the Islamic conquests in Syria in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D (or late 12 A.H/ 633 A.D) up to the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in Aelia is grossly misclassifications in the Islamic narratives and sources. This is ironic because this period is crucially important since it could be considered an integral part of the history of the conquest period. It seems that the misclassifications of information, except a few spare allusions in the Islamic sources, specifically until the battle of al-Yarmūk in 15 A.H/ 13 August 636A.D, had reflected badly on modern studies dealing with the first Islamic conquests. The main feature of these studies is that they took for granted whatever was passed down to them by the available sources, so that they too were led into inaccuracies to this crucial period altogether, or into mentioning it only in passing.

The difficulty of studying the aforementioned period -which in the researcher’s view had witnessed the Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) according to the Byzantine division of the area and their siege over whatever happened to be inside its borders -lies in the fact that the Islamic sources had furnished very little information for the period preceding al-Yarmūk, while they provided more information for the period from al-Yarmūk until the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the area. These sources agree that this period did not exceed four months.

Upon examining and critically analysing the narrations and Islamic sources concerned with the general conditions in Palestine following the battle of Ajnādīn, and also those developments after al-Yarmūk up to the conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem),

the researcher noted that if we accept that, then this will cause disparities in a number of issues related to the Aelia prior to its surrender to the Muslims. These issues include (i) the geographic borders of the city during the Byzantine period, i.e. before the Islamic conquest, and (ii) the inaccuracies over the identity of the military leader who was holding the area inside the walls of the city under siege. Particularly there are discrepancies concerning each of the leaders which the sources mention as having led the siege operation or participated in the conquest of the Aelia region. Finally there is disagreement in the history of the conquest of Aelia or the entry of 'Umar into Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) in the period from 13-16 A.H/ 634-638A.D, a matter that may raise a number of questions concerning the logic behind these inaccuracies and lack of clarity.

The researcher endeavours, in this chapter, to throw light on the history of Aelia beginning from the start of the first Islamic conquests in Syria until the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb. This is done in two ways: first, by trying to define the period of time which the Muslim army spent on the siege of the region, as well as trying to find the logical and scientific explanation for the reason behind the Islamic sources misclassification for the period which preceded al-Yarmūk. Secondly, the researcher endeavours to explain and clarify the reasons behind the uncertainty and inconsistency in the identity of the military leader who carried out the siege operation, and in the large number of characters cited as having played important roles in the siege. This has been done by compiling information from the various narrations which dealt with this specific period. This information is then subjected to a critical analysis after being located in the context and general framework of the events of conquest in Syria.

It seems that there are reasons behind the Islamic sources misclassification for the period which preceded al-Yarmūk, which in some cases are the same as those causing the inaccuracies and disparity in the identity of the real date and conqueror of the Aelia region. These reasons are as follows:

Firstly, the problem of the identity of the various commanders who held the post of commander-in-chief of the Muslim army in Syria at the beginning of the conquest, specifically between 13-15 A.H/ 634-645 A.D, and the numerous changes taking place in a short period, caused many inaccuracies in the information given by both narrators and sources, as well as disagreement over the areas assigned to each commander. Furthermore, the area where each of the Muslim military commanders were sent, in particular with regard of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Ās.

Secondly, the conquest by the Muslims of most of the Byzantine Aelia region at an early period, specifically after the battle of Ajnādīn 13 A.H/ 634 A.D, except the small area surrounded by the walls, which continued resisting a long time after that, caused more inaccuracies among both narrators and sources.

3.3. The Problem of the Commander-in-Chief

There is almost unanimous agreement among the Islamic sources that Abū Bakr directed the Muslims towards Syria in order to conquer it at the beginning of 13 A.H/ 634 A.D.¹ However, there is confusion as to the identity of the commanders of the Muslim armies, especially in relation to Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān, Shurahbīl Ibn

¹See: Al-Tābarī, Muhammad Ibn Jaḥīr. *The History of al-Tābarī (Tārīkh al-rusul wa`a-muluk)*, Vol. X. 1, *The Challenge to the Empire*, translated and annotated by Khālid Yhyā Blankinship (University of New York press, 1993), Pp. 73-74. F. Donner argues that there is good reason to believe that this event actually occurred in the autumn of 12 A.H / 633 A. D. Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 113.

Hasana, ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ,¹ and Abū ‘Ubayda ‘Āmir Ibn al-Jarāh. Some sources and accounts view Abū ‘Ubayda as the chief commander of all the Islamic military forces in Syria, whereas others state that he did not take part in the Islamic conquests at this early stage. They also state that ‘Umar appointed him commander and governor-general of Syria after the death of Abu Bakr. Al-Wāqidī, for instance, stated that he was one of the commanders who headed for Syria without any indication that he was the supreme commander.² Al-Balādhurī, in turn, mentions two different accounts, the first one with the transmission chain ‘they said’, he mentions:

أن أبا بكر أراد أبا عبيدة أن يعقد له فا ستعفاه من ذلك، وقد
 روى قوم أنه عقد له وليس ذلك بثبت ولكن عمر ولاه الشام
 حين استخلف.³

Abū Bakr wanted to give the banner to abū -‘Ubayda; but the latter begged to be relieved. Others claim that he did give one to him, but that report is not confirmed. The fact is that when ‘Umar became caliph, he conferred on him the governorship of all of Syria.⁴

The second account is from Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157 A.H/ 774 A.D) in which he mentions Abū Bakr’s statement. He mentions that Abu Bakr said to the commanders:

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 2-10. Balādhurī, *Futūh*, Pp. 115-117. Tābarī. *Tārīkh*, op. cit, Vol. X. 1, Pp. 73-74. Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, Pp. 86-100. Azdī, Pp. 7, 48-50.

²Wāqidī. *Futūh*, S, 1, p. 7.

³Balādhurī. *Futūh*. op. cit. P. 116 (they said).

⁴*The Origins of the Islamic State*, being a translation from the Arabic accompanied with annotations geographic and historic of Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān of al-Imam abu-al-‘Abbās Ahmad Ibn-Jabir al-Balādhurī, translated by Philip Hitti, Khori (Beirut, Khayats, 1966), p. 166.

ذكر أبو مخنف أن أبا بكر قال للأمرء: ان اجتمعتم على قتال
فأميركم أبو عبيدة عامر بن عبد الله بن الجراح الفهري وإلا
فيزيد ابن ابي سفيان.¹

Abū Mikhnaf states that ‘Umar said to the commanders, “If
you altogether are to lead a fight, your commander will be
abū ‘Ubayda ‘Āmir ibn ‘Abdallah ibn al-Jarāh al-Fihri
otherwise Yazīd ibn Abi-Sufyān.²

This account, is mentioned with some difference in the text, by Ibn A‘tham³ and
al-Azdī⁴ whereas it is not found in al-Tābarī, who does not indicate that Abu ‘Ubayda
was the supreme commander of the armies. He mentions that he was one of the military
commanders.⁵

Other accounts such as al-Balādhurī mention on the authority of al-Wāqidī that
Abū Bakr said to the commanders:

وروى الواقدي أن أبا بكرأ ولى عمرا فلسطين، وشرحبيلى
الأردن، وبزید دمشق، وقال: إذا كان بكم قتال فأميركم الذى
تكونون فى عمله، وروى أيضا أنه أمر عمرا مشافهة أن
يصلى باناس إذا اجتمعوا وإذا تفرقوا صلى كل امير بأصحابه
وأمر الأمرء أن يعقدوا لكل قبيلة لواء يكون فيهم.⁶

¹Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 116. (on the authority of Abū Mikhnaf). See also Ibn ‘Asākir, (Dimashq, 1951), Vol. 1, p. 447.

²*The origin of the Islamic state*, p. 166.

³Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 100.

⁴Azdī, p. 48.

⁵Tābarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 1, Pp.73-74 (on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq).

⁶Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 116-117. (on the authority of Al-Wāqidī).

It is reported on the authority of al-Wākidi that abu-Baker assigned 'Amr to Palestine, Shurahbil to the Jordan, and Yazid to Damascus saying "When ye all fight together, your commander is the one in whose province ye are fighting". It is also reported that to 'Amr (Ibn al-'As) he gave oral instructions to lead the prayers in case the armies are united, and to have each commander lead the prayer of his own army when the armies are separate. Abu-Baker ordered the commanders to see that each tribe flies a banner of its own.¹

Finally, all the accounts confirm that Khālid Ibn al-Walīd was the supreme commander of the Muslim armies in Syria after Abū Bakr ordered him to move there from Iraq shortly after the beginning of the conquests. This is mentioned by al-Wāqidī, al-Balādhurī, Ibn A'tham, al-Azdī and many others.² The same sources are also unanimous that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb, after he became caliph, removed Khālid of his duties and appointed Abū 'Ubayda in his place.³

It appears that these inaccuracies are the main reason for the errors in the Islamic sources with regard to specification of the identity of the commander who was in charge of the supreme command of the Muslim armies when the Muslims conquered Aelia. It also appears that there was no supreme commander of the Muslims armies in Syria when the conquests started during the time of Abū Bakr. The powers of command were assigned to the person or commander in whose province the fighting was taking place.

¹*The origin of the Islamic state*, p. 167.

²Wāqidī, *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 54. Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 128.

³Wāqidī, *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 13. Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2, Pp. 107-108. Azdī, Pp. 68-69.

Al-Balādhurī mentions on the authority of Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār that the first battle the Muslims fought in Syria was in the land of Palestine. The supreme commander then was ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ.¹ In addition there was a letter from Abū Bakr to Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd ordering him to take charge of the supreme command of the Muslim armies in Syria. That letter does not include removing Abū ‘Ubayda or other commanders of their duties.² This letter is quite contrary to the letter that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb sent Khālīd Ibn al-walīd in 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, which included removing him of his duties as commander and appointing Abū ‘Ubayda in his place.³ Furthermore, Abū ‘Ubayda was present in Syria when ‘Umar appointed him in place of Khālīd. This is clear from many letters and messages, mentioned by all the sources in this regard. This undoubtedly, indicates that Abū ‘Ubayda was one of the military commanders from the time of Abū Bakr, without being the chief or supreme commander. Therefore, this is one of the reasons behind the contradiction in the accounts with regard to the conqueror of Aelia, particularly the many inaccuracies between Abū ‘Ubayda and ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ.

From the thorough examination of the early accounts of the beginning of battles in Syria, it appears that the Muslim siege of Aelia started shortly after the Muslims arrived in the region, specifically in 13 A.H / 634 A.D. This is contrary to the view, which is held by many modern researchers who study the Islamic conquest, i.e. that the Muslims actually besieged Aelia only after al-Yarmūk battle in 15 A.H/ 636 A.D as Gabrieli, Donner and others argue.⁴ These arguments result from a normal reading of

¹Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 144.

²Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 104.

³Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 123.

⁴Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 151.

history, which does not thoroughly examine the sources that mainly concentrate on the period before al-Yarmūk battle. Therefore, such arguments restrict their attention to the period after the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in Aelia, from which it might be understood that the Muslims besieged Aelia only during that period, i.e. for four months, as some accounts and sources indicate.¹

The Muslims long siege of Aelia and the large number of persons or commanders who took part in the important events, might explain how inaccuracies arose in the Islamic sources regarding many issues relating to the first Islamic conquest. Such issues still need to be explained and solved. The researcher bases this argument on a great deal of evidence and historical facts, especially those related to the regions where each Muslim commander was sent, the roads which the Muslim armies took, and the personalities and background of some commanders, particularly ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ.. Furthermore, these facts also cover the identification of the regions which the Muslims reached after the start of the first battles, especially Ajnadīn, the general situation on the fighting front, and finally the extended boundaries of the Aelia region before the Islamic conquest, which has already been discussed.

3.4. The Area of each Commander

The Muslim sources agree, to some extent, on the identification of the regions where each of the Muslim military commanders were sent, with very few differences. The sources indicate that Shuraḥbīl Ibn Ḥasana was sent to Jordan,² Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 148.

²Balādhurī. *Futūh*, op. cit, p. 116. Ibn ‘Asākir (Dimashq, 1951), Vol. 1, p. 545.

to al-Balqā'¹ and there was absolutely no conflict among these sources that 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ was sent to Palestine.² There is some difference about the region where Abū 'Ubayda was sent; some sources indicate that it was Damascus, whereas other sources indicate that it was Hims;³ a third category of sources does not mention the name of Abū 'Ubayda at this stage, as previously mentioned.

Since the sources do agree on the region where 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ was sent, it is important to draw attention to the unique account which was mentioned solely by al-Wāqidī. He states that Abu Bakr specifically sent 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ to Palestine and Aelia. Rabī'a Ibn Qays, who took part in the early Islamic conquests, narrated that he was in the army that Abū Bakr sent under the leadership of 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ to Palestine, and Aelia. Rabī'a Ibn Qays was the flag bearer in that army.⁴

Furthermore, al-Wāqidī said that it reached him that 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ was ordered to march with his army to Aelia until he reached Palestine.⁵ This gives the impression, if we accept this account and there are no reasons for rejecting or doubting it, that Abū Bakr sent 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ to two regions and not just one region. The *wāw* (and) in Arabic language, here, means disconnection and distinguishing between two different things. This fact, also supports what we have previously mentioned that the Byzantine Aelia

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, op. cit, Vol. X. 1, Pp. 107-108. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 116. Ibn 'Asākir (Dimashq, 1951), op. cit, Vol. 1, p. 545. (on the authority of Sayf Ibn 'Umar). (They reported that Yazīd was sent to Damasqas).

²Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 7-9. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 116. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 1, p. 73. (on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq). Ibn 'Asākir. (Dimashq, 1951), op. cit, Vol. 1, p. 545.

³See: Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 8-9. Balādhurī, *Futūh*, p. 116. (on the authority of al-Wāqidī). Azdī. p.48. Ibn al-Athīr. *Kāmil*, Vol. 2, p. 277.

⁴Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 8.

⁵Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 9.

region was a vast region and not just that small city which lies inside the wall, traditionally known as Aelia a long period after the Islamic conquest. Wilkinson mentions this and argues that:

The area called 'Jerusalem' in Aelia Capitolina was thus a very small city, but since the later Roman cities were in some cases merely converted villages the size had nothing to do with the status as city.¹

It also appears that the sending of 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ by Abū Bakr to Palestine and Aelia, as al-Wāqidī mentions, agrees to a large extent with the general context of events and the roads which the Muslim armies took. There is consensus among the sources that these armies took the Tabūk road² with the exception of 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ's army which was ordered to take the Ayla road.³ We can say here that the Ayla road is considered the shortest and easiest way to reach the Ayla region. This means that, in order to reach Gaza after Ayla, there were very few miles separating 'Amr from that region. In fact, the regions of Bi'r al-Sabi' specifically al-Kusayyfa, Ludda, Bayt Jibrīn and other regions were part of Byzantine Aelia, as previously mentioned. This view is further supported by the fact that the Ayla road was the same road which 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb took in his visit during the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), as 'Urwa Ibn

¹Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Under Rome and Byzantium*, p. 90.

²Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 3-4. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 116. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, op. cit, Vol. X. 1, Pp. 73-74. Ibn 'Asākir, (Dimashq, 1951), op. cit, Vol, 1, p. 449. (on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq).

³Wāqidī. *Futūh*, op. cit, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 7-8. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 116. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, op. cit, Vol. X. 1, p. 73. (on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq). Ibn 'Asākir, (Dimashq, 1951), V.1. p. 449. (on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq).

al-Zubāir mentioned.¹ It is worth noting that ‘Umar used the other road, i.e. the Tabūk road when he headed for al-Jābiya during the ‘Imwās plague and returned from Sargh which was very close to Tabūk.²

3.4.1. The reasons behind Abū Bakr choosing ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ

It appears that there are a number of factors behind Abū Bakr’s decision to send ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ to Palestine and Aelia. These factors include ‘Amr’s first rate knowledge of the region, its topography and administrative divisions. The historic background of ‘Amr reveals that he embraced Islam in the late period of 8 A.H/ 629 A.D,³ and before that time he had clear antagonistic attitudes towards Islam.⁴

Many accounts confirm ‘Amr’s vast knowledge about the geographic nature of Syria and Palestine, and Aelia in particular. In fact, this knowledge goes beyond Syria and covers Egypt as well. It seems that ‘Amr resided in the Aelia region for some time before Islam. Therefore, he had knowledge of the geography of the Sabi’ region which extends from ‘Asqalān to Bayt Jibrīn, i.e. within the extended boundaries of the Byzantine Aelia, or at least very close to it. This is the land which was mentioned by both Ibn Sa’id and al-Balāḍhurī and others.⁵ Added to this, ‘Amr said to ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb when he tried to convince him to give him permission to go to Egypt that he has

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, p. 102.

²See Ibn ‘Asākir, Vol. 1, p. 553. (footnote 3).

³Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 4, p. 258. Vol. 7, p. 493. al-Athīr. *Kāmil*, Vol. 2, Pp.155-156.

⁴Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 4, Pp. 258-260.

⁵Ibid, Vol. 7, p. 493.

knowledge about it and about its roads. He says that it is a country that has few defences and vast wealth.¹

Since 'Amr had this vast knowledge about Egypt, there is no doubt that his knowledge about Syria and Palestine, as well as Aelia, is even greater as a result of his involvement in trade and his continuous travels between Hijāz, Syria² and Egypt.³

There are two important points, which further support our view that 'Amr's knowledge of the region was the direct reason for him to be chosen as commander of the army that headed to Palestine and Aelia. The first point is that Prophet Muhammad sent him, shortly after he embraced Islam, on an expedition to Dhāt al-Salāsīl, which lies on one of the Syrian roads.⁴ His mother belonged to the tribe of Bālī,⁵ which resided on that road. The second point is that another commander, namely Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān was chosen to lead one of the armies heading for Syria, on the same basis. Yazīd embraced

¹See: 'Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 102.

²See: al-Qifī, 'Alī Ibn Yusūf. *Tārīkh al-Hukamā'*, edited by Yulyūs Librt (Germany, 1903), Vol. 4, p. 640. Ibn Manzūr. *Lisān al-'Arab* (al-Maṭba'a al-Amīriya, Cairo, 1st ed, 1301 AH), Vol. 23, p. 147. Al-Kinī, Abū Muhammad Ibn Yūsuf. *Kitāb al-Wlā wa Kitāb al-Quḍa*, (Beirut, 1908), p.7. 'Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 103.

³See: Al-Kindī, p.7. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, op. cit, Vol, 2, p. 255. 'Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 102.

⁴See: Ibn Wāqid. Al-Wāqidī, Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar. *Kitāb al-Mghāzī lil Wāqidī*, edited by Marsden Jonson, (Oxford University Press), Vol. 2, Pp. 661. 741-749. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, Pp. 143-146. Ibn al-Athīr. *Kāmil*, Vol. 2, p.156.

⁵Wāqidī. *Kitāb al-Mghāzī*, Vol. 11, p. 660. Guillaume, A. *The life of Muhammad: A Translation of ISHaqs Sirat Rasul Allah* by 'Alī Ibn al-Hasān Ibn Hishām, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Delhi, fifth impression, 1978), p. 668. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, op. cit, Vol. X. 111, p. 146. Al-Bustī, Abū Ḥātim Ibn Ḥayyān al-Tamīmī. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiya wa Akhbār al-Khulfa'*, edited by 'Azīz Bayk, al-Sayyid (Beirut, 1987), p. 319. Vol. 3, Pp. 198-200. Al-Ḥalāby, Burhān al-Dīn. *Al-Sīra al-Ḥalabiya wa Insān al-'Uyū fī Sirat al-Amīn wa al-Ma'mūn* (Cairo, 1964), Vol, 3, Pp. 198-200. Al-Diyārbakrī, *Tārīkh al-Khamīs fī Anfas Nafīs* (Cairo, 1283 A.H), Vol. 2, p75. Al-Shayyāl, Jamāl al-Dīn. *Tārīkh Miṣr al-Islāmya* (Dār al-Ma'āri, e.d), Vol. 1, Pp. 13-16.

Islam after the conquest of Makka in 8 AH.¹ His father, Abū Sufyān was famous for leading the Quraīsh commercial caravans to Syria,² where he had a piece of land called *Buqbush* in al-Balqā' region which he bought before Islam.³ That land was then inherited by his son Mu'āwiyya as al-Balādhurī mentioned. This gives a clear indication that Yazīd had vast knowledge about the region towards which he was sent, i.e. al-Balqā' region, the same as in the case of 'Amr Ibn Ibn al-'Āṣ.

The researcher aims to pinpoint the beginning of the Islamic siege of Aelia and identify the military commander who was in charge of that siege. As has been previously mentioned, the Islamic sources only discussed the period which followed al-Yarmūk battle and payed scant attention to the period which preceded it. However, the researcher argues that the siege had started a long time before that period.

3.2.2. The conquest of most of the Aelia region after the battle of Ajnādīn, 13 A.H/ 634 A.D

The Islamic sources indicate that 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ was able to defeat some of the Byzantine garrisons in the Dāthin area immediately after crossing Ayla. He returned and set up a camp at al-'Arabāt or Ghamr al-'Arabāt,⁴ and he asked Abū Bakr in Madīna to send him reinforcements.⁵ He might also have asked the other military commanders in

¹Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, Pp.405-406.

²Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 103.

³Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, , Vol. 1, p. 103. Ibn al-Athīr. *Al-Kāmil*, Vol. 2, p. 286.

⁴A place in the Wadī 'Arabah, some two days march from Aelia. See: Le Strang, op. cit, Ailah (Aelia), p. 447.

⁵Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 1, Pp. 107-109.

the region to send him reinforcements as well after he learned that Hercules had directed his forces from Hims towards him. Thus the Ajnādīn battle took place.

The main question to pose here is why Hercules directed his forces from Hims towards ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ in particular, although he was the farthest commander from Hims. In this case, the Byzantine forces had to cover a distance of more than 400 miles in order to reach the Ajnadīn region which lies between Gaza and Bayt Jibrīn, as the Islamic sources have confirmed.¹ In this regard we have to take into account that the distance to al-Balqā’ does not exceed 270 km, and to Jordan (‘Ammān) about 320 km. Furthermore, Abū ‘Ubayda would have been the nearest commander to Hims according to accounts which stated that he was directed to it. In addition to all this, we also notice that ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ was the last commander to leave Madīna. Al-Madā’inī mentioned the chronological arrangement for the departure of the military commanders from Madīna. Yazīd was the first to depart, then Shuraḥbīl, then Abū ‘Ubayda and finally ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ.² The same chronology was mentioned by al-Wāqidī, who stated that the departure of ‘Amr was before the departure of Abū ‘Ubaīda.³ Al-Ṭabarī and al-Azdī agree that ‘Amr was the last military commander to depart from Madīna⁴ whereas al-Balādhurī does not give a chronological arrangement.⁵

The Islamic sources do not give reasons or explanations for the question posed earlier except for that which al-Wāqidī has mentioned. He says:

¹See Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 103.

²See: Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 114.

³Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 10.

⁴Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 1, p. 74. Azdī, Pp. 8-50.

⁵Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 115-117.

كانت الساقطة (تجارا) تنزل في الجاهلية والإسلام يقدمون
بألبر والشعير والزيت والقماش وما يكون في الشام فقدم
بعض الساقطة الى المدينة وأبو بكر ينفذ الجيوش وسمعوا
كلام أبي بكر لعمر بن العاص وهو يقول عليك بفلسطين
وأيلياء، قال فساروا بذلك إلى الملك هرقل.....

Al-Sāqita (merchants from Syria), before and after Islam, used to bring to Madīna wheat, barley, cooking oil, figs, clothes and whatever goods were available in Syria. Some of these Sāqita arrived in Madīna while Abu Bakr was sending the armies out. They heard Abū Bakr saying to ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ, “You are assigned the task of conquering Palestine and Aelia.” Then these merchants told Hercules what they had heard.....¹

Al-Wāqidī mentions in the same account that Hercules held his counsel meeting and revealed the news to them. He sent his armies under the leadership of Roubis to prevent the Arabs from reaching Palestine, as some of the Byzantine prisoners of war had informed the Muslims.²

This account by al-Wāqidī is in total agreement with the general context of the events of the Islamic conquests, especially those related to Aelia since it represents an important place for the Christians. The sources mentioned that Hercules had previously vowed to make pilgrimage to Aelia on foot if he succeeded in liberating it from the Persians. This is what he did in 628 A.D.

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 8-9.

²Ibid, p. 10.

‘Alī Ibn Abī Tālib explained part of this importance in the context of his advice to ‘Umar Ibn al Khattāb to go to *Bayt al-Maqdis*, before it fell to the Muslims. He says:

ولست أمن أن يأسوا منك ومن الصلح ويمسكوا عليهم
حصنهم ويأتيهم المدد من بلادهم وطاغيتهم فيدخل على
المسلمين الهم والبلاء ولا سيما ان بيت المقدس عندهم
معظم وإليه يحجون فلا يتخلفون عنه والصواب أن تسير
إليهم إن شاء الله تعالى.

I do not feel comfortable that the people of Aelia might despair of you and of the peace treaty. They might hold on to their fortress, and reinforcements reach them from their land and their emperor, thus the Muslims suffer calamities and tribulations as a result. This is very much so because Bayt al-Maqdis (Islamic Jerusalem) is sacred to them and they make pilgrimage to it and they do not stay behind in defending it. The right idea is that you should go to the Muslims there by the will of Almighty Allah.¹

What we understand from al-Wāqidī is that Hercules directed his forces to Ajnadīn, i.e. towards ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ, in order to prevent the Muslims from reaching the Aelia region. This is also understood from Ibn Kathīr² even though it is a late source. In this regard, we should not assume that this was the only and basic objective of the Byzantines. It was rather part of their global objective, which was to prevent the Muslims from reaching Syria, and to drive them out of it. What is meant here is that Aelia, or its

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S, 1, p. 148. Ibn al-Murajjā, p. 49.

²Ibn Kathīr. *Bidāya*, Vol. 7&8, S, 7, p. 54.

region, was the prime reason behind the Ajnādīn battle taking place in this region, which each side was trying to control.

It appears that al-Ṭabarī inaccurately reports these important events, which took place in the period between 13-18 A.H/ 634-639 A.D. The most significant example of these inaccuracies is that he classified al-Yarmūk battle as taking place in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D, and the Ajnādīn battle as taking place in 15 A.H/ 636 A.D. By so doing, al-Ṭabarī has contradicted the majority of the early Islamic sources such as al-Wāqidī, Ibn Sa‘d, Khalīfa and al-Balādhurī, Ibn A‘tham and al-Azdī. These source are unanimous in that the opposite is true, i.e. the Ajnādīn battle was in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D and al-Yarmūk battle in 15 A.H/ 636 A.D.¹ Even Ibn al- Athīr who, in most cases, copies al- Ṭabarī, is indecisive with regard to this issue. He mentions Ajnādīn twice, once as taking place in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D and another time as taking place in 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, but seems to lean towards 15 A.H/ 636 A.D.² For Ajnadīn to take place before al-Yarmūk seems to be an acceptable matter for the majority of modern researchers³ except for a very few.⁴ However, ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz al-Dūrī mentioned two differing dates in two different articles regarding the conquest of

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 37-38. Khalīfa. *Tārīkh* (on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq). Vol. 1, p.103, 118. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp.120-121, 142. Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 134, 141. Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 3, p. 282. (He argued that all of Syria and Iraq was conquered during the rule of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb except Ajnādīn which was in the rule of Abū Bakr). Ibn A‘tham, op. cit, Vol. 1&2, Pp. 113-120. Azdī, Pp. 87-93.

²Ibn al-Athīr. *Kāmil*, Vol. 2, Pp. 286-287, Pp. 346-347.

³See Gabrieli, p.146. (He argued that the date of the battle of Ajnādīn is 634 A.D), 150. (He argued that the date of the battle of al-Yarmūk is 636 A.D). Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, op. cit, p. 128-130. Muri, Pp 127-130.

⁴See: ‘Abdallah, Muḥammad Ahmad, p. 30.

Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem).¹

The researcher argues that, Ajnādīn is more likely to have taken place a long time before al-Yarmūk battle. This is mainly because of the nature of the geographic location where each battle took place, i.e. Ajnādīn was in the area that lies between al-Ramla and Bayt Jibrīn to the south of Aelia, whereas al-Yarmūk took place in the heart of historical Syria on the bank of the river Jordan. It is unlikely that the Muslims had reached this place at this early stage of the Islamic conquests.

Furthermore, the location of Ajnādīn on the edge of the desert leading to the Arab Peninsula enabled the Muslims to withdraw into the desert, their natural element, and one into which the Byzantines could hardly follow. Moreover, they could return to Ḥijāz if they become susceptible to defeat at the beginning of military incursions as had happened before in Mū'ta battle.² All these factors make it more likely that Ajnādīn took place first, as a major decisive battle in Syria. It was suggested to 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ in one of his consultations with the Muslims about the best place to gather in order to confront the Byzantines, that they should gather in Ayla. However this is explained by 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ, in al-Azdī who reported that 'Amr said:

ما أيله عندي إلا كقرية من قرى الشام، ولكن أرى أن ننزل
قرحا (بلدة في أسفل الغور الشمالي من فلسطين قريه
من طرف الصحراء) فنكون في أرضنا قريبا من مددنا، فإذا
جاءنا المدد نهضنا إلى القوم.

¹Al-Dūrī. *FKikrat al-Quds fī al-Islām*, p. 8 cited in Jāsir, Shafī. *Tārikh al-Quds*, p. 109. al-Dūrī, *Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period*, p. 110.

²For more details about the battle of M'ūta see W.E. Kage. *Byzantium*, Pp.71-74.

Ayla, according to me is not more than one of the Syrian villages (Cities). I think that it is a good idea that we should set our camp in Qirḥa. (A place which lies at the foot of northern valley of Palestine close to the desert). Thus we will be in our land and close to our supply lines. Whenever reinforcements reach us we spring up and fight these people (the Byzantines).¹

What we aim at from this presentation and detailing the dates when the battles of Ajnadīn and al-Yarmūk took place, is to indicate that ‘Amr besieged Aelia from the year 13 AH after the defeat of the Byzantines in that battle. If the battle of Ajnadīn was concluded with the defeat of the Byzantine forces whose majority later took recourse inside the enclosures of Aelia and Qisariyya, as numerous sources have reported,² then this could only indicate that the Muslim troops were able to take most or all those areas outside the enclosures after this battle. Not only that, but it could also indicate that those troops put under siege the areas inside the enclosures at an early stage, and this could be gleaned from the various narrations which described the then general conditions in Syria even though most of these sources did not refer directly to Aelia. Al-Ṭabarī describes the Muslim military operations led by ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ in Palestine subsequent to the Ajnadīn battle, as follows:

ذكر فتح بيسان ووقعة أجنادين
ولما توجه علقمة إلى غزة وتوجه شرحبيل ومعاوية إلى
قيسارية، صعد عمرو بن العاص إلى الأرطوبون، ومر بإزاءه،
وخرج شرحبيل بن حسنة على مقدمته، واستخلف على

¹Azdī, p. 170.

²See Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 185-186. See also, Glubb, Sir John Abagot. *The Great Arab Conquests* (New Jersey, 1963), p. 146.

الأردن أبا الأعور [السلمي]، وولى عمرو بن العاص مجنبيه
عبدالله بن عمرو بن العاص وجناده بن تميم المالكي؛ مالك
بن كنانة، فخرج حتى ينزل على الروم بأجنادين، والروم في
حصونهم وخذاقهم وعليهم الأربطون. وكان الأربطون أدهى
الروم وأبعدها غورا، وأنكأها فعلاً، وقد كان وضع بالرملة جندا
عظيماً، وبإيلياء جندا عظيماً؛ وكتب عمرو إلى عمر بالخبر؛
فلما جاءه كتاب عمرو، قال، لقد رمينا أربطون الروم بأربطون
العرب، فانظرو عما تنفرج! وجعل عمر رحمه الله من لدن وجه
أمراء الشام يمد كل أمير جند ويرميه بالأمداد؛ حتى إذا أتاه
كتاب عمرو بتفريق الروم، كتب إلى يزيد ان يبعث معاوية في
خيله إلى قيسارية، وكتب إلى معاوية بإمرته على قتال أهل
قيسارية؛ وليشغلهم عن عمرو؛ وكان عمرو قد استعمل
علقمة بن حكيم الفراسي ومسرق بن فلان العكي على
قتال أهل إيلياء، فصاروا بإزاء أهل إيلياء، فشغلوهم عن
عمرو، بعث [وبعث] محمد بن عمرو مددا لعلقمة ومسروق،
وبعث عمارة بن عمرو بن أمية الضمري مددا لأبي ايوب،
وأقام عمرو على أجنادين لا يقدر من الأربطون على سقطة،
ولا تشفيه الرسل، فوليه بنفسه، فدخل عليه كأنه رسول،
فأبلغه ما يريد، وسمع كلامه، وتأمل حصونه حتى عرف ما
أراد. وقال أربطون في نفسه....¹

When 'Alqamah moved to Gaza and Mu'āwiyah to Caesarea, 'Amr b. al-'As went to confront al-Artabūn and passed in front of him. Shurahbil b. Hasanah set out with him, commanding the vanguard. 'Amr b. al-'As appointed Abu al-'Awar to govern (the province of) Jordan in his stead. He put the two wings of his army in charge of 'Abdallah b. 'Amr and Junādah b. Tamim al-Mālikī [of the

¹Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 447. (in Arabic)

tribe of Mālik b. Kinānah]. He set out and camped near the Byzantines at Ajnadeen. The Byzantines were in their fortifications and trenches, with al-Aartabūn, and the most harmful, as their commander. He placed a large army in al-Ramlah and a large army in Jerusalem (Aelia). 'Amr (b. al-Ās) informed 'Umar of the news. When 'Amr's letter reached him, he said: "We have sent the Artabūn of the Arabs to confront the Artabūn of the Byzantines (*al-Rūm*). Let us see what the outcome will be!"

At this time, 'Umar began to dispatch the amīrs of Syria and to provide each commander with reinforcements. When he received 'Amr's letter informing him that the Byzantines had divided their forces, he wrote to Yazīd (b. Abī Sufyān) to send Mu'āwiyah with his cavalry to Caesarea. He wrote to Mu'awiyah, appointing him to lead the fighting against the people of Caesarea, and to tie down their forces in order to prevent them from fighting 'Amr. 'Amr appointed 'Alqamah b. Hakīm al-Firāsī and Masrūq b. so-and so (Fulān) al-'Akki to fight the people of Aelia and prevented them from fighting 'Amr. 'Umar sent Abū Ayyūb al-Mālīkī to al-Ramlah, which was ruled by al-Tadhāriq. He confronted the two of them.

When the reinforcements reached 'Amr one after the other, he sent Muhammad b. 'Amr b. Umayyah al-Damrī to reinforce Abū Ayyūb. 'Amr stayed in Ajnādayn, without being able to cause al-Artabūn to make a mistake. Nor did the envoys bring him satisfaction (either). So he took the matter upon himself and entered upon al-Artabūn as if he were an envoy. He told Artbūn what he wanted, listen to what he said, and looked at his fortifications until he knew

what he wanted to know. Artabūn said to himself...¹

Al-Ṭabarī also cites a lot of detailed information about 'Amr's siege of the Byzantine leader Al-Artabūn who entered Aelia after being defeated in Ajnādīn. He also contributed detailed information about the negotiations, which took place between the two sides. Amongst these is that mythical tale which we referred to earlier and in which al-Artabūn tells 'Amr that the only person who was capable of entering Aelia victoriously was 'Umar, not 'Amr. We may add to the reasons which we earlier adduced in rejecting this narration, that the focus here was on those events which took place in 13A.H, not the period preceding 'Umar's arrival in Aelia during its siege follows the Yarmuk battle.

This is mainly because there is no mention of al- Artabūn in the sources when 'Umar arrived at Aelia. It appears that al-Artabūn left the city for Egypt only a short while after the Ajnadīn battle, or long after the arrival of 'Umar in Aelia. This, apparently, was what prompted al-Ṭabarī to narrate on the authority of Khālid and 'Ubāda that the populace of Aelia and al-Ramla concluded the peace treaty concerns Palestine with 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb.²

Yet, if we come to learn that 'Umar's arrival in Syria and his entry to Aelia actually occurred after a long period of time - a period not less than three years after the Ajnādīn battle - it then becomes certain that al-Ṭabarī's talk about 'Amr's siege of Aelia was meant to refer to post-Ajnādīn. Perhaps 'Amr had concluded some conciliation with a section of Aelia's population, particularly those living outside the city's enclosures.

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 185-186.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, p. 190. Ibid, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 449. (in Arabic),

This is what 'Amr's message to Abū 'Ubayda after the Yarmūk battle clearly refers to, as mentioned earlier.

We also find some allusions which corroborate the Muslim conquest of all or at least some parts of Aelia, as well as the Muslim siege of its enclosures (this took place just before the death of Abū Bakr, the first caliph). The relevant reference here was al-Balādhurī who reports on the authority of Abī Ḥafṣ Ad-Dimashqī, on the authority of Sa'd Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, on the authority of his *shaikhs* (great religious teachers), and on the authority of Baqiyya Ibn al-Walīd on the authority of religious *shaikhs*. All these narrators, according to al-Balādhurī, make a detailed description of the conditions in Palestine and in Aelia. He reports them to have said that:

حدثني أبو حفص الدمشقي عن سعيد بن عبد العزيز عن
اشياخه، وعن بقية بن الوليد عن مشايخ من أهل العلم
قالوا: كانت أول وقعة وأقعها المسلمون الروم في خلافة أبي
بكر رضي الله عنه أرض فلسطين، وعلى الناس عمرو بن
العاصي، ثم إن عمرو بن العاصي فتح غزة في خلافة أبي بكر
رضي الله عنه، ثم فتح سبسطية ونابلس على أن أعطاهم
الأمان على أنفسهم وأموالهم منازلهم وعلى أن الجزية على
رقابهم والخراج على أرضهم، ثم فتح لد وأرضها ثم فتح بينى
وعمواس وبيت جبرين واتخذ بها ضيعة تدعى عجلان باسم
مولى له، وفتح يافا ويقال: فتحها معاوية، وفتح عمرو رفح على
مثل ذلك، وقدم عليه أبو عبيدة بعد أن فتح قنسرين ونواحيها
وذلك في سنة ستة عشر وهو محاصر أهل إيلياء، وإيلياء
مدينة بيت المقدس، فيقال: أنه وجهه إلى أنطاكية من إيلياء
وقد غدر أهلها ففتحها، ثم عاد فأقام يومين أو ثلاثة ثم طلب
أهل إيلياء من أبي عبيدة الأمان والصلح على مثل ما صولح
عليه أهل مدن الشام من أداء الجزية والخراج والدخول فيما

دخل فيه نظرائهم على أن يكون المتولي للعقد لهم عمر بن الخاب نفسه، فكب أبو عبيدة إلى عمر بذلك فقدم عمر فنزل الجابية من دمشق ثم صار إلى إيلياء فأنفذ صلح أهلها وكتب لهم به، وكان فتح إيلياء سنة سبع عشرة.¹

Abu Hafṣ al-Dimashqī from learned *Shaīkhs*:- The first conflict between Muslims and Greeks took place in the caliphate of Abu-Baker province of Palestine, the one in chief command over the Muslims being ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āsi. Later on in the caliphate of Abu-Bakr, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āsi effected the conquest of Ghazzah, then Sabastiyah and Nābulus [Neapolis] with the stipulation that he guaranteed to the inhabitants the safety of their lives, their possessions and their houses on condition that they pay poll-tax, and *kharāj* on their land. He then conquered Ludd [Lydda] and its district, and then Yubna [Jabneh or Jabneel], ‘Ammwās [Emmus] and Bait Jabrin [Eleutheropolis] where he took for himself an estate which he named ‘Ajlan after a freedman of his. He then conquered Yāfa [Jaffa] which according to others was conquered by Mu‘āwiyah. ‘Amr also conquered Rafah and made similar terms with it.

As ‘Amr was besieging Aelia, Islamic Jerusalem in the year 16, abu-’Ubaydah after reducing Kinnasrin and its environs, came to him, and according to a report, sent him from Aelia to Antioch whose people had violated the covenant. ‘Amr reduced the city and returned [to Aelia]. Only two or three days after his return, the inhabitants of Aelia asked to capitulate to abu-’Ubaydah on the same terms as those of the cities of Syria as regards tax and

¹Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 144.

Kharāj, and to have the same treatment as their equals elsewhere, provided the one to make the contract be ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb in person, Abu-’Ubaidah communicated this in writing to ‘Umar who came first to al-Jābiyah in Damascus and then to Aelia. He made the terms of capitulation with the people of Aelia to take effect and gave them a written statement. The conquest of Aelia took place in the year 17.¹

When we compare the territories which ‘Amr conquered after the battle of Ajnādīn (e.g. Yibnā which seems to be located southern of Al-Khalīl as Mustafā Murād al-Dabāgh and Ahmad al-Shbūl, argued,² and ‘Imwās, Bayt Jibrīn, Nāblus and Saba) with the geographical frontiers of the area during the Byzantine era (specifically after 139 A.H, as mentioned earlier) leads to the clear conclusion that most of these areas fall within the jurisdiction of Aelia.

Later sources such as Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Kathīr also say that it was ‘Amr who conquered these areas which al-Balādhurī had mentioned. Ibn al-Athīr, who was known for his reliance on al-Atabarī reports that when al-Artabūn went to Aelia upon the Byzantine defeat at Ajnadīn ‘Amr conquered Gaza, Sabastia, Nāblus, Ludda, ‘Imwās, Bayt Jibrīn and Yāfā (Jaffa). He also mentions ‘Amr’s negotiations with Al-Artabūn in Aelia, and ‘Amr’s sending of a convoy who spoke the Greek language. This is exactly the

¹*The Origins of the Islamic State*, Pp. 213-214. Ibn ‘Asākir (Dimasq, 1951), Vol. 1, Pp. 447. He reported from Usāma Ibn Ziyād al-Laiyythī that ‘Amr Ibn al-Āṣ was the Muslim leader at the battle of Ajnādīn.

²Al-Dabāgh, Mustafā Murād. *Al-Qabā’il al-‘Arabiyya wa Sulālātuhā Fi Bilādunā Filastīn* (Dār al-Ṭalī’a, Beirut 1979), p. 80. Al-Shbūl, Ahmad. ‘*Alaqāt al-Umma al-Islāmiyya fi al-‘Asr al-Nabawī ma’ Bilād al-Shām wa Bizanta, Al-Jajziyya al-‘Arabiyya fi ‘Asr al-Rasūl wa al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn*, Vol. 1. p. 96. Al-Nadūa al-‘Ilmiyya al-Thālitha lidirasāt Tārīkh Al-Jajzīra al-‘Arabiyya fi 15-21 Muharram 1404 AH/ al-Muwāfiq 21-27 October 1983. Qism al-Tārīkh wa al-Athār wa al-Matahif, Kuliyyat al-Adāb, Jāmi‘at al-Malik Su‘ūd, al-Mamlaka al-‘Arabiyya al-Sa‘ūdiyya, (Maṭā bi’ Jami‘at al-Malik Su‘ūd, 1989), Pp. 176-177.

same point which al-Ṭabarī referred to. However, Ibn al-Athīr says that this had taken place in 13 A.H.¹

Al-Azdī relies on al-Ḥasan Ibn Ziyād, who reports on the authority of Ibn Isma‘īl Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdullah, and also on Abū Jahdham, who reports on the authority of ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn al-Sulāik Ibn ‘Abdullah Ibn al-Qurazī to emphasise, the Muslims imposed a siege on Aelia a long time before the battle of al-Yarmūk; his report read that:

أن أهل إيلياء وأهل قيسارية بعد فحل تواصلوا، واجتمع رأيهم
على أن يبعثوا وفدا إلى ملك الروم هرقل، فيخبرونه
بتمسكهم بأمره وبقامتهم على طاعته وبخلافهم العرب
وكرهتهم لهم، ويسألونه المدد والنصر وإلا أمكنوهم من
أنفسهم.²

The people of Aelia and Qisārya gathered after the ‘Day of Faḥil’ to consult one another, and they agreed on sending a convoy to the king of Rome, Hercules, assuring him of their compliance with his orders, and with their obedience to him, and to tell him their disagreement with the Arabs and their hatred of them; they also asked him to send them supplies necessary for victory, otherwise the Arabs would overpower them.

This message from the people of Aelia prompted Hercules to send troops to Al-al-Yarmūk.³

¹Ibn al-Thīr. *Al-Kāmil*, Vol. 2, Pp. 286-287, Pp.346-347.

²Azdī, Pp. 151-152.

³Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 152.

Upon close investigation, therefore, it has become clear that the Muslims had conquered a large part of Aelia and put its centre under siege quite early during the Islamic conquests in Syria. Yet the Islamic sources did not give this issue the attention it required weight. What they mention concerning the siege is far less than what Qinsarīn cites about other Syrian cities such as Damascus, Ḥims, Qinsārīa. These sources never refer directly to the siege of Aelia before the battle of al-Yarmūk, except al-Ṭabarī, who starts with 15 A.H/ 636 A.D rather than with the actual 13A.H/ 636 A.D.

We note that the Islamic sources consider the year 15 A.H, after al-Yarmūk, as the actual start of the Muslim siege of Aelia. All the sources say Aelia was under Muslim siege on the eve of ‘Umar’s arrival in the area and his laying hold of its city. Later, the researcher will discuss al-Ya‘qūbī’s important narration emphasising ‘Umar’s refusal to share the al-Yarmūk spoils before laying hold of Bayt al-Maqdis. We also will discuss Ibn A‘tham’s narration in which ‘Umar ordered Abū ‘Ubayda to move towards Aelia after the battle of al-Yarmūk. That cited by al-Wāqidī in this connection concerning the nature of the siege and its duration (from al-Yarmūk until the conquest of Aelia) can be considered as the clearest reference. Al-Wāqidī reports under the title “The mentioning of the Conquest of Aelia” that Abū ‘Ubayda sent a message to ‘Umar asking his opinion on directing the Muslims towards Aelia or Qisārya after the battle of Al-Yarmūk. It was then said that ‘Umar replied from Aelia, the response itself having been made on the advice of ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (the fourth caliph).

He goes on to say that Abū ‘Ubayda ordered the Muslims to conquer Aelia after he divided the troops into seven garrisons, each having a paramount leader, with five thousand soldiers. After a period of seven days the troops reached the city and put it

under siege from seven sides, particularly from the sides of Jericho and al-Ramla. Abū ‘Ubayda’s message to ‘Umar was then revealed four months after the siege of the city, and this message contained some important information about that period, its duration and his (i.e. Abū ‘Ubayda’s) own opinion on the matter. Although it contained some information about one of the city’s patriarchs (perhaps the patriarch Sophronius), who told him the attributes of the only person who was able to take the city, it did not say that the people of Aelia had stated that their surrender was dependent on ‘Umar’s presence in person, as the message of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ to ‘Umar states. This was the message mentioned by al-Ṭabarī, as stated earlier; the message of Abū ‘Ubayda to ‘Umar reported by al-Wāqidī reads thus:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم إلى عبد الله أمير المؤمنين عمر بن الخطاب من عامله أبي عبيدة عامر بن الجراح اما بعد السلام عليكم فاني أحمد الله الذي لا إله إلا هو وأصلي على نبيه صلى الله عليه وسلم واعلم يا أمير أنا منازلونا لأهل مدينة إيلياء نقاتلهم أربعة أشهر ويقاتلوننا ولقد لقي المسلمون مشقة عظيمة من الثلج والبرد والأمطار إلا أنهم صابرون ويرجون الله ربهم فلما كان اليوم الذي كتبت إليك فيه الكتاب أشرف علينا بتركهم الذي يعظموه وقال انهم يجدون في كتبهم أنه لا يفتح بلدهم إلا صاحب نبينا واسمه عمر وهو يعرف صفته ونعته وهو عندهم في كتبهم وقد سألنا حقن الدماء فسر إلينا بنفسك وانجدنا لعل الله يفتح هذه البلدة على يديك.

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the merciful. To the servant of Allah, the *Emīr* of the People of Faith, ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattāb. From his agent Abū ‘Ubayda ‘Āmir Ibn Al-Jarrāh. After many greetings, I thank God, the one and only, and I offer words of peace and blessing to His

Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace and blessing be upon him). And may you, 'Amir of the People of Faith, learn that we are now fighting the people of Aelia for four months. Everyday we wage war on them and they on us. Muslims have suffered a lot of hardship due to snow, cold and rain; but they are patient, only waiting for Allah's help. But as the day in which I had written the message to you their Patriarch said to us that they find in their Books that no one will be able to conquer their country except the prophet's companion. And his name is 'Umar, and that his looks and character are known, and he is being referred to in their Books. Now we have asked to stop the bloodshed, and I ask you to come personally and rescue us. May Allah destine to conquer this city by your own hands.¹

The argument that the Muslim siege of the city of Aelia lasted for four months in conditions of snow, cold and rain, no doubt refers only to the period following the battle of al-Yarmūk, excluding the period preceding this battle. Evidence and some information for the long Islamic siege of the city found in non-Islamic sources referring to the same period corroborate the contention that the Muslim siege of Aelia lasted for a very long period.

Thus Theophanes argues that 'Umar's entry into the city was only possible after a siege that lasted for two years, as stated earlier. But the most important reference in this matter was Sophronius, the patriarch to whom 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattāb had granted the assurance (i.e. assuring peace and security) with regard to the conquered city. It was a well-known fact that Sophronius was made a leader of the patriarchy of Aelia only a few

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 148.

months before the start of the Islamic conquests in the area, and that he died a few years after the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem).¹

Sophronius described the conditions in Jerusalem in 634A.D/13A.H, i.e. a short period after the start of the conquests as very hard, to the extent that it was impossible to leave the city's enclosure to reach Bethlehem for the commemoration of Christmas that year. The description of the conditions and his sermon at the time is even more detailed:

Why is there no end to the bloodshed? Why are churches being destroyed and the cross desecrated? The Saracens 'abomination of desolation' foretold by the prophet (Daniel 12: 17), are passing through lands forbidden to them, plundering cities and destroying fields, burning villages and razing holy monasteries....and priding themselves that they will finally conquer the whole world.²

The present research has not found any evidence in early or even later Islamic narratives and sources that there was any destruction or desecration of the Churches and cross. However, this account contains a very strong indication which supports the researcher's assumption that the Muslims had conquered most of the Aelia region a short time after their arrival in the area.

It is clear from this text that Muslims had put Aelia under a very close siege near the start of the Islamic conquests in Syria. So, if the Christians of the city of Aelia could not reach Bethlehem in the year 634 A.D., given the fact that it was located only about ten kilometres away from the centre of Aelia (and that Bethlehem was then part and

¹See D. Goitein. *Jerusalem During*, p. 170.

²Ibid, p. 170. (He quotes from a source, namely Dapad.-Kerameus, Ana Andalecta. V.8. P. 166. For parts of patriarch Sophronius' letter see Robert G. Hoyland, Pp. 67-76.

parcel of the centre Aelia), then this means that the siege took place very early and it was very tight.

We can also see the deadly attempts by Muslim troops to force the inhabitants of the city to surrender; learned by referring to the messages which Muslim leaders sent to the people in the city. Thus, al-Azdī reports that ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ sent a warning message to the patriarchs of Aelia before the battle of Al-Yarmūk in which he stated that the latter should seek reconciliation and agree to pay *Jizīya* (tax for being defended by Muslims) in humility. He threatened to descend upon them if they failed to do so, on horses upon horses, men upon men, not stopping until he kills the female fighter, and takes the offspring as hostage, till they become a community that existed at night but was no longer there in the morning.’¹ Both Ibn A‘tham and Ibn al-Murajjā also mention a similar message sent by Abū ‘Ubayda to the patriarchs after the battle of al-Yarmūk.²

It appears then, from the above, that the Muslim troops were able to control all or most of the territories outside the enclosure of Aelia. It becomes apparent as well that the areas inside the enclosures had been under siege since 13 A.H (before the death of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq). Moreover, we note that the Islamic sources did not give due attention to the period between the battle of al-Yarmūk and the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattāb to Aelia in 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. All that had been mentioned by those sources relates only to the short period that preceded ‘Umar’s arrival in the city, and that was the period whose duration al-Wāqidī defined as four months of harsh weather. As we mentioned before, this is contrary to most modern Muslim researchers of the Islamic conquests. Modern

¹Azdī, Pp. 165-166.

²Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, Pp. 222-223. Ibn al-Murajjā, Pp. 45-46.

researchers, including Jondora, F. Gabrieli, F. Donner, and others, argue that Jerusalem had never actually been put under siege before Yarmūk.¹ Thus H. Busse argues that:

The surrounding of Jerusalem, as it stated by Sophronius. As already mentioned, the city was not besieged in the technical sence of the word. Accordingly, Pseudo Wākidī uses the formula *nzūl al-muslimin ‘ala bait al-makdis*. Further on, the same, author says that the siege took place in the cold of the winter (*fi ayam al-shitā’ wal-bard*). This report and that of Sophronius confirm each other, which leads us to the conclusion that the Pseudo-Wākidī’s story contains details that stand critical examination, notwithstanding the fact that it is a mine of legends and tales of a more folkloristic character.²

It is well known that Busse is very sceptical about the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem, which he considers as a repugnant myth. The fact that the Islamic sources did not give due attention to the siege of Jerusalem before al-Yarmūk could have led D. Goitein to reject the idea of the siege in this specific period despite his agreement with Sophronius who states that:

The villages and enwalled cities suffered more than the fortified cities from the sudden invasion by the sons of the desert.³

D. Goitein also claims that there was no serious siege against Jerusalem until the Arabs moved to conquer the city some four years after their arrival in the country,

¹Jondora, Pp. 73-74. F. Gabreili, Pp. 151-155. F. Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, op. cit, P. 151.

²Busse. *‘Omar’s Image*, p. 151.

³D. Goitein. *Jerusalem During*, p. 170.

although there was a mild siege under unimportant desert wartimes. It was only after the decisive victory near Yarmūk in August 636 A.H, with the consequent removal of the armies of Hercules from the land of Syria, that the ring was tightened around the beleaguered city.¹

Moshe Gil asserts that:

Towards the end of summer (634 A.D), as we have seen, the conquest of most of the cities of Palestine had come to an end. Evidence could be heard in the sermon held by Jerusalem patriarch, Sophronius, on Christmas Day that year.²

As for Jerusalem, however, he argues that it was completely severed from the rest of Palestine after the battle of al-Yarmūk.³ F. Donner argues that the traditional dating for the Muslims' siege of Aelia implies that Abū 'Ubayda's activity in northern Syria must have occurred in about 15-16 A.H / 636-637 A.D.⁴ Furthermore, he states that some sources described the beginnings of an advance on Aelia by troops led by 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ to Adjnādīn, but it seems, however, that the real siege of Aelia was undertaken by troops and Abū 'Ubaīda after his activity in the north around Qīnsārīn.⁵

Finally we can say that there are three important points which related to the period from 13-16 A.H/634-637 A.D. of Aelia's history. These three points can be summarised as follows:

¹Ibid, p. 171.

²Gil. *A History of Palestine*, p. 43.

³Ibid, p. 51.

⁴Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 151

⁵Ibid, p. 151.

The first point is that the Muslims had conquered most of the Byzantine Aelia territories, except that small area which fell within the enclosures of Aelia. This they did in an early period, specifically after the battle of Adjnādīn in 13 A.H./634 A.D. Moreover, Muslim troops had since started to subject the rest of the area to a tight siege, and this continued until it finally surrendered; although they withdrew for a little while, when greater wars erupted in other places such as the battles of Fāhil and al-Yarmūk.

This conclusion depends on the critical analysis of available narratives, after putting them in the general context of the Islamic conquest of the area, particularly that of Palestine and Aelia. All these sources, except al-Ṭabarī and al-Azdī do not address Aelia directly, this is simply because it is illogical (or unacceptable) for Muslim troops after the battle of Adjnādīn to conquer most of Palestine, including a number of other areas which the author contends were part and parcel of Byzantine Aelia (and which also lie close to the centre of the city), without attempting to subject the rest of the area to siege in order to control it. This is confirmed by non-Islamic sources, namely the patriarchs of Aelia, Sophronius and Theophanes, despite the lack of detail in the latter sources.

Secondly, and most importantly, the Islamic sources (except on a few rare occasions) ignore the period of time preceding 'Umar's arrival in Aelia in 16 A.H./ 637 A.D, and this is unlike their detailed coverage of other cities. Thirdly, most modern researchers of the Islamic conquest, or of issues relating to the Islamic conquest, take the available Islamic sources at face value, especially in the argument that Jerusalem was only put under real siege after the battle of al-Yarmūk.

The question posed here by the researchers is: what is the reason behind the lack of information, and the neglect of Aelia's history in respect of the period between 13-16

A.H/ 634-637 A.D? It is, indeed, surprising, if we consider the region's historical importance, and the fact that the same sources give comparatively more detailed information on other Syrian cities, such as Damascus, Ḥims, and Qinsārīn, covering the same period. There is certainly more than one answer (as more than one assumption) to this question. First, some researchers, such as D.R Hill, argue that the lack of sources dealing with the city's history reflects its unimportance as a capital. He states:

The reports for Jerusalem are brief and few, reflecting the relative unimportance of the city, a mere provincial capital. Nor was the surrender of much military importance. The rest of the region, towns and countryside had been in Muslim hands for about two years, and Jerusalem must have depended upon Muslim good will for its food supplies. Furthermore, they stated that the surrender of Jerusalem was therefore only a matter of time, and it was not worth efforts or lives to take it by force or those investments.¹

Some scholars may assume here that the neglect of the period from 13 A.H until the arrival of 'Umar Ibn Al- Al-Khattāb in Aelia, was purposeful, the aim of which was to hide information concerning the hardship to which Muslims subjected the city's inhabitants during the long siege. The object was to imply that the Muslim conquest of Aelia or of the area located inside the enclosures was a peaceful and easy one, that is, through reconciliation (or peace accords) rather than through the use of naked force. This

¹Hill, D.R. *The Termagant on Hostilities In The Early Arab Conquest: A.D. 634-656* (Luzac & Company LTD. London, 1971), p. 79.

was the contention of a large number of modern Muslim jurists, who depend on the era of 'Umar to support their claims.

The above assumption appears logical to some extent, though there is another point, which the researcher considers more important. It is that the Muslim historians were not at all concerned with geography, or with the geographical borders of the cities; for they saw the conquest of any city, especially when it was fortified, as final. This could be true of some parts of these cities, but not so for Aelia. Aelia in the Byzantine era, which preceded the Islamic conquests, was a vast area rather than a mere city, as we have mentioned earlier. If we bear in mind the repetitive Muslim withdrawals from most of the regions which they controlled, a manoeuvre to relocate their forces and confront the Byzantine troops (as happened in Adjnādīn, and in Fahil in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D and al-Yarmūk; or even in Palestine it self), then we get the general impression that the city had never really been subjected to any serious siege except after al-Yarmūk when the Byzantine forces totally collapsed in Syria. This is what most modern Muslim authors take as fact. In addition, there is another factor, which contributed to the inaccuracies regarding the Islamic conquests. Muslim Aelia was not the same as Byzantine Aelia in terms of frontiers, for those frontiers had certainly changed when the Muslims started recording events chronologically. It is true that they extensively used the name "Byzantine Aelia", but it is unlikely that they intended this to cover the Byzantine Aelia with its borders. They only meant that area known to them as Bayt al-Maqdis, which in all probability had become a smaller area in those days, compared with the Byzantine period. This led them to the understanding that the period of the Muslim siege of Aelia referred only to the period which Muslims spent during the siege of the city's enclosures,

excluding the Muslim withdrawal from the area. The Muslim's withdrawal from these areas only became clear after al-Yarmūk, and this contradicts the same sources which assert that most of the areas of Palestine after the battle of Ajnādīn, including most of the parts of Aelia such as Nāblus, Bethlehem, Bayt Jibrīn and 'Imwās, had been conquered by the Muslims.

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis above, the researcher argues that there are specific reasons behind the neglect of the period between 13 A.H/ 634 A.D up to the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in Aelia in *Jumādā first or second* (March or April), 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. These reasons are:

The Muslim narrators and historians did not pay attention to the problem of the commander-in-chief of the Muslim army in Syria in general at the beginning of the conquest, specifically between 13-15 A.H/ 634-645 A.D, and the changes in command in a short period causes many errors in both narrators and sources, in addition to the area that each commander was directed to.

On the other hand, the fact that the Muslims conquered most of the Byzantine Aelia region at an early period of the conquests, specifically after the battle of Ajnādīn 13 A.H/ 634 A.D, except for the small area surrounded by the walls, which continued to resist long after, causes more errors among both narrators and sources who neglected all areas except the walled parts of Aelia. This fact is seen clearly when we know that this area was taken by several different forces. Doubtless the fact that many troops were present in the Aelia region misled the narrators and historians in classifying the events. This further led them to fall into many inaccuracies in the belief that the Muslims had withdrawn from

these areas together with the other armies to confront the Byzantine armies; as we shall see in chapter four.

Chapter Four

The Date and the Names of the Conquerors of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem)

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Introduction

Islamic narratives and sources seems disagree and actually contradict one another with regards to the real date of the conquest as they report different dates extending between the years 15-17 A.H/ 636-638 A.D.

The difficulty of establishing the real date of the conquest and name of the conqueror of Aelia is associated with the fact that the early narrators and historians who reported and wrote about this have lived at different times as well as different places and regions in the Islamic state, which at that time included Syria, Iraq, Hijāz and Egypt. Furthermore, in many cases we find that many different narrators who lived at different times and places have reported similar accounts. This fact makes it very difficult or even impossible to divide the narrators and the sources based on time and place since there is no agreement about similar accounts among those who lived within a short time span of each other or at least in the same region. In other words, there are no similar accounts belonging to narrators and sources from the same time and place.

Indeed, the early Islamic sources in general are full of inaccuracies, errors and contradictions about the exact dates of many events in Islamic history. However, there are even greater differences and inaccuracies about the events concerning Aelia. It is also clear that this confusion is not limited to a few months. For example, some sources reported the conquest to have taken place at the end of one year and others reported it happening at the start of the following year. In the case of Islamic Jerusalem, the disagreements can be as far as three years or more. This means that there are strong reasons for it to be different from other cases.

In this chapter the researcher endeavours to explain and clarify the reasons behind the confusions and contradictions with regard to the identity of the military leader who carried out the conquest of Aelia. In addition, an attempt will be made to discuss the large number of characters cited in the narratives and sources for having played important roles in the conquest. This will be achieved by compiling information from the various narrations that have dealt with this specific period. This is then subjected to a critical analysis after putting it in the right context and general framework of the events of the conquest in Syria. Finally, some of the real dates and the name of the conqueror of Aelia, will be suggested.

4.1. Early Accounts

There are great differences in the narratives and sources in the date given for the conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem), and its surrender. Al-Wāqidī in *Futūh al-Shām* states that it was 16 A.H/ 637 A.D.¹ This date was also reported by al-Ya‘qūbī² without *Isnād*, in addition to Khalīfa Ibn Khayyāt on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī.³ Abī Zir‘a al-Dimashqī gives two accounts, in both of which he reports it to be 16 A.H/ 637 A.D with the first account on the authority of Yazīd Ibn‘Ubayda,⁴ while the second was on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn Muslīm.⁵ Indeed, many later sources such as Ibn ‘Asākir, Ibn

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 149-155.

²Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 247.

³Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 125.

⁴Abī Zir‘a, Vol. 1, p. 176.

⁵Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 177.

al-Athīr, Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn Kathīr, and others quoted literally the early above-mentioned accounts.¹

Al-Ṭabarī also reported two different dates; he gives on the authority of Sayf Ibn ‘Umar too early a date, 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, which is the date appearing at the end of ‘Umar’s Assurance of safety (*amān*) to the people of Aelia.² The date 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, is also reported by Mujīr al-Dīn, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Khuldūn, and Abī al-Fidā’ and others,³ which seem to quote the account of al-Ṭabarī on the authority of Sayf. In his second account al-Ṭabarī took his information on the authority of Abū ‘Uthmān Abū Ḥāritha. In this account the narrators not only mentioned the year but also emphasised the month when they stated that Aelia and its region were conquered, which was the month of Rabī‘ al-Akhir of the year 16 A.H/ May 637 A.D”.⁴

Like Abī Zir‘a and al- Al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī also reported two accounts; in both he makes the date of the conquest 17 AH/ 638 AD. Al-Balādhurī took the information of the first account on the authority of Abī Ḥafṣ al-Dimashqī on the authority Sa‘īd Ibn ‘Abd al-Azīz al-Tanukhī,⁵ while the second was on the authority of Abī ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām on the authority of ‘Abdullah Ibn Ṣāliḥ on the authority al-Layth Ibn Sa‘d from

¹Ibn ‘Asākir, Vol. 1, p. 454. He states that “Yazīd Ibn ‘Ubayda said: Bayt al-Maqdis was conquered in the year 16 AH, and in this year ‘Umar came to al-Jabiya”. Ibn al-Athīr. *Al-Kāmil*, Vol. 2, p.349. Ibn Kathīr. *Bidāya*, Vol. 5&6, p. 57.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 191-192.

³See Aḥmad ‘Abdullah, p. 47.

⁴Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 193.

⁵Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 143.

Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb.¹ Lastly, the date 16 A.H/ 637 A.D was also reported by a non-Islamic source, the Byzantine historian Theophanes.²

4.2. Modern Scholars arguments

It seems that the confusion and division among the Muslim narrators and historians with regard to these two points has led to a division among modern researchers on the same issue.

‘Abd al-Fattāḥ El-‘Awaisī, who studied ‘Umar’s Assurance, argues that the first Islamic conquest of Aelia took place in *Muharram* 17 A.H/ 638 A.D. He rejects the date 15 AH/ 636 AD, which appeared at the end of ‘Umar’s Assurance as he believes that this date was added to the version and is not originally part of it.³ Zakariyā al-Qudā also rejects the date 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, and argues that a document written before the Muslims started using the Hijrī calendar should not be dated with the Hijrī date.⁴

The Israelis; D. Goetein and H. Busse contradict one another with regard to the date. D. Goetein argues:

At the beginning of 638, probably in February, the conquest of the city (Jerusalem) was completed.⁵

However, H. Busse argues:

¹Ibid, p. 145.

²Theophanes, p. 39.

³El-‘Awaisī. *‘Umar’s Assurance*, Pp. 47, 68.

⁴Al-Qudā, Zakariyā, p. 276.

⁵D. Goetein. *Jerusalem in the Arab period*, p. 170.

In fact, Jerusalem had been handed over to the Arabs in the spring of 635, obviously on Palm Sunday, i. e. April 2nd, 635.¹

Ahmad ‘Abdullah is inclined to believe that the date was 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, because this date has been mentioned by Mujīr al-Dīn, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Khuldūn, and Abī al-Fidā’.² Lastly, ‘Abd al Azīz al-Dūrī mentions two different dates in two different articles. In the first one he accepts the year 17 A.H/ 638 A.D, when he classifies the events of the Islamic conquest. He claims the dates of these events as follows:

Al-‘Araba-Dāthin, 13 A.H. Ajnadīn (*Jumāda al-Ula*, 13 A.H). Fahil (*Dhū al-Qi‘da*, 13 A.H). Jordan, Palestine and *Marj al-Siffīr*, (*Muharam*, 14 AH), Damascus (*Muharam*, (16A.H), Aelia (Jerusalem), (17 A.H).³

However, al-Duri provided another date in another article regarding Jerusalem; that date is 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. He states:

Reports differ about the date of the conquest of the city and its surrender.....Most early reports put the date of the conquest at 16 A.H, and this seems to be likely.⁴

¹H. Busee. ‘Omar’s Image, p. 160. Ibid, ‘Omar mar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem, Pp. 73-199.

²Abdullah, Ahmad, p. 47.

³Al-Durī. *Fikrat al-Quds fi al-Islām*, p. 109.

⁴Ibid. *Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period*, p. 106.

4.3. Analysis of the Early Account

The researcher believes, firstly, that it is difficult to consider the date 15 A.H/ 636 A.D which appeared at the end of 'Umar's assurance in the version of Sayf Ibn 'Umar in al-Ṭabarī (15 A.H, 636 A.D). It is acceptable that this date has been added to the version and is not originally part of it as Zakariyā al-Qudā and 'Abd al-Fattah El-'Awaīsī indicated.¹ Zakariyā al-Qudā argues that it is well known that the Muslims did not start using the Hijri calendar until the fourth year of the Caliphate of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb and it is inconceivable "that a document before this date should be dated with the Hijri date".² In addition, the Muslims did not start using the Hijrī calendar until the year 16 or 17 A.H/ 637 or 638 A.D, as confirmed by a host of narratives and sources.³ It is probable that al-Ṭabarī himself added the date to Sayf's version, considering that al-Ṭabarī usually used the term Aelia when relating the events of the conquest of Palestine, and as most of the Aelia region excluding the walled part had been conquered between 13-15 A.H/ 634-636 A.D.

Secondly and most importantly, it could be argued that both al-Ṭabarī and Sayf are well-known for confusing the dates of many important events between 13-18 A.H/ 634-639 A.D, with regard to the conquest of Syria; in particular, the great differences between their dates for the battles of Ajnādīn and al-Yarmūk.⁴ Thus, it is probable that

¹El-'Awaīsī, *'Umar's Assurance*, p. 68. Al-Qudā, Zakariyā, p. 276.

²Al-Qudā, Zakariyā, p. 276.

³ See Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, Pp. 3-6. (In Arabic). Ibn 'Asākir, Vol. 1, Pp. 37-39.

⁴See: Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 185-189. Wāqidī, *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 37-38. Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*. V, 2, p. 134. Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2, Pp. 113-120. Azdī, Pp. 87-93.

Sayf narrated 'Umar's assurance in the year 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, and then al-Ṭabarī thought that the assurance was drawn up on that date.

Lastly, it is also possible that Sayf did not mention the date in his version and dated it when he found that he had classified it after the battle of Ajnādīn which he believed to be in 15 A.H/ 637 A.D. On the other hand, the other sources which reported the date 15 A.H/ 636 A.D as the date of the conquest usually used the term Aelia before 'Umar's arrival in the region which led the researcher to believe that they meant that the Muslims had conquered that region at that date.

In addition, the researcher has totally rejected the year 17 A.H/ 638 A.H, which is reported by al-Balādhurī as the date of 'Umar Ibn al- Khattāb's entrance to the walled part of the Aelia region. The Muslim sources agree that 'Umar attempted to enter Syria in 17 A.H/ 638 A.D but he returned from Saragh when he knew that the plague had reached its peak in the area.¹ There is also an agreement between narrators and historians that the event of 'Umar's return from Saragh did not occur before his first visit at the date of the conquest of the walled part of the Aelia region but rather after it.

Furthermore and most importantly, the Syrian narrators, especially Abī Ḥafṣ al-Dimashqī, Sa'īd Ibn 'Abd al-Azīz al-Tanukhī, Abī 'Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām, 'Abdullah Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Layth Ibn Sa'd and Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb, from whom Balādhurī took his information have all confused the first visit that 'Umar undertook to the Aelia region with the other visits that he made to Syria and to the Aelia region when they

¹Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, S, 5, p. 383. (on the authority of Muḥammad Ibn Muṣlīm Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 A.H/ 741 A.D). Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 3, p. 283. Abī Zir'a, Vol. 1, Pp.77-178. Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 149. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, p. 92. (on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq).

mentioned the reason for one of these visits and connected that with the work that 'Umar carried out on other visits.

It seems difficult to accept that the people of Aelia could resist until the year 17 A.H/ 638 A.D, after the complete collapse of the Byzantine army in Syria in the battle of al-Yarmūk. Al-Azdī reported that the inhabitants inside the walls thought of capitulating during the siege before the battle of al-Yarmūk when they wrote to Hercules to inform him that they were still under his command and on their hating of the Arabs. They asked him for help to avoid being forced to capitulate as the people of Hims had been.¹ This means that they could not continue resisting for another long period without Byzantine help.

Furthermore, it seems that the siege after the battle of al-Yamūk was very much tighter than before because most or all of the Muslim armies had taken part in it in addition to those who came with 'Umar from Madīna.² Also, it seems that the inhabitants inside the walls of Aelia or *Bayt al-Maqdis* had lost any hope of receiving help after the battle of al-Yarmūk and their resistance weakened when they heard of the arrival of 'Umar and decided to capitulate to him at that date.

In short, there is almost unanimous agreement between the sources, excluding al-Ṭabarī, that the date of the battle of al-Yarmūk was on the fifth of Rajab (13 August), 15 A.H/ 636 A.D,³ and that the Muslims besieged the walled part of the Aelia region after that battle for four months until they wrote to 'Umar asking for help⁴, which eventually

¹Azdī, p.151-152.

²See Ibn al-Murajjā, p. 44. Al-Maqdisī, p. 156.

³Khalīfa, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 118.

⁴See Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 190. Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, Pp. 146-147.

led to the collapse of the Byzantine army in Syria. These facts led the researcher to be inclined to believe that 'Umar's arrival in the region was *Jumāda first or second* (March or April), 16 A.H/ 637 A.D.

If there is no doubt about the date of the battle of al-Yarmūk, then it could be argued that the Muslim armies combined at *al-Jābiya* for at least one month, which was the time needed for their messenger, who they had sent to Madīna to ask 'Umar for his advice, to arrive. In addition, this, enabled them to bury those who were killed in al-Yarmūk battle, and take some rest after that very difficult battle.

The condition of the Muslim armies mentioned above led the researcher to argue that they had begun to move towards the walled part of the Aelia region by *Ramadān* at least, the year 15 A.H/ 636 A.H, (after the middle of September) when they received 'Umar's order to do so. Abū 'Ubayda divided the troops into seven garrisons each having a paramount leader with five thousand soldiers, commanded by a local leader or *Emīr*, who marched one after another. This means that they probably completed gathering around the walled part of the Aelia region at the start of the winter season *Shawwāl* (October). This classification agrees with al-Wāqidī's report that when the Muslims were unable to storm and control the city they wrote to 'Umar asking for his help,¹ and informed him that they had besieged it for four months in the cold winter (*fi Ayyām al-shitā' wal-Bard*),²

The fact that the siege of the walled city was maintained for the four months of the winter season, and considering the time that 'Umar needed to travel the whole

¹Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X, II, p. 190. Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, Pp. 146-147.

²Wāqidī. *Futūh*. Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 148. See also Ibn 'Asākir, V.1. p. 501.

distance from Madīna after receiving the message of Abū ‘Ubayda, makes the researcher argue that Umar’s arrival in the region was at least in *Jumāda first or second* (March or April), 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. It is also believed that he conquered the walled part of Aelia a few days after his arrival, when the inhabitants inside the walls had decided to capitulate to him.

4.4. The Real Dates and Conquerors of the Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) Region

It seems that the different terms used by the early Muslim narrators and historians have played a big role in the confusion over the date and the conqueror of the Aelia region. Indeed, narrators and historians who reported the date as 15 AH/ 636 AD, may have meant that the Muslims had conquered the Aelia region excluding the walled part, after the battle of Ajnadīn (13 A.H/ 634 A.D) and the battle of Yarmūk (15 AH/ 636 AD), in other words, before the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb; while those who reported the date as 16 A.H/ 637 A.D, may have meant the capitulation when ‘Umar entered the walled part. Lastly, those who reported the date as 17 A.H/ 638 A.D, specifically, the Syrian narrators, confused the first visit that ‘Umar made to Aelia with other visits that he made to the same region.

The researcher argues that without doubt the Muslims commanded by ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Ās, with the help of Shurahbīl Ibn Ḥasana, conquered the Aelia region, excluding the walled part, between 13-16 A.H/ 634-637 A.D; they laid siege to the walled part at the start of the Islamic conquests in Syria; and they withdrew from the area periodically together with other troops to confront the Byzantine armies.

After identifying the difference of the different terminologies that the Muslim narrators and historians used in their accounts as important reasons behind the differing dates given, the question of the real date of the conquest and the identity of the conqueror of the Aelia region remains.

In the light of this critical analysis of the early narratives and sources, it could be argued that there is more than one date for the conquest of the Aelia region. The classification of the events could be as follows:

1- Between 13-15 A.H/ 634-637 A.D, the Muslims conquered most of the Aelia region excluding the walled part.

2-In the fifth of Rajab (13 August), 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, the Muslim withdrew from the area periodically together with other troops to confront the Byzantine armies in al-Yarmūk. After they take some rest after that difficult battle ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb order them to move towards the walled part of the Aelia region.

3- In *Jumāda first or second* (March or April), 16 A.H/ 637 A.D, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb entered the walled part of Aelia and put an end to the military operations in this area.

With regards to the conqueror, it could be argued that the Aelia region was not conquered by one but by several commanders, and we can classify the stages of the conquest as follows:

1- Between 13-15 A.H/ 634-636 A.D, ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ conquered most of the Aelia region in the early stages of the conquests as the first commander-in-chief, then later under the command of Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd, and then some later time under the command of Abū ‘Ubayda. During this time, ‘Amr probably concluded a peace treaty

with the inhabitants who lived outside the walled part of the Aelia region and besieged those who lived inside it. Furthermore, 'Amr, who received some assistance from other commanders, specifically from Shurahbīl Ibn Ḥasana, appointed some local leaders, such as 'Alqama Ibn Ḥakīm and Masrūq Fulan Ibn al-'Akkī to fight the people who lived inside the walled part when he withdrew and camped in other places.

2- After the battle of al-Yarmūk, Abū 'Ubayda besieged the inside of the walled part of the Aelia region for four months until the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb.

3- A short time after the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al- Khattāb in the region, the inhabitants of Aelia inside the walled part decided to capitulate to him and he entered the walled city and put an end to the operations of the Muslim army, which means that he took part in the siege and the conquest even if only in the last part of it.

4.4.1. The Reasons Behind the Confusion

As can be seen from the table, the names of the conquerors were mentioned by most of the sources at the same dates. The date 15 A.H/ 636 A.D was reported by the Syrian, Iraqī, and Andalusian narrators, and other sources. In addition, there is almost unanimous agreement between most of the sources about the date 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. In fact, the 'Irāqī al-Balādhurī was the only source who was different, giving the date 17 A.H/ 638 A.D, although he took his information from Syrian and Egyptian narrators.

It could be true to say that the confusions and contradictions in the Islamic narratives and sources are generally a natural phenomenon. Such a phenomenon however, can be seen more clearly amongst the Syrian narratives and sources than others. This is because most of the Syrian narrators and sources have confused the reasons behind the different visits of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb to Syria and the various functions that

he carried out on each visit, as they dealt with the issue based on the wrongful assumption that it was just one visit, as will be discussed later in chapter five. This in addition to other reasons which led the Syrians to confuse and contradict the date of the conquest, as well as the identity of the besiegers and conquerors.

It seems to the researcher that there are many reasons for the differences between the sources with regard to the date and the name of the conqueror of the Aelia region, as well as the large number of persons whom the sources have reported to have taken part in the siege and the conquest. Indeed, the researcher has discussed most of these reasons in different chapters,¹ while the important point is the problem of the use of different terminology by the Muslim narrators and historians such as, *Aelia* , *Bayt al-Maqdis al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*, *al Arḍ al-Mubarakā*, and others, without paying any attention to distinguishing the great difference in the boundaries of these areas from the Byzantine to the Muslim eras. This difference has led Muslim narrators and historians to disagree, as will be seen.

¹The problem of the different visits 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb paid to the same region and approximately the same areas in the period between 14-18 A.H/ 635-639 A.D, we have seen that the narrators, especially the Syrians, have incorrectly reported the reasons for these visits and the various work that 'Umar carried out on each of them when they dealt with the issue as if it were one visit. Other points causing many inaccuracies among both narrators and sources are: the problem of classifying the events in Aelia region from the start of the conquests until the last visit of 'Umar Ibn Al- Al-Khattāb to Syria after 'Imwās in 18 AH/ 639 AD, especially the inaccuracies about the dates of the battles of Ajnādīn and al-Yarmūk; the problem of the commander in chief of the Muslim army in Syria in general at the start of the conquest, specifically between 13-15 A.H/ 634 -636 A.D.; the long siege and the conquest of most of Aelia between 13-16 A.H/ 634-636 A.D.; the fact that the Muslims had conquered most of the Byzantine Aelia region at an early period of the conquests specifically after the battle of Ajnādīn 13 A.H/ 634 A.D except the small area that was surrounded by the walls which continued resisting long after that.

4.4.2. The Problem of the Boundaries and the Different Terminology

It seems to the researcher that the problem of the different terminology used by the early Muslim narrators and historians in their accounts and writings without distinguishing the boundaries represented by each term, especially between the Byzantine Aelia (135-637 A.D/ 637 A.D=16 A.H), Palestine in general, and *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Islamic Jerusalem), is one of the main causes behind the disagreement in the narratives and sources over the dates and identity of the conquerors of the Aelia region.

The difficulty of studying the different terminology that the Muslim narrators and historians used in their accounts and writing is represented by the fact that these sources in some cases used the name or the term Aelia in their accounts and writing, while in others they followed it by describing it as the city of *Bayt al-Maqdis*.¹ In other cases they just used the term *Bayt al-Maqdis*.² In addition, the issue becomes increasingly complex when we find that new terms began to appear in the sources with regard to the same area such as *al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*, and *al-Ard al-Mubaraka*.

Some historians put the conquest under the title of Aelia or *Bayt al-Maqdis*, using titles such as the conquest of *Bayt al-Maqdis*,³ while others use the conquest of Aelia, and the conquest of Aelia, *Bayt al-Maqdis*.⁴

¹See Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 1, p. 47, 251, 259, Vol. 3, p. 516.

²See: Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p.142. Azdī, p. 258.

³Wāqidi. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 143. Ibn A'tham Ibn al-Thīr. *Kāmil*, Vol. 2, Pp. 280-300. He puts it under the title of the conquest of Aelia which is *Bayt al-Maqdis*.

⁴Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, p. 347.

The critical analysis of the early narratives and sources led the researcher to argue without doubt that the Aelia region during the Byzantine era extended over a large area. In other words, it was, in fact, a region rather than a large or small area enclosed by walls. The Muslims divided Syria into five administrative areas, each part named *Jund*.¹ According to this new division, Aelia or *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Islamic Jerusalem), had become part of *Jund Filasṭīn*.² Indeed, this division does not inform us of the exact boundaries of *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Islamic Jerusalem).

The problem of distinguishing between the boundaries designated by the different terms that Muslim narrators and historians used could be shown clearly through investigation of the different terms used before, during and after the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb to the region.³

The following table may serve as an illustration of the different terminology in the narratives and sources:

¹The term *Ajnād* meant assistants and supporters. It is also meant the city, as *a jund* in the administrative terminology referred to the military district that was guarded by the army. About these meanings see Ibn Manzūr, Vol. 4, p. 106. Zidān, Jurjī. *Tārīkh al-Tamaddun al-Islamī* (Dār al-Hilāl, Cairo, 1958), p. 74. Al-‘Alī, Sāli ḥ. *Imtidād al-‘Arab fī Šadr al-Islam* (Ma ṭ ba‘at al-Majma‘ al-‘Irāqī, Baghdad, 1981), p. 4. According to the first administration al-Shām was divided into four *ajnād*; Dimasshḡ, Hims, Palestine and Jordan. Each of these sections included some large cities. However, several administrative changes happened in al-Shām after the plague of ‘Imwās (17-18 A.H/ 638- 639 A.D). See ‘Arrāf, Pp. 177-231. Ahmad Ahmad, Ḥāfez. *Adminstration During the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (Al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn 11-40 H./ 632-660 C.E)*. Ph.D, submitted to the University of Westminster (1997), Pp. 104-107.

²‘Arrāf, Pp. 177-231.

³For more details about the different visits that the caliph Ibn al-Khattāb undertook to Syria in general, Palestine and Aelia (Jerusalem), see Chapter five.

Table (1)

The various terminologies in use in the early Islamic narratives and sources with regard of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) at the eve of the first Islamic conquest.

Aelia	Aelia and Bayt al-Maqdis	Bayt al-Maqdis
Khalīfa Ibn Khaiyyāt (d. 240 A.H/ 854 A.D)	Al-Wāqidī (d. 207 A.H/ 822 A.D) Al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 284 A.H/ 854 A.D)	Abī ‘Ubayd (d. 224 A.H/ 836 A.D)
Balādhurī (d. 279 A.H/ 892 A.D)	Ibn A‘tham (d. 314 A.H/ 926 A.D)	Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230 A.H/ 845 A.D)
Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H/ 922 A.D)	Al-Azdī (d. 430 A.H/ 1039 A.D)	
	Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630 A.H/ 1233 A.D)	
	Ibn Kathīr (d. 704 A.H/ 1305 A.D)	

From this analysis, the researcher argues that some of the early Muslim narrators and historians did not know the differences in the administrative divisions and boundaries between the Byzantines and the Muslims. In addition, they did not distinguish between the different terms that they used to refer to the same areas. This made the researcher feel that the confusion contained in these accounts in the classification of events was even greater than the contradictions.

4.4.3. The Conquerors of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem)

Reports differ about the identity of the besieger and the conqueror of Aelia. Amongst the names suggested were those of ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, Abū ‘Ubayda, ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ, and a man from the *Judayla* tribe, Khālid Ibn Thābit al-Fahmī. Moreover, sources claimed that a number of local leaders also took part in the siege and the conquest.

As it will be discussed in chapter five, it is a fact that ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattāb came to the Aelia region during his first visit when the Muslims asked for his help¹. This was because the Muslim army had, for a long time, been unable to storm and control the walled city.²

4.4.3.1. Early Accounts

The sources contain disagreements about the identity of the leader who was besieging Aelia upon the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattāb. Some accounts reported that

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 190. Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, V.2, Pp. 146-147.

²See Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 190. Wāqidī. *Futūh*, S, 1, Pp. 143-152.

the commander was Abū ‘Ubayda,¹ while others reported that he was ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Ās.² In addition, other reports mentioned that Aelia was conquered by a man from the *Judayla* tribe,³ or by Khālīd Ibn Thābit al-Fahmī who led the army from al-Jābiya to Aelia and reached a peace treaty with its inhabitants.⁴ The sources also mention numerous names of local leaders who allegedly took part in the siege and conquest of Aelia.

With regard of the names of the conquerors, the following tables may serve as an illustration of the different narrators and sources, with regard to the identity of the commanders-in chief, in addition to the local or tribal leaders who took place in the siege and the conquest of Aelia:

¹See Wāqidī, *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 147.

²See Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, p. 190.

³Abī ‘Ubayd, Pp. 152-153.

⁴Abī ‘Ubayd, p.153. Balādhurī. *Tārīkh*, Pp. 144-145.

Table (2)

Illustration of the various narrators and sources, with regard to the identity of the commanders-in chief and the local or tribal leaders who took place in the siege and the conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) between 13-15 A.H/ 634-636 A.D.

Commander-in chief	Headquarter	date	Sources	Narrators
'Āmr Ibn al- 'Āṣ	Palestine	13 A.H/ 634 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
			Balādhurī	Abū Mikhnaf Yazīd Ibn Abī Habīb
			Ṭabarī	Sayf Ibn.'Umar/ Sālim Ibn'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar Khālīd Ibn Mi'dān 'Ubāda Ibn Nusay
			Ibn A'tham	Without Isnād
			Azdī	Without Isnād
	Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem)	13 A.H/ 634 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd	Historical Syria	13-15A.H/ 634-636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
			Balādhurī	

			Ṭabarī	Sayf Ibn ‘Umar
			Ibn A‘tham	Without Isnād
			Azdī	Without Isnād
			Ibn al-Murajjā	‘Abdullah Ibn Lahhy‘a
Abū ‘Ubayda	Historical Syria	15-18 A.H	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
			Balādhurī	Abī Ḥafṣ al- Dimashqī from his Shaykhs
			Ṭabarī	Sayf Ibn ‘Umar
			Ibn A‘tham	Without Isnād
			Azdī	Without Isnād
			Ibn al- Murajjā	Al-Walīd Ibn Muslīm
‘Umar Ibn al- Al-Khattāb	Madīna Islamic Jerusalem		Wāqidī	Without Isnād
			Ibn Sa‘d	
			Balādhurī	Abī Ḥafṣ al- Dimashqī–Sa‘īd

				<p>Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz from his Shaykhs. Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār- Al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm-Tamīm Ibn ‘Aṭya- ‘Abdullah Ibn Qays</p>
			<p>Balādhurī <i>Ansāb Al- Ashrāf</i></p>	<p>Abī ‘Ubayd ‘Abdullah Ibn Ṣālih - al-Layth Ibn Sa‘id -Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār-Al-Walīd Ibn ‘Ammār al- ‘Ansī (probably al- ‘Abbsī).</p>
			<p>Ṭabarī</p>	<p>Sayf Ibn ‘Umar ‘Adī Ibn Sahl Abū ‘Uthmān and Abū Ḥāritha</p>

			Al-Maḡdisī	Without Isnād
			Ibn A‘tham	Without Isnād
			Azdī	Without Isnād
	Madīna Jābiya		Wāqidī	With out Isnād
			Balādhurī	
			Ṭabarī	Sayf Ibn ‘Umar Abū Maryam al- Filaṣṭīnī Sālim Ibn ‘Abdullah Khālid Ibn Mi‘dān ‘Ubāda Ibn Nusay
			Ibn A‘tham	Without Isnād
			Azdī	Without Isnād
<i>Aman from Judayla Tribe</i>	Jābiya- Jerusalem		Abī ‘Ubayd	Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār-Al-Walīd
				Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār al-‘Ansī

				(probably al- 'Abbsī).
			Ibn al- Murajjā	Al-Walīd Ibn Hishām Hishām Ibn 'Ammār
Khālid Ibn Thābit al-Fahmī	Jābiya- Jerusalem		Abī 'Ubayd	'Abdullah Ibn Ṣālih - al-Layth Ibn Sa'd - Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb
			Balādhurī	'Abdullah Ibn Ṣālih - al-Layth Ibn Sa'd - Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb
			Ibn al- Murajā	'Abdullah Ibn Ṣālih - al-Layth Ibn Sa'd - Yazīd Ibn Abī Ḥabīb

Table (3)

Illustration of the various narrators and sources, with regard to the identity of the local or tribal leaders who took place in the siege and the conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) between 13-15 A.H/ 634-636 A.D.

Local or tribal leader	Headquarter	Date	Source	Narrator
'Alqama Ibn Ḥakīm	Aelia Jerusalem	13 A.H/ 634 A.D	Ṭabarī	Sayf Ibn 'Umar
Masrūq Ibn Fulan al-'Akkī	Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem)	13 A.H/ 634 A.D	Ṭabarī	Sayf Ibn 'Umar
Shuraḥbīl Ibn Ḥasana	Aelia (Jerusalem)	13 A.H/ 634 A.D	Ṭabarī	Sayf Ibn 'Umar
Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd	Aelia (Jerusalem)	15 A.H/ 636 A.D	Azdī	Without Isnād

Table (4)

Illustration of the various narrators and sources, with regard to the identity of the commanders-in chief and the local or tribal leaders who took place in the siege and the conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) between 15-16 A.H/ 637-638 A.D.

Commander in chief	Headquarter	Date	Source	Narrator
Abū ‘Ubayda				
Seven Amīris commanded by Abū ‘Ubayda	Aelia (Jerusalem)	15 A.H/ 636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
Khālid Ibn al-Walīd	Aelia (Jerusalem)	15 A.H/ 636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān		15 A.H/ 636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
Shuraḥbīl Ibn Ḥasana		15 A.H/ 636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
Al-Mīrqāl Ibn Ḥāshim Ibn ‘Uutba Ibn Abī Waqqās		15A.H/ 636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād

Al-Musayyb Ibn Najiya al-Fuzārī		15A.H/ 636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
Qays Ibn Hubaiyyra al- Murādī		15A.H/ 636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād
'Urwa Ibn Muhallhal Ibn Zayd al-Khaiyl		15A.H/ 636 A.D	Wāqidī	Without Isnād

Also, the disagreements among the Muslim narrators and historians with regard to the identity of the conqueror of the Aelia region have also led to a division among modern researchers over the same issue. Some scholars were inclined to believe that ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ was the real conqueror of Aelia,¹ whereas other scholars argued that it was Abū ‘Ubayda². In modern Islamic thought this event was attributed to the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb personally under the name of the ‘Umarī conquest (*al-Fath al-‘Umarī*).³

4.4.3.2. Modern Scholars Arguments

Some scholars believe that ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ was the real conqueror, amongst whom are the Israeli scholars H. Busse and D. Goetein. The Israeli, H. Busse, alleges that what is narrated by the Islamic sources about the first Islamic conquest of Aelia is no more than a legend, imagined by the Muslim historians. According to him, the plan of such historians is to portray the city in a holy Islamic character in order to exclude and replace its Christian character. In his manifest attempts to discount the Islamic sources, H. Busse deliberately ignores and denies them, as is the case in the Jewish document of Cairo Geniza. He concludes that the Arab narrators and historians confused the name of the real conqueror of Jerusalem. They confused ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ (d. 42 A.H/ 662 A.D)⁴

¹See: Busse ‘*Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem*, Pp. 73-119. Ibid. ‘*Omar’s Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem*, Pp. 149-168.

²See ‘Abdullah, Ahmad, p. 50.

³See: Balādhurī, *Futūh*, Pp. 144-145.

⁴For more details about his life see Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 1, p. 57. Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 4, Pp. 254-261. Vol. 7, Pp.493-494. Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, S. 5, Pp. 337-340. Ibn Qutayba. *Ma‘ārif*, Pp. 285-286.

with caliph 'Umr Ibn al-Khattāb as a result of similarity of letters in both names in an attempt to make the caliph personally the champion of this important event.¹

Furthermore, D. Goitein denies the historical fact of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia and the arrival of 'Umar in the region. He alleges that the Islamic sources contain many legends and myths which aim at raising the holy status of Jerusalem in the hearts of Muslims by depicting its conquest as a major central event and caliph 'Umar himself the hero of that event. He concludes that the Islamic accounts of the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem came under the influence of the Israeli narrations and were taken from one of the Torah interpretations, namely (ha-midrash) which indicates that Jerusalem will only be conquered by a king who is fit to be called a mightily one.²

Another Israeli academic, Moshe Gil, differs from his predecessors; i.e. D. Goitein and H. Busse, in some matters and agrees with them on others. He argues that the Islamic sources and narrations have exaggerated and magnified the role of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb with regard to the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem in order to present that event in a state of religious holiness and glorification.³ However, in Moshe Gil's opinion, the reasons give by D. Goitein are not enough to deny the value and historic fact of the Islamic narrations of the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem. This is because of the other visits which 'Umar paid to the city on a number of other occasions, which are not related

¹Busse. *'Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem*, Pp. 73-119. Ibid. *'Omar's Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem*, Pp. 149-168.

²Busse. *'Omar's Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem*, p. 169.

³Gil. *Palestine during*, p. 43. Cited in: Khalīl 'Athāmina. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 118. See also: Gil. *A History of Palestine*, p. 73.

to the first conquest.¹ With regard to his opinion of the Islamic sources, Gil adds that it is not fair to cast doubt on sources which were written over a thousand years ago. According to him, Caliph 'Umar himself upon his visit to Jerusalem acknowledged the importance of the Jews in Palestine and allowed them to settle in the city. He states:

But there seems to be little justification for these very stringent attitudes (of D. Goitein) a source that has been preserved for more than a thousand years, 'Umar's line appears to have been to adopt the most decent attitude possible towards the local population and enable it to continue to pursue its customary mode of life and to earn its living in its own fashion from then on,..... 'Umar acknowledged the importance of the Jews in Palestine, comprising still a sizeable population and economically the most important, and therefore their request to settle in Jerusalem was granted.²

Lastly, Khalil 'Athāmina has presented new explanations for the reasons behind the different names that the sources reported He claims that this was due to rivalry among later Muslim political groups and committees which reflected the care of the families and the tribes of those leaders to obtain this great fund of nobleness and glory (*Al-Sharaf wal-Majd*), that enriched the status of the families and the tribes one generation after another.³

It seems that the arguments of some modern scholars are not based on any careful rational academic analysis or objective criticism of the historical accounts and sources.

¹Gil. *A History of Palestine*, p. 73.

²Ibid, p. 73.

³'Athāmina, Khalil. *Filastīn*, Pp. 116-117.

This fact can be seen clearly when we find that they depend on some accounts and ignore others, which were mentioned by the same sources without giving any kind of explanation or scientific reasons to justify their exclusions. For instance, the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb in Aelia or *Bayt al-Maqdis* was confirmed by most of the Islamic and non-Islamic sources which makes it hard to accept the weak Busse argument. Furthermore, the historical fact of the caliph ‘Umar’s role in the conquest makes it too hard for any neutral researcher to cast doubt about the historicity of the visit. In addition, the confusion in the narratives and sources does not mean the facts have been lost, and considering that this confusion is not only about the names of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb and ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ, but also about most of the issues in Islamic history in general.

On the other hand, some researchers, such as Ahmad ‘Abdullah took his information from some non-historical accounts such as the accounts mentioned by al-Wāqidī and al-Ṭabarī, who reported that some of the inhabitants of the city informed the Muslim military leaders who besieged them of the name and characteristics of the only person who would be able to conquer the city. When they based this information on what they had found in their scriptures and their knowledge it was clear that these characteristics were applicable to ‘Umar, hence he came to Jerusalem.¹

Furthermore, ‘Abdullah quotes two later sources which were too far from the time of the conquest to be considered as reliable, for example, Mujīr al-Dīn, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Khuldūn, and Abī al-Fidā’. Also, the acceptance of the accounts which reported that Abū ‘Ubayda was the besieger at the eve of ‘Umar’s arrival in the region does not mean that he was the real conqueror.

¹See Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 152. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, p. 190.

Lastly, with regard to Khalil ‘Athāmina’s claims, the researcher argues that it is true that the matter of the nobleness and glory (*Al-Sharaf wal-Majd*) had played an important role in the Islamic narratives regarding the first Islamic conquests in general, but in the case of the Aelia region, the researcher failed to find evidence of any relations between the narrators and the leaders they mentioned, as is shown from the *Isnāds* of most of the narratives mentioned in the graph above. This fact led the researcher to totally reject ‘Athāmina’s hypothesis, considering it as a very weak one.

4.4.3.3. The Names of the Conquerors of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem)

The analysis of the military operations in the Aelia region between 13-16 A.H/ 634-637 A.D shows that the Muslims had conquered most of this region before the death of Abū Bakr in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D, and managed to put the walled part under siege from that time until the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb in the region in the year 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. In addition, it should be remembered that the Muslim armies withdrew from the area from time to time to combine with other Muslim armies in order to confront the Byzantines. The researcher argues that the capture of this area was accomplished by several different forces, and the fact that many troops were present in the Aelia region did not enable the narrators and historians to easily classify events, and hence led them to into inaccuracy. It is well known that the Muslim commanders in this area, specifically ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ had appointed some local leaders to fight the people who lived inside the walled part of the Aelia region when his forces withdrew from one place to another.

Moreover, the long period of the siege led the narrators to fall into many classification problems when they neglected the history of Aelia during the period 13-16

A.H/ 634-637 A.D. The critical analysis of this period shows that it could be considered as an integral part of the period of the conquest.¹ Furthermore, we can see that the Muslims conquered most of the Aelia region a short time after their arrival in the area, but the Islamic sources have also neglected and did not pay attention to it except to the period after the battle of al-Yarmūk, and the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb.² In addition, the Muslim narrators and historians did not pay attention to distinguishing between the boundaries of the different terms they were using, especially between the Byzantine Aelia and *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Islamic Jerusalem).³

These are the major points over which early Islamic sources disagreed.⁴ However, the fact seems to be that the confusion and contradictions are more likely to be in classifying and distinguishing between the events of the conquests and the boundaries of the different terms rather than anything else.

In short, the Byzantine Aelia with its large extended boundaries was the place of the Muslims armies’ operations shortly after their arrival in the region and the siege of the walled part of the region, specifically between 13-15 A.H/ 634-636 A.D. As there were several forces and troops present in that part of the world during this period, it is possible that many commanders-in-chief and local or tribal leaders took part in fighting the people of Aelia.

¹See chapter three.

²See chapter three.

³See chapter four.

⁴See Donner. *The Early*, p. 152.

Al-Ṭabarī reported that Shuraḥbīl Ibn Ḥasana had joined ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ in the Aelia region, and he appointed Abū al-‘Awar al-Salamī to govern Jordan in his place.¹ In another account, al-Ṭabarī reported that ‘Amr appointed ‘Alqama Ibn Ḥakīm al-Firazī and Masrūq Fulan Ibn al-‘Akkī to fight the people of Aelia in order to confront and prevent them from fighting ‘Amr when he set out and camped in Ajnādīn (meaning al-Yarmūk).² On the other hand, after the battle of al-Yarmūk, Abū ‘Ubayda who became the commander-in-chief and governor of the whole of Syria had directed all the Muslim armies towards Aelia by dividing the troops into seven garrisons. After a period of seven days the troops reached the wall and put the area under siege from seven sides for four continuous months until the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb.³

The role of ‘Alqama, Masrūq, and Shuraḥbīl in the military operations in Palestine was well-known, which made their role in the siege and the conquest of the Aelia region quite possible in the light of the evidence which mentioned that the operation of the Muslim armies in the Aelia region had started a short time before their arrival in the region. ‘Alqama was well known as a local leader in Palestine, in particular as one who worked with ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ, and who was the first military governor of Aelia appointed by the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb.⁴ The role of Masrūq in the conquests was also well known as most of the sources reported.⁵ Lastly, the researcher argues that the assistance of Shuraḥbīl to ‘Amr in the Aelia region was also quite feasible

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, p. 185.

²See Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 185-186.

³Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 143-144.

⁴Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 192-193.

⁵See: Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 185-186.

in the light of the fact that he was foremost among the four commanders whom Abū Bakr directed to Syria, (his area was Jordan), close to the Aelia region. In addition, Shurahbīl was the conqueror of the north of Palestine.¹

Furthermore, the account of al-Wāqidī that Abū ‘Ubayda directed all the Muslim armies towards Aelia after the battle of al-Yarmūk by dividing them into seven battalions could also be quite feasible in the light of the collapse of the Byzantine armies in Syria and fall of almost all their bases except for the small walled part of the Aelia region, and Caesarea. The Aelia region was closer to Abū ‘Ubayda’s camp in al-Jābīya than Caesarea, which makes it more likely that he directed all the armies in that direction first, as supported by accounts which reported that ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb ordered him to do that.

The researcher argues that the appointment of seven *Amīrs* by Abū ‘Ubayda to command the army as he directed them towards the walled part of Aelia is compatible with the sequence of events, in particular the orders of Abū Bakr to the commanders he sent to Syria to ask each tribe to fly its own banner for the purpose of distinguishing between them.²

The researcher argues that to the local or tribal commanders, it seems that most of them took part for short durations of the siege and the conquest, excluding the men of the *Judayla* tribe and Khālīd Ibn Thābit al-Fahmī of whose role the researcher could not find any evidence. They probably took part in conquering other areas in Palestine, Jordan, and Syria in general.

¹See Donner. *The Early*, p. 152. ‘Athāmina, Kalil. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 119.

²See: *The origin of the Islamic state*, p. 167.

The table below may represent the real besiegers and conquerors of the Aelia region as commanders-in-chief, in addition to the local leaders who contributed during parts of the siege and the conquest:

Table (5)

The table below represents the true identity of conquerors and besiegers of the Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) region

Commander –in chief	date
‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ	13 A.H/634 A.D
Shurahbīl Ibn Ḥasana	13 A.H/634 A.D
‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ	13-15 A.H/634-663 A.D
Abū ‘Ubayda	15-16 A.H/636-637 A.D
‘Umar Ibn al- Khattāb	16 A.H/637 A.D
Local or tribal leader	
‘Alqama Ibn Ḥakīm	13 A.H/634 A.D
Masrūq Fulān Ibn al-‘Akkī	13 A.H/634 A.D
Seven <i>Amīris</i> commanded by Abū ‘Ubayda Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd, Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān, Shurahbīl Ibn Ḥasana, Al-Mirqāl Ibn Hāshim Ibn ‘Uutba Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Al-Musayyb Ibn Najīyya al-Fuzārī, Qays Ibn Hubayyra al- Murādī , and ‘Urwa Ibn Muhalhal Ibn Zayd al-Khayl.	15-16 A.H/ 636-637 A.D

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis of the narratives and sources, several forces and troops were present in this region until the capitulation of the walled part of Aelia during the military operations between 13-15 A.H/ 634-636 A.D, which also resulted in the take-over of most of this region shortly after the start of the conquests. The different terms that the narrators and historians used, and the long duration of the siege that the Muslims imposed upon the walled part of the Aelia region makes the picture unclear with regard to the dates and the identity of the real conqueror of Jerusalem. This has resulted in the feeling that the narratives and sources contradict each other, while in fact, the real problem lies in the classification of the events of this period. It could be argued that the Aelia region was conquered by several commanders-in-chief as well as local and tribal leaders, which leads us to believe that the names mentioned in the sources are correct, excluding the few names for which there was no evidence to confirm their roles.

Chapter Five

Discussion of the Reasons behind ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s Visit to Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem)

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Introduction

The discussion of the reasons behind the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in Aelia and his historic visit involves a number of issues. Such issues revolve around whether this visit was a special visit paid to Aelia by 'Umar, or his arrival into Syria from Madīna had been for reasons connected with Aelia, or this visit took place for other reasons, which had nothing to do with Aelia. Furthermore, we may ask if this visit took place in order to meet certain conditions which were laid down by the inhabitants of Aelia, and which made it necessary for 'Umar to come to them. Such questions are in turn connected with many other issues such as: what was the first place which 'Umar reached at the beginning of his visit and what were the tasks that he carried out during this visit and other visits to the region, in the light of the classification of the stages of the Islamic conquest of Syria? In other words, what were the circumstances surrounding each of Umar's visits to Syria?

Any researcher who tries to examine the reasons behind the arrival of 'Umar in Aelia will face significant problems. This is because the Islamic sources greatly differ in identifying these reasons. They differ even with regard to the work 'Umar carried out while he was there. For instance, the Islamic sources contain an enormous number of accounts narrated by narrators with different political affiliations and areas as I have mentioned early.

Although Islamic sources, or indeed most sources, make the arrival of 'Umar personally in the walled part of Aelia a condition laid down by its inhabitants in return for

their surrender,¹ some other sources link the arrival of ‘Umar in the region to military reasons required specifically by the Palestinian front. He arrived after the Muslims asked for his help in dealing with the inhabitants of Palestine in general and Aelia in particular.² There is also a third group of sources, which mention that ‘Umar was present at the conquest of Aelia without mentioning any reasons for his arrival from Madīna.³ Finally there are two accounts touched upon by some sources, which can be cited as legendary or non-historical narrations. Each narration mentions that some of the inhabitants of Aelia informed the Muslim military leaders who besieged them of the name and characteristics of the only person who would be able to conquer it. They based this information on what they had found in their scriptures and their knowledge that these characteristics were applicable to ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb. Therefore, he arrived after the Muslims informed him of this.⁴

If we attempt to deal with this inaccuracy by identifying the place where ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb first reached after his departure from Madīna, we notice that the issue becomes increasingly complex. This is because some sources make Aelia the first stop on the visit.⁵ Other sources state that the first place ‘Umar reached was al-Jābīya.⁶ The issue becomes even more complex when the same source mentions more than one account.

¹Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 125. (on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī). Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 190. (on the authority of Kālid Ibn Mī’dān and ‘Ubāda Ibn Nusayy). Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, Pp. 146-147.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 11, p. 190. Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, Pp. 146-147.

³Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 3, P. 283. Al-Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, p. 383. Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p.125.

⁴Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p.152. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II. p. 188.

⁵Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 124. Wāqidī, *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p.154.

⁶Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p.154. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 188, 190, 193. Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 226.

Some mention Aelia while others mention al-Jābīya as the first stop.¹ Also, these sources sometimes talk simultaneously about both, whether they define one of them as the first stop in the visit² or not.³ The difference among the Islamic sources in defining the objective behind ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s visit has created a division among modern researchers who have dealt with the issue of the Islamic conquests in general terms and those who have dealt with an aspect of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia. The results they arrived at varied between those who deny that the visit took place,⁴ and those who acknowledge that it did take place, although they rule out the possibility that Aelia was the main reason behind the visit. This is because they focused on the work that ‘Umar carried out in al-Jābīya. The reason for these varying results seems to go back mainly to the fact that these studies are not originally related to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia. They are, rather, studies which deal with the Islamic conquests in general, and the writers did not discuss the issue of Aelia in depth, as mentioned earlier.

In this chapter, in order to arrive at the real reason behind the visit, the researcher will gather all the available reasons, compare them and try to link them with the surrounding situation. At the same time, the writer will try to give explanations of the reasons for the great contradictions among the Islamic sources and accounts. In addition, the reasons behind the different visits of ‘Umar’s to Syria and the work he carried out in

¹Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p.154. Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 147.

²Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, Pp. 146-147.

³Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 3, p. 283. Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, S. 5, p. 383.

⁴This inaccuracies makes some researchers describe what is narrated by the Islamic sources about the first Islamic conquest and the historic visit of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb to Aelia as no more than myths that were imagined by the Muslim historians. See D. Goitein. *Jerusalem During The Arab period*, p.169. Busse. *‘Omar b. al Hattab in Jerusalem*, Pp. 73-119. Busse. *‘Omar’s Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem*, Pp. 149-168.

each visit will be reported. Furthermore, through the analysis of the early sources, the researcher will also discuss and analyse the views of some modern researchers who have dealt with this issue.

5.1. Early Accounts

Nearly all the early Islamic sources cite some reasons for ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s visit to Aelia. Among the early historians who mention such reasons, is al-Wāqidī. He states that, one of the Aelia Patriarchs (it may be the Patriarch Sophronious)¹ informed Abū ‘Ubayda ‘Āmir Ibn al-Jarrāh al-Fihri (d.18 AH)² who was besieging the walled part of Aelia, that according to the Christian prophecy, the conqueror of Aelia must be a man of a certain description and his name must be ‘Umar. According to the Patriarch, ‘Umar was not present among those who were taking part in the siege. This prompted Abū ‘Ubayda to write to ‘Umar in Madīna and inform him that he had been besieging the walled part of Aelia for four months in the midst of snow, cold weather and rain. At the same time, he informed him of the Christian prophecy which he had heard from the Patriarch. After consultation with the Muslims, and upon the recommendation of ‘Alī Ibn Abī Tālib (the fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs who ruled from 36-40 AH)³ ‘Umar

¹Sophronous is the Patriarch of Aelia’ who handed the city to the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb. He died a short time after the Islamic conquest of the city in 638 or 639. See: D. Goiten. *Jerusalem in the Arab period*, p. 174.

²About Abū ‘Ubayda see Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, V. 1. 62. Vol. 2, p. 772. Ibid. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, P. 13. Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 3, Pp. 409-415. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma’ārif*, Pp. 247-248. Abī Zir’a, Vol. 1, p. 177. Ibn Al-Athīr. *Uṣd*, Vol. 6, Pp. 205-206.

³About ‘Alī Ibn Abī Tālib see Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 1, p. 11. Ibid. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 227. Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 2, Pp. 337-340. Vol. 3, Pp. 19-40. Vol. 6, p. 12. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma’ārif*, Pp. 203-218.

decided to travel to Aelia¹ where he made a treaty with the inhabitants of Aelia, on the condition that they pay the *Jizya* tax.²

A similar reason to which some refer, with a little nominal difference in the personalities, was mentioned by al-Ṭabarī from Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamīmī (d. 180 AH/796 AD), who was related to Artabūn. After Artabūn was defeated in the battle of Ajnādīn, he wrote to ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Aṣ (d. 42 AH)³ who had laid siege to the walled part of Aelia, and informed him that he would never be able to conquer it because, according to Christian prophecies, the conqueror of Aelia must be a man named ‘Umar. ‘Amr wrote to ‘Umar that he was conducting a difficult war and struggling for a land which had been held and preserved for ‘Umar. ‘Umar, who knew from the letter that ‘Amr was speaking out of knowledge, came from Madīna, made a peace treaty with the inhabitants of Aelia and conquered it.⁴

The Islamic sources, particularly the Syrian accounts, mention that ‘Umar arrived in Aelia in response to a condition laid down by its inhabitants that he personally should be the one to conduct the treaty with them in return for their surrender. In other words, the people of Aelia asked the Muslims to conclude peace with them on the condition that ‘Umar was personally responsible. This reason was mentioned by Khalīfa

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp.152. Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, Pp. 290-296.

²Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 152. (It is noted that al-Wāqidī’s account does not mention that the Patriarch of Jerusalem or someone among the people of the city asked the Muslims to conclude peace with them on the condition that the caliph ‘Umar be personally responsible).

³Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 1, p. 57. Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 4, Pp. 254-261. Vol. 7, Pp.493-494. Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S,5, Pp. 337-340. Ibn Qutayba. *Ma‘ārif*, Pp. 285-286.

⁴Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X, II, p. 190.

Ibn Khaiyāt on the authority of Muhammad Ibn al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 146 AH/ 763 AD),¹ al-Balādhurī on the authority of Abī Hafṣ al-Dimashqī from Sa'īd Ibn 'Abd Al 'Azīz al-Tanūkī (d. 167 or 168. AH/ 783 or 784 AD)² and also on the authority of Hishām Ibn 'Ammār (d.180 AH/ 796AD) on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn 'Ammār and on the authority of al-Uzā'ī (d. 157 AH).³

Al-Tabarī, reported on the authority of 'Adī Ibn Sahil that the reason for 'Umar's visit to Aelia was that he came to reinforce the Muslims who requested his help against the people of Palestine.⁴

Ibn Sa'd and Al-Balādhurī, in *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, reported in an account from Muhammad Ibn Muslīm Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī that 'Umar attended the conquest of Aelia and distributed the booty at al-Jābīya. The account did not give reasons why he came with regard to these two issues or even if he came on one or two different occasions, but what is understood from the text is that 'Umar arrived for the conquest of Aelia before the distribution of the booty.⁵ Sālim Ibn 'Abdullah in Khalīfa Ibn Khayyāt restricted himself, without giving any details, in stating that the people of Aelia concluded a peace treaty with 'Umar and he conquered it.⁶ What applies to the early sources applies to later sources since most of them state that the reason for 'Umar's visit to Aelia was that its

¹Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 124.

²Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p.144.

³It is noted that al-Ūzā'ī does not mention any answer whether 'Umar accepted this condition or not. Furthermore, he does not mention anything regarding the visit. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 145. For more details about 'Adī Ibn Sahil see Ibn Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma'ārif*, Pp. 496-497. Abī Zir'a, Vol. 1, p. 262.

⁴Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 190.

⁵Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 3, p. 283. Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S. 5, p. 383.

⁶Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 124. Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 190.

inhabitants requested his presence as a condition for their surrender as is widely reported by the Syrian narrators and sources, in particular by al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm and Yazīd Ibn ‘Ubayda in Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 539 A.H/ 1144 A.D) and others.¹ However, the earlier and famous Syrian historian Abī Zir’a al-Dimashqī (d. 281 A.H/ 894 A.D), who reported ‘Umar’s visit to Aelia on the authorities of the same Syrians narrators (al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm and Yazīd Ibn ‘Ubayda does not mention this condition at all.²

5.2. An analysis of the Reasons

To discuss the reasons mentioned by the Islamic sources with regard to ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s visit to Aelia, we can divide such reasons according to their narrators as follows:

1-The Syrian accounts, such as the accounts of Muḥammad Ibn al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī, Abī Ḥafṣ al-Dimashqī, Sa’īd Ibn ‘Abd Al ‘Azīz, Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār, al-Walīd Ibn ‘Ammār, al-Uza’ī, al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm and Yazīd Ibn Rajā’ Ibn Ḥayawa, state that the reason for ‘Umar’s visit to Aelia was that its inhabitants requested his presence as a condition for their surrender. On the other hand, other Syrian accounts, among them those of Yazīd Ibn ‘Ubayda, al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm and Abī Zir’a al-Dimashqī did not mention this condition at all.

2-The ‘Irāqī accounts such as those of al-Wāqidī, who lived most of his life in

¹Ibn ‘Asākir. (Matb‘at Raudat al-Shām, 1330 AH), Vol. 1, Pp.175-177. Ibn ‘Asākir (Mtbu‘āt Majma‘ al-Lughah al-‘Arabiah bi Dimashq, 1951), Pp. 553-554. See also Al-Himiyariī, *al-Rawd al-Mi‘tār*, p. 69. Cited al-Dūrī. *Jerusalem in the early Islamic Peried*, p.107. Ibn al-Athīr. *Kāmil*, Vol, 2, Pp. 247-249. Al-Dhahabī. *Tārīkh al-Islām wa waḥyiyāt al-Mashāhīr wal-A‘lām*, Vol, p.162. Ibid. *Tārīkh al-Islām wa Tabaqāt al-Mashāhīr wal-A‘lām*, Vol. 2, p. 20. Ibn Kathīr. *Bidāya*, Vol. 7& 8, S. 7, Pp. 55-57. Ibn Hajar, p. 107.

²Abī Zir’a, Vol. 1, Pp. 176-178.

Iraq,¹ and Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamimī (d. 180 AH/ 796 AD) in al-Ṭabarī,² state the reason for ‘Umar’s visit was that the people of Aelia informed the Muslims who were besieging them of the name and description of the only person who was capable of conquering Aelia. ‘Umar arrived in Aelia after the description matched him and conquered it. Furthermore, al-Balādhurī who took his information from Syrian sources states that the inhabitants of Aelia agreed to capitulate on condition that the Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in person wrote the peace treaty.³

3-The Madanī or Ḥijāzī accounts state that the reason for ‘Umar’s arrival in Aelia was as leader of the military campaign. He came to reinforce the Muslims who asked his help in the matter of the people of Palestine. This was mentioned by ‘Adī Ibn Sahil. Some of the Ḥijāzī accounts, among them those of ‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubāir, Sālim Ibn ‘Abdullah, and Muḥammad Ibn Muṣlīm Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, the famous Madanī and Syrian jurist scholar, who lived in Damascus do not cite reasons for the visit.

Although the Syrian accounts are close to the event with regard to place as Aelia lies in that region, the researcher asserts that the Madanī or Ḥijāzī accounts are closer to the event not only with regard to place, but also time. This is because the narrator of the Ḥijāzī accounts resided in the capital city of Madīna where Caliph ‘Umar resided at the time of the conquest. In addition to that, some of these narrators belonged to the household of Caliph ‘Umar, among them Sālim Ibn ‘Abdullah and, to a lesser degree

¹Waqidī, *Mghazī*, Vol. 1, Pp. 5-9.

²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 191.

³Balādhurī, *Futūh*, p.144

‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubāir.¹ As far as the Iraqī accounts are concerned, they come into the last category with regard to their distance in both time and place from the event. They are also characterised by their enormous length and wealth of details, which give the impression of a legendary non-historical character in many respects. The Syrian accounts as a general rule are also mostly characterised by length and detail, and differ from the Hijazī and Iraqī ones with regard to the aspects of both time and place, or they concur a little with Hijazī and Iraqī in their historical framework and internal content, but differ widely with them on other points as Ḥusāin ‘Aṭwān argues.²

Contrary to the argument of Ḥusāin ‘Aṭwān, the researcher would argue that the Syrian accounts related to ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s visit to Aelia seem to contradict these general rules. This is because they are short rather than long. Although they give details, these details are not elaborate or comprehensive, contrary to the Hijazī accounts, which rarely give any noticeable details. The reason for this is more likely to be the great similarity of the tasks which ‘Umar undertook on each of the various visits to the same region. Thus the Hijazī narrators avoided the inaccuracies made by the other narrators particularly the Syrians with regard to these tasks.

The researcher discounts the Iraqī accounts which mention the reasons for ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s arrival in Aelia, whether it be al-Wāqidī’s account related to ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ or the account of Sayf Ibn ‘Umar in al-Ṭabarī of the dialogue between Abū ‘Ubayda and the patriarch. The researcher’s reason for discounting such accounts is

¹‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubāir was ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s brother-in-law. See Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 4, Pp. 167-168.

²‘Aṭwān, Ḥusāin. *Al-Riwayāt al-Tārikhiyya fī Bilād al-Shām fī al-‘Aṣr al-Umawī* (‘Ammān, 1986), Pp. 231-232.

that they are the furthest, al-Ṭabarī's in particular, from the event with regard to both time and place. In addition, they contain information that can be considered within the domain of the unseen, which totally contradicts historical events. For instance, it is understood from these accounts that the people of Aelia knew beforehand that, in the end, the walled part of Aelia would fall to the Muslims. This goes against the fierce struggle they endured with the besiegers, as al-Wāqidī himself mentions in another account.¹ Theophanes mentioned that the siege continued for two years as previously noted.² Even if, for the sake of argument, we accept these accounts as true and add to this the knowledge of some of the people of Aelia about the name and description of the only person capable of conquering the city, we must then expect them to reveal this information to their besiegers at an early stage of the siege. The same applies to al-Wāqidī citing in the same account a failed attempt by the Muslims to deceive the people of Aelia by presenting Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd (d. 21 AH)³ as 'Umar in order to ensure that they were telling the truth.⁴

With regard to the Syrian accounts, almost all of them agree that the primary and perhaps the only reason for 'Umar's arrival in Aelia was the condition laid down by the people of Aelia which required his presence for the surrender of the city. Such a reason might apparently be acceptable because the city was subjected to the siege for a long period, in addition to the city holding a holy status since it contained Christianity's most

¹Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, pp. 144-148.

²Theophanes, p. 39.

³About Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd see Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 1, Pp. 42-43. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 4, Pp. 252-253. Vol. 7, Pp. 394-398. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Vol. 1, Pp. 405-410. Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S. 5, Pp. 83-99. Ibn Al-Athīr. *Uṣd*, Vol, 2, p. 109-112.

⁴Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 147-148.

holy places. This might have created a fear in the Christians' hearts that the Muslims might undertake revenge attacks against them and against their holy places as they were the followers of a new religion; and they might not have sufficient knowledge about its attitude towards the followers of other religions and how the Muslims would deal with them and their holy status. Therefore, it is probable that the people of Aelia did their best to gain as many guarantees as they could. Thus they laid down a condition that the head of the Islamic State, i.e. 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb, should be personally present for them to surrender the city. The Iraqī Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī mentions this as the reason behind their request that 'Umar should come from Madīna. He states that it is attributed in the first place to their lack of confidence in any of the Muslims who were besieging them. Therefore, they demanded the presence of 'Umar because they had admiration for and confidence in him personally more than the others.¹

However, as far as the practical analytical aspect is concerned, the acceptance of this condition faces a major stumbling block, which makes it both difficult to justify or indeed to accept this condition as an absolute fact. After a thorough examination of the texts which mention the condition laid down by the people of Aelia that 'Umar should be present for them to surrender the city, the researcher noticed that the same accounts, especially the Syrian accounts mentioned the arrival of 'Umar in al-Jābiya before his arrival in Aelia.² This is also mentioned by the Syrian Jurist scholar, Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawa³ as well as by Abū Maryyam al-Filastīnī, Khālid Ibn Mi'dān (103 or 108 A.H/ 721 or 725

¹Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 223.

²Balādhurī. *Futūḥ*, p.144. Azdī, Pp. 247-248.

³Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 194.

A.D), ‘Ubāda Ibn Nusay(d. 118 AH) in al-Ṭabarī.¹ Some of these narrators state that ‘Umar wrote his assurance to the people of Aelia in al-Jābīya and not in Aelia itself.² A number of them also state that the people of Aelia left the city and met ‘Umar in al-Jābīya where they concluded the peace treaty with him.³ Nevertheless, this issue totally contradicts the existence of the condition they laid down for him to come to them in the walled part of Aelia. It is inconceivable, on the one hand, that ‘Umar should come all the way from Madīna in response to this condition, then head for al- al-Jābīya before he achieved the objective for which he came, if there were such a condition. On the other hand, a delegation departing from the walled part of Aelia and then heading for al-Jābīya in order to conclude a peace treaty with ‘Umar there, is an issue which raises many questions. These questions centre on how the delegation was able to leave Aelia in the first place and the attitude of the Muslims who besieged them towards that departure. The Islamic sources did not mention anything about this point, which prompts the researcher to exclude such a scenario.

In short, the researcher is inclined to accept the Hijazī accounts because they are the most accurate with regard to the reasons behind the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in Aelia. These accounts do not enter into details like the other accounts those erroneously report the visit with others that ‘Umar undertook to the same region. They instead relate directly to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia.

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol, X. II, p. 188, 190.

²Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p.144. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol, X. II, p. 191. Ibn A‘tham, Vol.1&2, p. 226.

³Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 194. (on the authority of Rajā’ Ibn Ḥayawa).

5.3. Discussion of the Early Accounts and the Arguments of the Modern Scholars

It seems that the inaccuracies and division in the Islamic sources and accounts with regard to the reasons concerning the arrival of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in Aelia have also led to a division among modern researchers with regard to the same issue. For instance, S. W. Muir claims that Jerusalem had absolutely nothing to do with the reasons behind the arrival of ‘Umar in Syria. Rather it was because he headed for al-Jābīya to undertake other tasks. He then headed from there to Jerusalem as he was eager to be one of the first to enter the holy city which contained sacred memories of the Prophet of Arabia (Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) when it was the goal of his night journey.¹ According to Muir’s claim, ‘Umar did not apparently make directly for the city, but went first to al-Jābīya in the confines of Damascus. With regard to the reason for the visit he argues:

The purpose of his coming was to set the whole government of the country upon a sound basis, to revise the treaties and fix the taxes upon real and other estate, and the mutual relations of conquerors and conquered to each other.²

¹Muir, p. 138.

²Ibid, p. 136.

W. Jandora argues that it is probable that ‘Umar travelled to al-Jābīya to accept Aelia’s capitulations, and in order to attend to administrative matters.¹

Francisco Gabriel and F. Donner argue that ‘Umar dealt with many issues on that visit; and the most important tasks which he undertook were the formation of the register (*Dīwān*) of soldiers, the constitutional position of non-Muslim tribute-paying people (*Dhimmi*) and the country’s financial system which made Syria liable to a land tax or *Kharāj*.² F. Donner added, ‘Umar distributed the booty of the battle of Yarmūk and, later went to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem, which in any case makes it hard to say that ‘Umar should have shown an interest in Aelia as he claims.³ Lastly, Shafīq Jāsir in accord with Ignaz Goldziher tends to believe that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s visit to Syria coincided with the conquest of Aelia.⁴ Shafīq Jāsir also believes that the purpose of the inhabitants’ claim that they had an assurance from ‘Umar personally, and the accounts which indicate the condition they laid down for his personal arrival, was to highlight the importance of the city for the Christians.⁵ In contrast, the researcher argues that that there are many Islamic accounts that confirm the importance of Jerusalem for the Christians rather than deny it, especially that which is mentioned by al-Wāqidī regarding the discussion between ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb when ‘Ali advised him to head for

¹Jandora, Pp. 73-74.

²Gabriele, Pp. 154-155. Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Pp. 151-152. Donner. *The Early*, Pp. 151-152.

³Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Pp. 151-152.

⁴Jāsir, Shafīq. *Thārīk al-Quds*, p. 109. Goldziher argues that “While Omar was at al-Jābīya, he received the gratifying news that Jerusalem was prepared to surrender on condition that he came in person to accept its submission.” Ignaz, Goldziher. *Muslim Studies (Muhammed Aniscche Studien*, edited by S.M Stern. Translated from the German by C.R Barber and S.M Stern (London, 1971), Vol. 2, p. 48.

⁵Goldziher. *Muslim Studies*, Pp. 107-108.

Aelia because the Byzantines will not delay to reinforce the people of their holy area¹

In contrast to these arguments, the researcher cannot see any strong, clear, or explicit indications in the sources to lead him to argue that 'Umar dealt in his visit with the issues mentioned by these modern researchers. On the contrary, there are accounts, especially the Ḥijāzī accounts, which mentioned absolutely nothing about this. It is understood from al-Maḡdisī and Theophanes that 'Umar actually took part in the siege of the walled part of Aelia before it was conquered. At the same time, they do not mention al-Jābīya or any tasks that 'Umar was supposed to have carried out there. Al-Maḡdisī (d. 336 A.H/ 382 A.D) states that 'Umar stayed at Jabal al-Zaiytun (the Mount of Olives) for some days before the capitulation of Jerusalem.²

In the same context Theophanes indicates that 'Umar led a military campaign against the city in 635 AD and was able to conquer the walled part of Aelia. He states:

In this year (635) Umar campaigned against Jerusalem; after he had besieged the holy city for two years' time he took it on terms.³

Although al- Wāḡidī's account has mentioned the advice of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib for 'Umar to travel to Aelia when he received Abū 'Ubayda's message that he had been besieging the walled part of Aelia for four months in the midst of snow, cold weather and rain, it does not contain any direct hint that there was a condition laid down by the people of Aelia that 'Umar must be present personally for them to hand it over. Furthermore, it is

¹Wāḡidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 148.

²Al-Maḡdisī. *The Best*, p. 156.

³Theophanes, p. 39.

not clear whether ‘Alī meant the people of Aelia or the Muslims who were besieging them who asked ‘Umar to come to them with the words: “the people have asked you”.¹

What can be understood from the talk of ‘Alī is that it centres around a military reinforcement, a fierce battle waged by the Muslims in order to conquer Aelia, and the difficulty they faced in achieving that objective.

Furthermore, Ibn Al-Murajā, (d. 450 AH) reported that ‘Umar came with four thousand men to reinforce the Muslims against the people of Aelia. He made his camp on the north of the Mount of Olives, which means Tour or Jabal al-Zaiyytūn. According to Ibn Al-Murajjā when the people of Aelia saw him they became weak and decided to capitulate.²

Both Theophanes and al-Maqdisī mention ‘Alī’s advice to ‘Umar and also Ibn Al-Murajjā reveals that ‘Umar arrived in Aelia before it fell to the Muslims and before his departure to al-Jābīya as previously mentioned, which is also confirmed by al-Wāqidī.³ Furthermore, there were no conditions laid down by the people of Aelia, which stated that ‘Umar should arrive in Aelia. What supports and makes it more likely that ‘Umar arrived directly in Aelia before any other place, is the road which ‘Umar took in his journey. It was the road of Ayla⁴ as ‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubaīr and others mentioned.¹ It was the same

¹‘Alī’s advice to ‘Umar read: “The people have asked you. In their request is a great victory for the Muslims. The Muslims have greatly suffered from the cold weather, fighting and the long siege. In my opinion, if you travel to them, Allah will enable you to conquer this city. You will have great reward from Allah in your travel for any hardship you may suffer from thirst, hunger, crossing a valley or climbing a mountain until you reach them. Whenever you reach them there will be security, health, goodness and victory for both yourself and the Muslims”. Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 148.

²Ibn Al-Murajjāj, p. 44.

³Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 154.

⁴A town at the northern end of the Gulf of ‘Aqabah. located to the west of the present Jordanian city al-‘Aqabah its ancient name was Um al-Rushrāsh and the Israeli occupiers changed it to Iīlāt after 1948.

road that was taken by the army which was sent by Abū Bakr to Palestine and Aelia in particular, under the leadership of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘As at the start of the Islamic conquests.² The arrival of ‘Umar in Ayla and from there to Gaza, which is one of the Hijazī Arab roads to Syria in general and to Palestine in particular,³ means that he was very close to Aelia compared to the distance that separated him from al-Jābīya which was extremely far from that region. Whether ‘Umar arrived in the region in response to a condition laid down by the people of Aelia or whether he came in a military campaign it would have been necessary for him to head directly to Aelia before any other place. Even if we assume that the aim of ‘Umar’s visit was to head to al-Jābīya, it would also have been necessary for him to visit the Muslims since he was a very short distance from them especially when they were besieging the walled part of Aelia with all their military force.

The conclusion which the researcher reached from ruling out the possibility that ‘Umar arrived in Aelia in response to a condition laid down by its people, or that he arrived in al-Jābīya before Aelia, conforms with the issue of dividing the spoils in Islam, i.e. they are usually divided by the leader of the battle between those who collected or gained them, the attitude of ‘Umar towards dividing the spoils of the al-Yarmūk battle in particular as well as the issue of the formation of the register (*dīwān*) of soldiers, and its date, i.e. the date on which it was established. The researcher would argue that if the

¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 102.

²‘Urwa Ibn al-Zubair in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, p. 193. Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 8. He mentioned the road of Aelia which seems to be the name transcribed incorrectly from Wāqidī original manuscript because Abū Bakr ordered ‘Āmr Ibn al-‘Aṣ to pass from Aelia road until he reach Palestine while there is no road hold this name at that time expect the road of Ayla.

³About the trade routes between the peninsula and Syira, see: ‘Alī, Jawād. *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-‘Arab Gabla al-Islām* (Dār al-‘Ilīm lil Malāīn, Beirutand Maktabat al-Muthnā Baqdād, 1971), Vol. 7, Pp. 336-359. Mū’nis, Husaīn. *Atlas Tārīkh al-Islām* (Al-Zhrā’ Lillīlām al-Arabī, 2 nd. ed. 1987), p. 59.

division of the spoils originally took place in al-Jābīya then it was almost certain that this occurred after the conquest of Aelia. As for the issue of establishing the register (*dīwān*) of soldiers, it is unlikely that ‘Umar dealt with it in any form whatsoever in his visit which coincided with the first Islamic conquest of Aelia, as most modern researchers such as W. Muir, F. Gabrielei, J. Jandora and others have imagined. The matter does not go beyond the fact that ‘Umar divided the inheritance of the people of Syria in his visit to al-Jābīya, in the wake of the ‘Imwās plague and the death of large number of Muslims. ‘Umar also agreed to include the Syrian tribes in the register, which he established in Madīna shortly before this visit.

The researcher did not find any accounts which categorically indicate that ‘Umar had specifically divided the spoils of al-Yarmūk battle or that he came from Madīna to Syria for this purpose. In fact, most of the accounts in this regard reveal that ‘Umar divided the spoils in al-Jābīya, without giving any details about the nature of these spoils and when the Muslims collected or gained them. The most significant accounts in this regard were the two accounts of Ibn Sa‘d and al-Balādhurī in *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, which have been previously mentioned.¹ The researcher would like to draw attention here to the fact that the division of the spoils was not a difficult issue requiring ‘Umar to come personally from Madīna to deal with it. In a similar and even more complicated situation, ‘Umar wrote to his military leader in Iraq, Sa‘d Ibn Abī Waqqās (d. 55 AH),² and asked him to divide the spoils of the al-Qādisiyya battle (16 A.H/ 637 A.D) among the Muslims

¹Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 3, p. 283. Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S. 5, p. 383.

²For more details about Sa‘d Ibn Abī Waqqās life see. Ibn Sa‘d, Vol, 5, Pp. 195-201. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, Pp. 186-187. Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol, 2, p. 614. Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S. 5, Pp. 512-524.

who took part in it and to leave the lands in the hands of its cultivators.¹ It is important to note that the spoils of al-Qādisiyya were far greater than the spoils of al-Yarmūk.²

Al-Wāqidī noted that Abū ‘Ubayda divided the spoils of the al-Yarmūk battle before he directed the Muslims towards Aelia.³

With regard to the attitude of ‘Umar towards the division of the spoils of the al-Yarmūk battle, al-Ya‘qūbī narrates a unique account. This account describes the general situation in Syria after the battle and illustrates the decisive stand of ‘Umar towards this issue. He states:

ورجع أبو عبيدة إلى الأردن، فحاصر أهل إيلياء، وهي بيت المقدس، فامتنعوا عليه وطاولوه، ووجه أبو عبيدة عمرو بن العاص إلى قنسرين، فصالحهم، فصالحهم أهل حلب، وقنسرين، ومنبج، وضع عليهم الخراج على نحو ما فعل أبو عبيدة بحمص، وجمعت غنائم اليرموك بالجابية، وكتبوا إلى عمر، فكتب إليهم : لا تحدثوا فيها حدثا حتى تفتحوا بيت المقدس.⁴

(After the battle of al-Yarmūk) Abū ‘Ubayda returned to Jordan and besieged the people of Aelia, which is Bayt Al-Maqdisī (Islamic Jerusalem). They resisted and fought him. Then he sent ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Aṣ to Qinsāriyn. The people of Ḥalab (Aleppo), Qinsāriyn and Minbij made a peace treaty with the Muslims and ‘Amr imposed upon them just as Abū

¹Taxation in Islam, p. 265.

²Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 226.

³Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, pp. 142-143. Also, a later source, Ibn al-Murajjā (d. 450 A.H/ 1050 A.D) noted that Abū ‘Ubayda divided the spoils of the battle of al-Yarmūk after the Muslims had buried those who were killed in it which means that this event took place before the Muslims marched to Jerusalem. See also Ibn ‘Asakir, Vol. 2, p. 550.

⁴Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p.142.

‘Ubayda did in Hims. The spoils of al-Yarmūk were collected in al-Jābīya and they wrote to ‘Umar about the matter. ‘Umar replied: do not do any things about these spoils until you conquer Bayt Al-Maqdisī (Islamic Jerusalem).

This text clearly indicates the stand of ‘Umar, which rejects any form of dividing the spoils of al-Yarmūk battle before the conquering of Aelia was completed. This matter is in total agreement with the accounts which indicated that ‘Umar, accompanied by the Muslims, headed to al-Jābīya from Aelia after it was conquered, as al-Wāqidī indicates and as is also understood from the accounts of Ibn Sa‘d and al-Balādhurī on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Muslm Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 A.H/ 742 A.D).¹ Finally, the most important point here is that the division of any spoils should take place in the presence of the people who took part in collecting or gaining them. What is in agreement in the Islamic sources is that Abū ‘Ubayda directed the Muslim forces who had taken part in the al-Yarmūk battle to Aelia, after he had consulted with ‘Umar as al-Wāqidī mentions,² and even under direct order from ‘Umar without consultation as is cited by Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī.³ Therefore, the possibility that the spoils of the al-Yarmūk battle were collected in al-Jābīya in the absence of their owners who were besieging Aelia, as it is unlikely to have taken place before Aelia was completely conquered and ‘Umar had afterwards gathered the Muslims in al-Jābīya.

¹Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 3, p. 283. Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S. 5, p. 383. For more details about al-Zuhrī life see Khalīfa. *Tabaqāt*, V.2. p. 389-390. Ibid. *Tārīkh*. V.2. P. 652. Ibn Qutaybah. *Ma‘ārif*, p. 536. Mahmud Hafiz, Abd-ar-Rahman. *The life of az-Zuhri and his Scholarship: in Qura'anic Secinces and Tradition (Hadith and Suna)*. These presented to the University of Edinburgh for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1977.

²Wāqidī. *Futūh*, p. 144.

³Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 222.

With regard to the establishment of the register (*Dīwān*), in particular *dīwān al-Jund* (register of soldiers), the date of its establishment is outside the domain of this research. However, it is important to draw attention here to the fact that the register (*dīwān*) was established at a time somewhat later than the time of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia. Although al-Ṭabarī inaccurately reports several dates regarding the events between 13-17 A.H/ 634-638 A.D, he mentioned that it was among the events of 15 AH,¹ whereas both al-Balādhurī and al-Ya‘qūbī state that it took place in 20 AH.² In another account, al-Ṭabarī narrates on the authority of Sayf Ibn ‘Umar that ‘Umar established the register at the end of the Islamic conquest of both Syria and ‘Iraq.³ The same thing is cited by ‘Amir Ibn Shurāiyyhīl al-Sha‘bī (d.104 AH/ 722 A.D),⁴ who is described by the judge of al-Kūfa, Shurāiyyhīl Ibn ‘Abdullah (d.177 AH/ 793 A.D), as the man who informed people about the affairs of the Islamic administration, especially in Iraq at the time of the Islamic conquest.⁵ Al-Sha‘bī notes that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb established the register (*Dīwān*) after the completion of the Islamic conquests and after the *kharāj* (taxes) were collected.⁶ This is undoubtedly in total agreement with the natural development of the Islamic State following the Islamic conquests. It would be very

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, p. 199.

²Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 443. Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 153.

³Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11. p. 207, 204, 205.

⁴About al-Sha‘bī see Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 1, p. 363. Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 6, Pp. 246-256. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma‘ārif*, Pp. 449-451.

⁵Abī ‘Ubayd, p. 206. See also: Judī, Jamāl. *Al-Ṣulḥ wal-‘Anwa Lada ‘Ulama al-Amṣār fi Sadr al-Islām* (Majalat al-Najah lil’ulwm al-Insaniya, al-Mujalad al-Thanī, al-‘Adad al-Thamin, Rabī ‘ Awal, 1994), p. 73.

⁶Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 435.

surprising if ‘Umar had taken such a step, i.e. the establishment of the register (*Dīwān*), before the completion of the conquests and stability on the war fronts, and before the collection of taxes could take place which would enable ‘Umar to calculate wages and how the monthly or yearly salaries (*‘A ṭā’*) and *Rizq* (food and clothing) would be allocated to every Muslim.

In this respect, Abū Yūsuf, Abī ‘Ubayd and al-Balādhurī mentioned that ‘Umar sent Sahil Ibn Ḥanīf (d.34 AH)¹ and Ḥudhayyfa Ibn al-Yamān (d.32 AH)² to Iraq to survey the land of *al-Sawād* (in ‘Iraq) in order to estimate the level of taxes to be imposed there.³ This procedure, which started after the completion of the conquest of Iraq, must have taken considerable time to complete. In addition to that, the process of entering the soldiers in the register took place on a tribal basis. In other words, the names were arranged according to the tribes,⁴ each tribe having its register. This work must have taken a long time to complete. As a matter of fact, ‘Umar would not have been able to complete all the work during his short stay in Syria, either during the period he stayed in Aelia or in al-Jābīya. Therefore, it is more likely that the register (*Dīwān*), was established after the al-Yarmūk battle and ‘Umar’s visit to Aelia.

In the light of these discussions, the researcher argues that without doubt ‘Umar did not deal in any form whatsoever with the issue of the register (*Dīwān*) in his first visit

¹About Sahil Ibn Ḥanīf see Khalīfa. *Ṭabqāt*, Vol 1, p. 196. Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 3, Pp. 471-473. Ibn Al-Athīr. *Uṣd*, Vol. 2, p. 470.

²About Hudhayyfa Ibn al-Yammān see Khalīf. *Ṭabaqat*, Vol, 1, p.121. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Vol. 1, p. 277-278. Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 6, p. 15. Vol. 7, p. 317. Ibn Al-Athīr. *Uṣd*, Vol. 1, Pp. 468-469.

³Ibn Ādam, Vol. 1, p. 31, 44. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, Pp. 270-271.

⁴Each tribe has its own register (*dīwān*) in which the names of all the tribes and their allies were recorded. See: Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, P.153. Balādhurī. *Futūḥ*, p. 436, 438, 440, 443. Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S. 5, p. 382. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 199-203.

to Aelia during the first Islamic conquest. Furthermore, the issue of dividing the spoils in al-Jābiya, if it had happened, must have occurred after ‘Umar had finally conquered Aelia. The reason for his arrival in Aelia was to support and reinforce the Muslim army when they were, for a long time, unable to storm and conquer the walled part of Aelia. This matter is, in general, confirmed by the H̄jāzī accounts. Al-Wāqidī cited a letter from Abū ‘Ubayda to ‘Umar in which he mentioned that he had been besieging the walled part of Aelia (mean after al-Yarmūk battle) for four months in adverse weather conditions and, consequently, the Muslims had suffered greatly.¹ The same thing is also understood from ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib’s discussion with ‘Umar before the latter headed for Aelia. In addition al-Ṭabarī narrates on the authority of Sālim Ibn ‘Abdullah that:

وكانوا [أهل إيلياء] قد أشجوا عمرا وأشجاهم؛ ولم يقدر
عليها ولا على الرملة.²

The people of Aelia caused distress to ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āsī and he caused distress to them, but he could not conquer Aelia, nor could conquer al-Ramlah.³

‘Adī Ibn Sahil narrates a unique account in al-Ṭabarī; he claims that the Muslims asked ‘Umar to help them overcome the people of Palestine. He states that:

وعن عدي بن سهيل، قال: لما استمد أهل الشام عمر
على أهل فلسطين، استخلف عليا، وخرج ممدا لهم، فقال

¹Ya‘qūbī. *Tārīkh*, p.148.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p.448.

³Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 189-190.

علي: أين تخرج بنفسك! تريد عدواً كلباً، فقال: إني أبادر
بجهاد العدو موت العباس؛ إنكم لو قد فقدتم العباس لانتفض
بكم الشر كما ينتفض أول الحبل.¹

"According to 'Adī Ibn Sahl: When the Muslims of Syria asked 'Umar to help them against the people of Palestine, he appointed 'Alī as his deputy and set off to reinforce them. 'Alī said: "Where are you going by yourself? You are heading toward a rabid enemy. " 'Umar said: "I hasten to fight the enemy before the death of al-'Abbās. If you lose al-'Abbās, evil will untwist you like the ends of a rope."²

Moreover, Abī 'Ubayd, Al-Maqdisī, Theophanes and others have confirmed that 'Umar had participated militarily before the city fell to the Muslims.³

5.4. 'Umar's Visits to Syria: Causes and Objectives

In order to explain the reasons behind the contradictions among the Islamic sources and hence the modern researchers, with regard to the reasons for 'Umar's visit to Aelia, the researcher argues that this issue is related to the other visits 'Umar paid to the same region and approximately the same areas in the period between 14-18 A.H/ 634-639 A.D. The narrators, especially the Syrians, have inaccurately reported the reasons for these visits and the various works that 'Umar carried out on each of them. They dealt

¹Al-Ṭabarī, Muhammad Ibn. Jarīr (224-310AH). *Tarikh al-Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Rusul wal Mulūk*. Edited by Muhammad Abū al-Fadhl Ibrahim. (Beirut, n.d), Vol. 2, 448.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 190-191.

³For more details see: Abī 'Ubayd, Pp. 224-225. Al-Maqdisī, *The Best*, p. 156. Mujīr al-Dīn, Vol, 1. p. 255.

with the issue as if it were one visit. It might be also because they mentioned the reason for one of these visits and connected it with the work that 'Umar carried out on another visit. This is contrary to the other accounts, especially the Hġjāzī accounts, which avoided this sort of inaccuracies. The Hġjāzī narrators and sources did not go into details, which might, in their opinion, be insignificant. The sources with their different narrators are in unanimous agreement that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb had visited Syria more than once. Some narrators stated that there were four visits and in one visit 'Umar returned from Saragh when he knew that the plague had reached its peak in Syria.¹

F. Donner argues that the question of 'Umar's interest in Syria is supported by the fact that various sources disagree on how many times he visited the area. He further argues that the most famous among these visits was the one that evidently coincided with the famous "year of ashes," nine months drought, during which occurred the devastating 'Imwās plague² which killed a large number of the Muslim military leaders.³ On this particular visit (18 AH) the researcher argues that, 'Umar might have carried out more work than he did on his other visits to Syria. This is mainly because of the special circumstances which the region witnessed in the wake of the 'Imwās plague.

Al-Ṭabarī reported on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Iṣhāq (d. 150 A.H / 767 A.D), Sayf Ibn 'Umar and 'Alqamah Ibn al-Naḍir and on the authority of others that the

¹Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, S.5, p. 383. (on the authority of Muḥammad Ibn Muṣlīm Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī. d. 124). Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 3, p. 283. Abī Zir'a, Vol. 1, Pp. 77-178. Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 149. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, p. 92. (on the authority of Muḥammad Ibn Iṣhāq).

²Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 152.

³See Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol, 1, p. 130. Al- Ya'qūbī reported on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Iṣhāq that the numbers of Muslims who died in this plague is twenty five thousand. Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p.150. Moshe Gil, as the researcher previous noted, also supports this statement.

Byzantine Empire in this year (17 A.H/ 638 A.D) marched towards Abū ‘Ubayda and besieged him with some of the Muslims at Hīms. When ‘Umar became aware of this, he asked for reinforcements from Iraq and left Madīna to help Abū ‘Ubayda, until he alighted at al-Jābiya. Abū ‘Ubayda and his men, however, achieved victory over the besiegers, and they wrote to ‘Umar to inform him. ‘Umar replied, and asked them to share in the spoils with the Iraqis who arrived with reinforcements three days later, and returned directly to Madīna.¹ As is clear, al-Ṭabarī states that this visit took place after ‘Umar’s visit to Jerusalem, which coincided with the Islamic conquest of the city. In other words, he mentioned it among the events of the year 17 AH.²

It appears to the researcher that the arrival of ‘Umar in al-Jābiya on this visit was the first time he had visited the region after he became caliph. This visit must have taken place some considerable time before the date mentioned by al-Ṭabarī. First of all, there were no indications of any Byzantine military movements in Syria after the al-Yarmūk battle (15 AH) that could have endangered the Muslim State. The reality was quite the opposite because the Byzantine forces had totally collapsed after this battle. H. Kennedy argues that after the defeat at al-Yarmūk and the final fall of Damascus the Byzantines put no more armies in the field.³ Secondly, it appears that al-Ṭabarī, inaccurately reports the important events, which took place in the period between 13-18 AH. The most significant example of these inaccuracies is that he classified the al-Yarmūk battle as taking place in 13 AH, and the Ajnadīn battle as having taken place in

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, Pp. 79-85.

²Ibid. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, p. 98. (on the authority of Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq).

³Kennedy, Hugh. *The Prophet And The Age of The Caliphates. The Islamic Near East from the sixth to the eleventh century* (Longman Inc, USA, New York, 1986), p. 61.

15 AH. By so doing, al-Ṭabarī has contradicted the majority of the early Islamic sources such as al-Wāqidi, Ibn Sa'd, Khalīfah Ibn Khaiyā ṭ, al-Balādhurī, Ibn A'tham and al-Azdī. These sources are in unanimous agreement that the opposite is true. The Ajnadīn battle took place in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D and the al-Yarmūk battle in 15 AH.¹ Even Ibn al-Athīr, who in most cases literally copies al-Ṭabarī, is indecisive with regard to this issue. He mentions Ajnadīn twice, once as having taken place in 13 AH and on another occasion as having taken place in 15 AH. He tends towards 15 AH.² For Ajnadīn to have taken place before al-Yarmūk seems to be acceptable to the majority of modern researchers.³

Although, Al-Ṭabarī who also cites much detailed information about 'Amr's siege of the Byzantine leader al-Aṭṭabūn, who entered Aelia after being defeated in Ajnadīn, in fact it appears that al-Aṭṭabūn left Aelia for Egypt only a short time after the Ajnadīn battle or some considerable time after the arrival of 'Umar in Aelia. This was apparently what prompted al-Ṭabarī to use his sources Khālīd Ibn Mi'dān (d. 103 or 108 AH), and 'Ubāda Ibn Nussay al-Kilā'ī al-Shāmī d. 118 AH) to say:

¹Wāqidi. *Futūh*, S. 1. P. 37-38. Khalīfah. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p.103, 118. (on the authority of Ibn Ishāq). Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp.120-121, 142. Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 134, 141. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 3, p. 282. (He argued that all Syria and Iraq conquered during the rule of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb expect Ajnadīn in the rule of Abū Bakr). Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2. Pp. 113-120. Azdī, Pp. 87-93.

²Ibn Al-Thīr. *Al-Kāmil*, Vol. 2, Pp. 286-287, Pp.346-347.

³See Gabrieli, p.146. (He argued that the date of the battle of Ajnadīn is 634 A.D), 150. (He argued that the date of the battle of al-Yarmūk is 636 A.D). Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Pp. 128-130. Muri, Pp. 127-130. In contrast see: 'Abdullah, Muḥammad Aḥmad, p. 30.

وعن خالد وعبادة، قالوا: كان الذي صالح فلسطين العوام من أهل إيلياء والرملة، وذلك أن أرطيون والتذارق لحقا بمصر، مقدم عمر الجابية، وأصيبا في بعض الصوائف.¹

According to Khālīd and ‘Ubadah: The peace treaty concerning Palestine was concluded by the populace of Aelia and al-Ramlah. The reason for this was that Artabun and al-Tuḍāriq had left for Egypt when ‘Umar came to al-Jabiyah; they were subsequently killed in one of the summer expeditions²

‘Abd al Azīz al-Dūrī, who classifies the time of the events of the Islamic conquests in Syria does not refer to any important military actions after the conquest of Aelia in the year 17 A.H/ 638 A.D.³ However, al-Durī, who wrote his article in 1980, provided another date in another article he wrote in 1989 regarding the conquest of Aelia, that is 16 A.H/ 636 A.D.⁴ which also states that no important events took place after that date.

It could be argued that, Ajnadīn is more likely to have taken place a long time before the al-Yarmūk battle. This is mainly because of the nature of the geographical location where each battle took place, i.e. Ajnadīn was part of Aelia in the area that lay between al-Ramla and Bayt Jibrīn while al-Yarmūk took place in the heart of historical Syria on the banks of the river Jordan. It is unlikely that the Muslims would have reached

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 449. (in Arabic).

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X.11, p. 190.

³Al-Durī. *Fikrat al-Quds fi al-Islām*, p. 8, cited in Jāsir, Shaḥīq, p. 109.

⁴Al-Durī. *Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period*, p. 110.

that place at this early stage of the Islamic conquests. Moreover, the location of Ajnadīn on the edge of the desert leading to the Arab Peninsula would have enabled the Muslims to withdraw into the desert and return to Ḥijāz if they became susceptible to defeat at the beginning of those military incursions, as previously happened in the Mu'at battle. All these factors would have made it more likely that Ajnadīn took place first, as a major decisive battle in Syria.

In this presentation the researcher aims to indicate by detailing the dates when the battles of Ajnadīn and al-Yarmūk took place, that the major movement of the Byzantine forces occurred during the period between these two battles, in 14 A.H/ 635 A.D and perhaps at the beginning of 15 A.H/ 636 A.D, i.e. some time after the defeat of the Byzantine forces in Ajnadīn. Many accounts indicate that Hercules sent large forces from Antioch to al-Yarmūk during this period. This endangered the military successes the Muslims had achieved in the region where they had been forced to withdraw from many places they had originally captured in order to gather in one place.¹ The accounts reveal that the Byzantine army headed towards Ḥimṣ, where Abū 'Ubayda and his men had gathered. This supports the belief, and indeed possibility, that the siege, which took place in Ḥimṣ or around it, was imposed by the vanguards of these forces and not in 17 A.H/ 638 A.D as Al-Ṭabarī reported.

It is quite conceivable and in fact, acceptable to argue that 'Umar left Madīna on occasions when the Muslims came under military pressure, whether in Iraq or Syria, even if it is true that he did not visit any region outside the Arab Peninsula throughout his rule. However, the sources are unanimous in stating that he was about to leave for Iraq

¹Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 141. Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2, Pp. 177-179.

and even set up his military camp and where the Muslim facing great difficulties after his military leader had been killed in the battle of al-Jisr (the bridge) in 14 AH.¹ He only returned to Madīna after the Muslims advised him to send Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ as the general military leader of the Muslims there.² This would make the belief that 'Umar arrived in al-Jābīya before the al-Yarmūk battle more generally acceptable.

If this visit was the first that 'Umar paid to Syria, it was followed by the famous historic visit which coincided with the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem. He also may have divided the spoils in al-Jābīya during this second visit. Then comes the third visit, which was made necessary by repercussions of the plague and the massive deterioration of the administrative and financial situation. It appeared that this visit took place at the end of 18 A.H/ 639 A.D, after the 'Imwās plague died out.

The problems resulting from the deaths in Syria of the military leaders, among them Abū 'Ubayda, Shurahbīl Ibn Ḥ asana and Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān, and a high proportion of other Muslims, estimated by al-Ya'qūbī at around twenty five thousand,³ the deterioration of the Syrian administrative and financial infrastructure, in addition to the problems of dividing the inheritance of the plague victims, prompted 'Umar to arrive personally in the region to deal with these problems, and to effect distribution at al-Jābīya of the aforementioned inheritance. Muhammad Ibn Ishāq cited that the Muslims found it difficult to deal with this issue because of its intricacy, and perhaps because of the death

¹This leader was named Abī 'Ubaid al-Thaqafī (d. 14 A.H). See Khalīfah. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, Pp.109-110. Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p.142.

²Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 143. Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p. 255. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 5-10. Ibn Al-Athīr. *Kāmil*, Vol. 2, Pp. 309-310. (He reported that 'Umar camped in *Sirāra*, which was the name of a palace, three miles from Madīna on the way to 'Irāq).

³Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 150.

of those who were capable of solving it. He says:

قال ابن إسحق قلت ولهذا قدم عمر بعد ذلك إلى الشام
فقسم موارث من ماتوا لما أشكل أمرها المسلمين، وطابت
قلوب المسلمين بقومه.....¹

I say, (Ibn Ishāq), for this reason ‘Umar arrived thereafter in Syria (after the plague) and he divided the inheritance of those who perished in the plague when the commanders found it difficult to divide it.

Furthermore, Abī Zir‘a al-Dimashqī from Duhaīm from al-Walīd Ibn Muslim said:

فتحت بيت المقدس سنة ستة عشرة وفيها قدم عمر بن
الخطاب الجابية وقال أبي ز رعة الدمشقي عن دحيم عن
الوليد بن مسلم قال: ثم عاد في سنة ثمانى عشرة
فاجتمع لإمرء فاجتمع إليه الأمراء وسلموا إليه ما إجتمع
عندهم فقسما وجند الأجناد ثم عاد إلى المدينة.²

Jerusalem was conquered in the year 16 AH. In 17 AH ‘Umar came to Syria but he returned to Madīna from Sargh. Then in 18 AH he arrived in Syria where all the commanders gathered to meet him. They handed over to him the money they collected and he divided it among the Muslims and organised the armies and the regions and returned to Madīna afterwards.

¹Ibn Khaṭīr. *Bidāya*, Vol. 7&8, S, 7, p. 79. See also Ibn al-Athīr. *Al-Kāmil*, Vol. 2, p. 393.

²Abī Zir‘a, Vol. 1, p. 178. See also Ibn ‘Asākir (Dimashq, 1951), Vol. 1, p. 553. Ibn Kathīr. *Bidāya*, Vol. 7&8, S, 7, p. 57. (He argued that Jerusalem was conquered in the year 16 A.H, and in this year ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb came to al-Jābīya. Then Ibn Kathīr completed the same text of Abī Zir‘a by saying, and Abī Zir‘a said...).

Al-Ṭabarī mentions more than one account, which reveals the extent of the anxiety

‘Umar showed with regard to the situation in Syria. For instance ‘Umar says:

فقد ضاعت مواريث أهل عمواس فأبدأ بها.....¹

He also says:

The estates of the victims of the plague of ‘Imwas are left untended, so I will begin (my tour of inspection) there”.
(i.e. I shall begin my tour in Syria).²

قال عمر: ضاعت مواريث الناس بالشام، أبدأ بهم فأقسم الموارث، وأقيم لهم ما في نفسي، ثم ارجع فأقلب في البلاد، وأنبذ إليهم أمري، فأتى عمر الشام أربع مرات، مرتين سنة عشرة، ومرتين سنة سبع عشرة لم يدخلها في الأولى من الأخرتين.³

‘Umar said, Since the estates of the people who recently died in Syria are left untended, I shall start my tour there. I shall properly divide the estates and I shall take measure for them as I think best. After that I shall return and travel all over the country, renouncing my previous orders to them. (In all) ‘Umar went to Syria four times, twice in the year 16 (637) and twice in 17 (638), but he did not set foot on Syrian soil on the first trip of the year 17 (638).⁴

Al-Ṭabarī on the authority of -‘Adī Ibn Suhayl also reported:

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 4, p. 59. (in Arabic)

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, p. 96.

³Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, p. 96.

⁴Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X 111, p. 96.

كتب إلي السري عن شعيب، عن سيف، عن أبي ضمرة وأبي عمرو، عن المستورد، و عن عدي بن سهيل، قال: لما فرغ عمر من فوجه وأموره قسم الموارث، فورث بعض الورثة من بعض، ثم اخرجها إلى الأحياء من ورثة كل إمري منهم.¹

According to al-Siri-Shu‘ayb-Sayf-Abū Damrah and Abu ‘Amr-al-Mustawrid-‘Adī b. Suhayl: When ‘Umar had finished seeing to the access routes (to the Hijāz) and his other business, he divided the estates of persons recently deceased, letting various heirs who were still alive from inherit various others, and then he presented the estates to the living heirs of every man (deceased) among them.²

It is clear in this respect that dealing with the issue of inheritance was not an easy issue in Islam. In addition of the collapsing administrative situation in Syria required there were two reasons, covering enough for the arrival of ‘Umar into the region. In this context, we can also understand why he attempted, as the sources agree, to enter the region during the plague period, and then returned to Madīna from Sargh. It is also evident that ‘Umar, on the basis of the deteriorating economic situation, decided to include the Syrian tribes in the register (*Dīwān*) with the exception of the Lakhkhm and Juthām tribes. As can be understood from al-Balādhurī, al-Ya‘qūbī,³ ‘Umar changed his mind after he held a discussion with the tribes and included them in the register (*Dīwān*)

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 4, p. 65. (in Arabic)

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 111, p. 103.

³See Abī ‘Ubayd, p. 263.

which took place during that visit. This is cited by Moḥammed Ibn ‘Adī, al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm and Yazīd Ibn ‘Ubayda.¹

Theophanes mentions another visit by ‘Umar to Jerusalem, in which he laid the foundation stone for al-Aqṣā Mosque. He says:

In this year ‘Umar began to build a temple in Jerusalem (meaning al-Aqṣā Mosque); the building would not stand, but fell down. When he asked why, the Jews told him the reason: “If you do not tear down the cross on top of the church on the Mount of Olives, your building will not stay up.” Therefore the cross there was torn down, and thus the building arose. For this reason the Christ-haters tore down many crosses.²

There is no strong reason to reject or deny this visit even though Theophanes made its date a little late (658 A.D). There is no doubt that the visit he means here was the visit ‘Umar paid to the region and al-Jābīya in particular in the wake of the ‘Imwās plague. This indicates that ‘Umar visited both al-Jābīya and Jerusalem on two different visits and on two dates that were far apart. This is considered a strong reason for the inaccuracies that have occurred, especially with regard to the Syrian narrators.

Finally, although the administrative procedures and the special tasks that ‘Umar carried out in Aelia during at least two of his visits to the area, will be discussed later the researcher would like to state the reasons and date of each of his different visits in the light of the analysis made:

¹ See Abī Zir‘a, Vol. 1, p. 178. (on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm). Ibn Katīr. *Biāya*, Vol, 7&8, S, 7, p. 57 (on the authority of Moḥammed Ibn ‘Adī on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm on the authority of ‘Uthmān Ibn Hisin Ibn ‘Allān From Yazīd Ibn ‘Ubayda).

²Theophanes, p. 39.

◆ The first visit took place in 14 A.H/ 635 A.D and at the beginning of 15 A.H/ 636 A.D. It was a very short visit and was restricted to al-Jābīya. ‘Umar came to provide a military reinforcement for Abū ‘Ubayda and his companions who were besieged near Ḥims by a Byzantine force. During that visit ‘Umar also asked for military reinforcements to be sent from Iraq to Abū ‘Ubayda because the Muslims in Syria were busy fighting. ‘Umar did not carry out any significant work during this visit. He quickly returned to Madīna as soon as he learned that the siege had ended.

◆ The second visit was the historic visit by ‘Umar to Jerusalem when it was conquered, which took place in *Jumāda first or second* (March or April), 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. ‘Umar made this visit to help the Muslims conquer the city, especially after their repeated attempts to conquer it had failed. It appears that the people of the walled part of Aelia decided to surrender shortly after his arrival; and after they had lost all hope of any reinforcement from outside. On this visit, ‘Umar headed with the Muslims from Jerusalem after it was conquered, to al-Jābīya where he might have divided some spoils, or the spoils of the al-Yarmūk battle. He also appointed ‘Alqama Ibn Mujziz governor of Aelia, a point which will be discussed later.

◆ The third visit took place in 18 A.H/ 639 A.D in the wake of the ‘Imwās plague. This visit was preceded by ‘Umar’s attempt to enter the region, which failed. The visit was made incumbent by the emergency situation, which resulted from the plague. Most of the military leaders, governors and important Muslims there died in the ‘Imwās plague, which caused disorder and the collapse of the economic and administrative situation in Syria. During this visit, ‘Umar divided the inheritance of the people of Syria, i.e. he divided the inheritance of the victims of the ‘Imwās plague. He also included the

Syrian tribes in the register (*Dīwān*) and the above coincided with his visit to Aelia.

Conclusion

It is clear that the narrators and the sources, in particular the Syrians, have inaccurately reported the reasons for each of these visits and the tasks which ‘Umar carried out. They dealt with the matter as if it were one visit, and they did not even distinguish between the various tasks that ‘Umar carried out on each visit. Moreover, these accounts did not distinguish between the division of the spoils and the division of the inheritance. The reason for these inaccuracies might be because these visits took place within a relatively short time of each other in the period between 14-18 A.H/ 635-639 A.D.

Furthermore, each visit occurred in unusual circumstances, whether these circumstances were military in the case of the first and second visits, or because of the ‘Imwās plague during the third visit. In addition to all this, the fact that ‘Umar arrived in al-Jābīya on all three visits, and also arrived in both Aelia and al-Jābīya at least during the last two visits, is a convincing reason for these inaccuracies. Although this does seem to be erroneous in reality, it may be viewed as addressing different events in terms of both time and place.

As far as modern studies are concerned, some researchers have exploited what is understood as major contradictions and have used them as a pretext to cast doubt on and even deny the historicity of ‘Umar’s visit to Aelia. Other researchers have ruled out the possibility that Aelia was the cause of the visit, and they have accepted the texts as they are without any deep scientific analysis. The researcher argues that the reason for this is that these studies are not, in fact related to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia, but deal

rather with general historical issues.

CHAPTER SIX

Demarcating the Re-construction of a Mosque (*Al-Aqsā*) in Islamic Jerusalem

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Introduction

The major activities that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb undertook on his arrival to Aelia may be viewed as some of the most complex historical issues in both the early and later Islamic narratives and sources. Of particular concern are the issues of the contradicting narratives in the early and later Islamic sources regarding the first mosque that ‘Umar demarcated to build in Aelia.

The early sources in general were silent about the activities that ‘Umar undertook in Aelia, with the exception of a few short accounts which mentioned that he demarcated the construction of chamber *a ‘Mihrāb’*. The later sources, however, reported a number of long accounts. These included ‘Umar’s visit to the church of Holy Sepulchre and the fact that he declined to pray inside, fearing that Muslims would take it from the Christians and convert it into a mosque. In addition it is also claimed that, while refusing to pray inside the church of Holy Sepulchre, he had shown great interest in praying at the site of the “Rock,” when he ordered the construction of a mosque in its vicinity.

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

1. Early Accounts and Narrations

Before examining the early accounts and narrations which deal with the question of 'Umar's entry into Aelia and measure the activities he eventually undertook in the walled city, it is essential at this stage to highlight an important issue. This is the fact that none of the historians including Khalīfa Ibn Khayyāt (d. 240 A.H/ 854 A.D), Muhammad Ibn Ibn Sa'd (d. 230 A.H/ 845 A.D), al-Balādhurī (d. 279 A.H/ 892 A.D), Abī Zir'a al-Dimashqī (d. 281 A.H/894 A.D), Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 283 A.H/ 896 A.D), al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284 A.H/ 897 A.D), nor any other early sources who preceded them or any subsequent ones who followed, either immediately or after a long span of time, including Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī (d. 314 A.H/ 926 A.D), al-Azdī (d. 430 A.H/ 1039 A.D), and Ibn 'Asākir (d. 539 A.H/ 1144 A.D), have made any reference to 'Umar ordering the construction of a mosque in Aelia.

Moreover, none of the above-mentioned sources, with the exception of al-Wāqidī, have made any reference to the exact period of time that 'Umar spent in Aelia. This is the period which al-Wāqidī, however, defines specifically by saying that 'Umar spent only a few days in this city.¹

The researcher found that al-Wāqidī, was the first among the early narrators who mentioned 'Umar's designs for the construction of a mosque in Aelia. Al-Wāqidī, who represents one of the earliest Islamic sources, was quoted by al-Azdī as stating that 'Umar had actually spent no more than five days there, during which time he drew a map of chamber *a Mihrāb* from the east side. The text reads:

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 152.

وكان دخوله يوم الإثنين وأقام إلى يوم الجمعة وخط بها
محراباً من جهة الشرق فتقدم وصلى بأصحابه صلاة
الجمعة¹.

“Umar’s entry (into Aelia) was on Monday and he stayed there until Friday. He drew a map of a ‘*Mihrāb*’² from the east, which is the site of his mosque; then he advanced and led his companions in the al-Jum‘a prayer.

One of the other early sources which follow al-Wāqidī, is Abī ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām. Ibn Sallām alluded in a couple of texts to some of the activities undertaken by ‘Umar, which were related to the construction of the mosque. In the first context, he reported on the authority of Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār, on the authority of al-Haītham Ibn ‘Ammār al-‘Abbsī, on the authority of the latter’s grandfather, that when ‘Umar entered the walled part of Aelia he asked Ka‘b al-Aḥbār whether he knew the site of the ‘Rock’. Then he asked his opinion on the most suitable place for a mosque or *qibla* (direction which Muslims face when praying). In the narration Abī ‘Ubayd states that:

حدثنا هشام بن عمار عن الهيثم بن عمار العنسي
[العنسي] فقال: لما ولي عمر زار أهل الشام فنزل الجابية،
وبعث من الجديله إلى بيت فافتتحها صلحا، فجاء عمر، ومعه
كعب، فقال عمر يا أبا إسحاق أتعرف موضع الصخرة؟ فقال
كعب: أذرع من الحائط الذي يلي وادي جهنم كذا وكذا ذراعا،
ثم إحتفر فإنك تجدها قال وهي يومئذ مزبلة، قال فحفروا
فظهرت لهم، فقال عمر لكعب: أين ترى أن نجعل المسجد-
قال او القبلة؟ فقال: إجعلها خلف الصخرة، فتجمع القبلتين:
قبلة موسى عليه السلام وقبلة محمد صلى الله عليه

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 152. Azdī, p. 259. In another account from Shihri Ibn Ḥaūsha, he mentioned that ‘Umar spent ten days in Jerusalem Ibid, p. 153.

وسلم. فقال ضاهيت اليهودية يا أبا إسحاق، خير المساجد
مقدمها، فبناها مقدم المسجد¹.

Hishām Ibn ‘Ammār on the authority of al-Haytham Ibn ‘Ammār al-‘Abbsī said: When ‘Umar was appointed as a *Walī* (became a caliph), he visited the people of al-Shām (Great Syria); he descended on al-Jābiya and then sent a man from Judayla to [conquer] *Baiy al-Maqdis*. He occupied it after ratifying a peace accord [*Sulh*] and ‘Umar subsequently came accompanied by Ka‘b. He [‘Umar] Said: O Abū Ishāq, do you know the site of the “Rock”? He [Ka‘b] said that “it was only a few feet away from the wall near the “Valley of Hell; dig there and then you will find it”. He said: “There and then it was a place of garbage”; he said they eventually dug and the “Rock” appeared. Thereupon ‘Umar asked Ka‘b: “where do you think we should locate the mosque - He said: or the *qibla*? Locate it behind the “Rock” so that it combines both *Qiblas*: The *qibla* of Moses (peace be upon him)”, and the *qibla* of Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him)”, he said [Ka‘b]. He [‘Umar] said: “you have emulated Judaism, O Abū Ishāq! The best mosques are in the front of it”. He then said: “consequently he constructed it in front of the “Rock”.

In the second narration of Abī ‘Ubayd, reported on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm, on the authority of Sa‘īd Ibn ‘Abd al-Azīz, he says that ‘Umar had employed the villagers (*Anbāt Ahl Filastīn*) to clear the place of garbage of Islamic Jerusalem. Ibn Sallām himself adds a few lines to complete the narrative by saying that ‘Umar won the

¹Abī ‘Ubayd, p. 153.

mosque for the Muslims from the *Dhimma* people (the people of the book), and that he did not include it as part of the peace accord. To illuminate the nature of this narration and show its importance we will cite it in full:

فقال وحدثني هشام عن الوليد عن سعيد بن عبد العزيز قال: تسخر عمر بن الخطاب أنباط أهل فلسطين في كنس بيت المقدس وكانت به مزيلة عظيمة. قال ابو عبيد: أفلست ترى أن عمر حاز المسجد للمسلمين، وحال بين أهل الذمة وبينه، فهم على هذا إلى اليوم لا يدخلونه. وإنما كانت البلاد صلحا فلم يجعل المسجد في الصلح، لأنه ليس من حقوقهم¹.

He said [Abī ‘Ubayd]: “Hishām has told me, on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm, on the authority of Sa‘īd Ibn ‘Abd al-Azīz, saying that ‘Umar employed the villagers of Palestine (*Anbāt Ahl Filasṭīn*), and got them to sweep Bayt al-Maqdis which had a lot of garbage. Abī ‘Ubayd said: Do you not see that ‘Umar has taken over the mosque for Muslim use, and prevented the *Dhimma* people from using the mosque. Accordingly, until this day they cannot enter it. The country had a peace accord [*Sulh*]; but ‘Umar did not include the mosque as part of that accord, because it was not part of their rights.

While these accounts represent most or all that has been mentioned on the subject in the early Islamic sources, al-Ṭabarī and other later narrators who relied on him, reported a great deal of additional information shown in the Syrian narratives. Al-Ṭabarī

¹Ibid, p. 153.

offered three narrations that are lengthy and detailed in comparison to the ones we have just cited. He reports his first narration on the authority of Abū Maryyam al-Filastīnī,¹ and the second on the authority of Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawa and the third (also in agreement with the narrative of Rajā'), with a slight addition, on the authority of Rabī'a al-Shāmī².

Al-Ṭabarī states in the first text that:

وعن أبي مريم مولى سلامة، قال: شهدت فتح إيلياء مع عمر رحمه الله، فجاء من الجابية فاصلا حتى يقدم إيلياء، ثم مضى حتى يدخل المسجد، ثم مضى نحو محراب داود؛ ونحن معه، فدخله ثم قرأ سجدة داود، فسجد وسجدنا معه.

According to Abū Maryyam, the client of Salāmah, who said: I witnessed the conquest of Aelia with 'Umar: He then went from al-Jabiyah, leaving it behind until he came to Aelia. He then went on and entered the mosque. Then he went toward the *mihṛāb* of David, while we were with him, he entered it, recited the prostration of David, and prostrated himself, and we prostrated ourselves with him.³

Furthermore, al-Ṭabarī, in two other similar accounts; one on the authority of Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawa, and one on the authority of Rabī'a al-Shāmī, states:

وعن رجاء بن حيوة، عن شهد؛ لما شخض عمر من الجابية إلى إيلياء، فدنا من باب المسجد، قال إرهبوا لي كعبا، فلما انفرق به الباب قال: لبيك، اللهم لبيك، بما هو احب إليك! ثم

¹Abū Maryyam al-Filastīnī belonged to al-Azd tribe. In Islamic Sources, however, there are inaccuracies between several persons who named Abū Mariyyam.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 196-197.

³Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 193-194.

قصد المحراب؛ محراب داود عليه السلام، وذلك ليلا، فصلى فيه، ولم يلبث أن طلع الفجر، فأمر المؤذن بالإقامة، فتقدم فصلى بالناس، وقرأ بهم "ص"، وسجد فيها، ثم قام، وقرأ بهم في الثانية صدر بني "إسرائيل"، ثم ركع ثم إنصرف، فقال: علي بكعب، فأتي به، فقال: أين ترى أن نجعل المصلى؟ فقال: إلى الصخرة، فقال: ضاهيت والله اليهودية يا كعب، وقد رأيتك وخلعك نعليك، فقال: أحببت أن أباشره بقدمي، فقال: قد رأيتك، بل نجعل قبلته صدره كما جعل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قبلة مساجدنا صدورها، اذهب إليك، فإننا لم نؤمر بالصخرة، ولكننا أمرنا بالكعب، فجعل قبلته صدره، ثم قام من مصلاه إلى كناسة قد كانت الروم قد دفنت بها بيت المقدس في زمان بني إسرائيل؛ فلما صار إليهم أبرزوا بعضها، وتركوا سائرها، وقال: يا أيها الناس اصنعوا كما أصنع، وجثا في أصلها، وجثا في فرج من فروج قبائه، وسمع التكبير من خلفه، وكان يكره سوء الرعة في كل شئ، فقال: ما هذا؟ فقالوا: كبر كعب وكبر الناس بتكبيره فقال: علي به فأتي به، فقال: يا أمير المؤمنين؛ إنه قد تنبأ على ما صنعت اليم نبي منذ خمسمائة سنة، فقال، وكيف؟ فقال: إن الروم أغاروا على بني إسرائيل فأدبلوا عليهم، فدفوه، ثم أدبلوا فلم يفرغوا له حتى أغارت عليهم فارس فبغوا على بني إسرائيل، ثم أدبلت الروم عليهم إلى أن وليت، فبعث الله نبياً على الكناسة، فقال: أبشري أوري شلم عليك الفاروق ينقيك مما فيك. وبعث إلى القسطنطينية نبي؛ فقام على تلها فقال: يا قسطنطينية، ما فعل أهلك بيتي! أخربوه وشبهوك كعرشي، وتأولوا علي، فقد قضيت عليك أن أجعلك جلاء يوماً ما، لا يأوي إليك أحد ولا يستظل فيك على أيدي بني القاذر سباً وودان؛ فما امسوا وما بقي منهم شئ.

وعن ربيعة الشامي بمثله؛ وزاد: أتاك الفاروق في جندي المطيع، ويدركون لأهلك تارك في الروم. وقال في

قسطنطينية: أدعك جلهاء بارزة للشمس، لا يأوي إليك أحد،
ولا تظليه.¹

According to Rajā' Ibn Hayawah,²-persons who were present at the event: When 'Umar came from al-Jabiyah to Aelia and drew near the gate of the mosque, he said:" Watch out for me Ka'b³ on my behalf 'When the gate was opened for him, he said: O God, I am ready to serve you in what you love most. Then he turned to the *mihrāb*, the *mihrāb* of David, peace be upon him. It was at night, and he prayed there.⁴ It was not long before dawn broke, and then 'Umar ordered the *Mu'adhhdhin* to sound the call of prayer. Then he moved forward, led the prayer, and recited Sūrat Sād with the people. During the prayer he prostrated himself. Then he stood up and read with them in the second (*Rak'ah*) the beginning of Sūrat Banī Isrā'il. Then he prayed another *Rak'ah* and went away. He said: "Bring Ka'b to me." Ka'b was brought to him. 'Umar said: "Where do you think we should establish the place of prayer? " Ka'b said: "Toward the Rock" 'Umar said:" O Ka'b, you are imitating the Jewish religion! I have seen you

¹ Tabari. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, Pp. 450.

²He was a Syrian from Kinda tribe, a highly-regarded jurist, in the Umayyad period, in particular during the 66-112 AH/ 688-730-31 A.D. See: Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 2, p. 793. Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma'ārif*, Pp. 472-473. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, Pp. 454-455.

³Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 32 A.H/ 653 A.D). A Yemenite Jew who converted to Islam during the reign of Abū Bakr or 'Umar and was considered an important transmitter of Jewish traditions into Islamic lore. Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X, 11, Pp. 194. (Margin 718), See Wolfensohn, Ka'b al-Aḥbār. Numerous transmissions by him have been assembled and analysed in Kister, 'Haddithu'an bani Israil. See also *EI* 2,s,v. Ka'b al-Aḥbār "(M. Schmitz).

⁴Busse claims that in this tradition, *Mihrāb Dawud* refer to the citadel of David. He also claims that 'Umar's night prayer is a reflection of a Christian custom of praying there at night. See Busse. *'Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem*, p. 84. Busse. *'Omar's Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem*, p. 166.

taking off your shoes. “Ka‘b said: “I wanted to touch this ground with my feet. “Umar said:” I have seen you. Nay, we shall place the *qiblah* in the front of it; the Messenger of God likewise made the front part of our mosques the *qiblah*. Take care of your own affairs; we were not commanded to venerate the Rock, but we were commanded to venerate the Ka‘bah.”¹

‘Umar made the front part of the mosque its *qiblah*. Then he stood up from his place of prayer and went to the rubbish in which the Romans had buried the temple (*Bayt al-Maqdis*) at the time of the sons of Israel. (When he came to the Byzantines, they had uncovered a part but left the rest [under the rubbish]. He said: “O people, do what I am doing. “He knelt in the midst of the rubbish and put it by the handful into the lower part of his mantle. He heard behind him the proclamation “God most great”. He disliked improper behavior in any matter and said: “What is this? “The people said:” Ka‘b proclaimed God is most great! and the people proclaimed it following him. “Umar said: “Bring him to me!” Ka‘b said:” O commander of the faithful, five hundred years ago a prophet predicted what you have done today. “Umar asked: “In what way?” Ka‘b said:

The Byzantines (*Rūm*) attacked the sons of Israel, were given victory over them, and buried the temple. Then they were given another victory, but they did not attend to the temple until the Persians attacked them. The Persians oppressed the sons of Israel. Later the Byzantines were given victory over the Persians. Then you came to rule.

¹Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X, 11, Pp. 194-195.

God sent a prophet to the [city buried in] rubbish and said: "Rejoice O Jerusalem (*Ūrī shalam*)! Al-Fārūq will come to you and clean you". Another prophet was sent to Constantinople. He stood on a hill belonging to the city and said: "O Constantinople, what did your people do to my House? They ruined it, presented you as if you were similar to My throne and made interpretations contrary to My purpose. I have determined to make you one day unfortified (and defenseless). Nobody will seek shelter from you, nor rest in your shade. [I shall make you unfortified] at the hands of Banū al-Qādhir, Sabā, and Waddān.¹

By the time it was evening nothing remained of the rubbish.

An identical tradition was transmitted to Rabī'ah al-Shāmī. He added: "Al-Fārūq came to you with my obedient army. They will take revenge upon the Byzantines on behalf of your people." Then regarding Constantinople he said: "I shall leave you unfortified and exposed to the sun; nobody will seek shelter from you, and you will not cast your shade on anyone".²

These accounts clearly show part of the development of the Islamic narrative in Syria. Al-Wāqidī, has reported that 'Umar only demarcated the construction of a *Mihrāb* without mentioning any details. Abī 'Ubayd, expanded on that when he reported the role of Ka'b al-Aḥbār in finding the location of the rock and that 'Umar constructed the *qibla* in front of it. Al-Ṭabarī reported in his first account that 'Umar entered the site of David's

¹Ibid, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 195-196.

²Ibid. Vol. X. 11, Pp. 196-197.

Mihrāb and prayed there without mentioning the rock. However, in his two second accounts not only did he mention the prayer, but also that he built a place of prayer (*Muṣallā*), in front of the rock which is the site of David's *Mihrāb*.

6.2. Analysis of the times, places, and chains (*Isnāds*) of the early Narratives and Sources

The early sources relating to the activities of 'Umar in Aelia can be divided on the basis of time and place into four categories.

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

On the other hand, neither al-Balādhurī nor al-Ya'qūbī, who were associated with moderate Shi'ism, nor historians such as, Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, al-Azdī, or any other early sources had made any mention of Umar's demarcating the construction of a mosque in Aelia, or even to a visit that 'Umar made to the site of David's temple.

The second category includes the Syrian historians. Abī 'Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām (d. 224 A.H/ 839 A.D) was the only Syrian historian to give any account of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb's construction of a *Mihrāb* or mosque in front of the rock in Aelia. He also reported without *Isnād* that 'Umar employed the villagers of Palestine (*Anbāt Ahl Filastīn*), and got them to sweep Bayt al-Maqdis which had a large garbage dump on it. These two accounts were not reported by the earlier famous Syrian historian Abī Zir'a

al-Dimashqī, who was close to the time of Abī ‘Ubayd, nor even by some later Syrian sources such as Ibn ‘Asākir.

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

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

While, Hussān‘Atwān claimed that the Syrian narratives are usually long and detailed but differ from the Hijāzī and ‘Iraqī accounts,¹ the researcher argues that the early Syrian accounts relating to the activities of ‘Umar in Aelia, judging from the accounts of Abī ‘Ubayd, are rather short and do not provide details or elaborations. In the case of the later Syrian accounts however, the narrations contain a great deal of inaccuracies and non-historical details. This fact perhaps offers some explanation, as will be seen, regarding the development of the narratives in Syria, especially regarding the inaccurate information about the sites of the mosques of David, ‘Umar and *al-Aqsā*.

¹‘Atwān, Hussān, Pp. 231-232.

Again, contrary to H. Busse's argument that non-Islamic sources have copied the Islamic ones with regard to the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem,¹ the researcher argues that this is totally incorrect and, in fact, the opposite is true. It seems to the researcher that the influence of the non-Islamic accounts in the Islamic sources from the beginning of the fourth century, are the reasons behind the expansion on the topic in the later Syrian Muslim narrations and the claims that 'Umar was interested in visiting the site of David's temple, and then that he built a mosque in the vicinity of its structure.

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

With regard to Abī 'Ubayd's account,² it would be safe to say that the line of this *Isnād* is acceptable when we know that he died in 224 A.H/ 839 A.D, and quoted his account from Hishām Ibn 'Ammār who died in (d.180 A.H/ 796A.D), and that Hishām had quoted it from al-Haythām Ibn 'Ammār who died in 160 A.H/ 777 A.D. In this case however, it could be argued that it is interesting that other famous historians such as al-Balādhurī and Abī Zir'a al-Dimashqī do not mention at least some of what he reported.

¹Busse. *'Omar b. al-Hattab in Jerusalem*, Pp. 73-119. Busse. *'Omar Image as the conqueror of Jerusalem*, Pp. 149-168.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11, Pp. 194-195.

Those historians were close to the time and place of Abī ‘Ubayd, and depended greatly upon the same narrators from whom he took his information, making one expect that they would mention at least some of what Abī ‘Ubayd reported. Furthermore, the researcher could not find accounts such as those of Abī ‘Ubayd in other later famous Syrian sources, such as, Ibn ‘Asākir who died in 539 AH, and who reported many accounts from Ka‘b al-Aḥbār regarding the literature of praise (*Aḥādīth al-Fadā’ī*).¹

It seems that Abī ‘Ubayd (who is known as a jurist more than as a historian), aimed for precedence (*Sābiqa*) from his accounts, as it is known that the jurists were mainly concerned with the precedence that led to the mutation of articles of Sharī‘a (law).

He aims from this precedence, to rely on ‘Umar’s action to rationalise an event in which the *Dhimma* people were reported to have complained of Muslims descending upon their houses². The complaint was made on the grounds that ‘Umar had already stated that, according to the peace accord, Christian churches and houses did not belong to Muslims.

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

¹Ibn ‘Asākir, Vol. 1, Pp. 147-148.

²Abī ‘Ubayd’s was the early source who reported that ‘Umar had asked Ka‘b al-Aḥbār about the site of the rock and then located the *qibla* or the mosque in front of it. Abī ‘Ubayd, p. 153.

Examining the *Isnāds* of al-Ṭabarī's accounts shows, on the one hand, that these *Isnāds* are weak and broken. This is because they do not continue until his time. On the other hand, he does not mention the identity of the narrator who told him that they heard the account of Rajā' Ibn Ḥayawa (d 112 A.H/ 730 A.D). There are at least three generations between al-Ṭabarī, and the time of Raja.

The same thing can be said about the *Isnād* of his accounts from Rabī'a al-Shāmī and Abū Maryam al-Filastīnī. All of these *Isnāds* are broken; in addition there is no mention of such accounts by other early sources that are closer to the time of the period. In the light of these facts, the researcher argues that some people in Syria, or others elsewhere, attributed these accounts to those narrators but never reported it.

This is because they are not found in the Syrian sources, which were close to their time and place, while they are found in the narratives of the 'Irāqī al-Ṭabarī, who rarely cited accounts in his history from Syrian narrators even when he related episodes on the history of Syria¹.

The analysis of the time, places, and *Isnāds* of the early Islamic narratives and sources shows that most of the early sources were silent with regard to the demarcating of the construction of a mosque in Aelia, except for the reports of al-Wāqidī, Abī 'Ubayd and al-Ṭabarī. The *Isnāds* of the above-mentioned accounts show that the Syrian narrators are singled out for reporting the first demarcated mosque and the role of Ka'b al-Ahbār in finding the location of the rock.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that the aim of Abī 'Ubayd was to look for precedence (*Sābiqa*), in order to rationalise an event during the era of 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-

¹See Donner. *The Problem of Early Arabic Historiography in Syria*, Pp.1-2.

‘Azīz. In addition, the *Isnāds* of al-Ṭabarī in all of his accounts were weak and broken, which cause them to be considered untrustworthy in the study of the narratives.

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

6.2.1. The role of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār in Aelia

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

The problem of the role of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār in the Islamic tradition has been the subject of various studies, in particular the studies of Welhausen and others.¹ The researcher could add here that² there is unanimous agreement among early Islamic sources that Ka‘b, who was a Jew from Yemen, embraced Islam when he met the caliph ‘Umar in Jerusalem, as indicated by al-Wāqidī, Ibn Sa‘d, Ibn A‘tham, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and others.

¹Welhausen. *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten* Helf IV, cited by Israel Ben Zeev (Abū Zuaib), *Ka‘b al-Aḥbār: Jews and Judaism in the Islamic Tradition*. (Jerusalem, 1976).

²Wāqidī, *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 153. Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 7, Pp. 445-446.

In short, a brief comparison between Ka‘b who is known in the Islamic tradition for relating *al-Isrā‘iliyyāt*,¹ along with another famous Yemeni narrator, Wahab Ibn Munabbih (d. 114 A.H/ 732 A.D), who was even more well-known than Ka‘b for relating *al-Isrā‘iliyyāt*,² has cited nothing regarding the activities that ‘Umar undertook in Aelia or the role of Ka‘b there. This makes the researcher inclined to argue that there was nothing to cite. It makes sense to say that if these events were true then Wahab would have been the first narrator to cite them according to his background in relating *al-Isrā‘iliyyāt*.

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

¹Al-Durī, *The Rise*, Pp. 30-32. Donner, *The Narratives of Islamic Origins*, Pp. 156-159. Nabia, Aboot. *Studies in Arabic Literary, Papyri, 1: Historical Texts*. (University of Chicago Press, 1957), Pp. 44-56. Tor, Anred. *In the Garden of Mysticism Trans* (University of New York Press, 1987), Pp.20-26. Al-Isrā‘ilyāt concept mean the legends and myths in Islamic tradition which taken from the old Testament (Torah and Injil). See: al-Dūrī, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. *Bahth fī Nash’āt ‘Ilm al-Tārīkh ‘Ind al-‘Arab* (Beriut, 1960), p. 26. (in Arabic). ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālim, p. 46

²Al-Durī, *The Rise*, Pp. 30-32. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, Pp. 156-159. Nabia, Aboot. *Studies in Arabic Literary, Papyri, 1: Historical Texts*. (University of Chicago Press, 1957), Pp. 44-56. Tor, Anred, *In the Garden of Mysticism Trans* (University of New York Press, 1987), Pp.20-26.

Lastly, the problem of Ka‘b residing in Hims after he became a Muslim until he died in 32 AH,¹ may raise many questions about his role in finding the location of the Rock and his desire to locate the *qibla* behind the Rock to combine both *Qiblas* (the *qibla* of Moses and the *qibla* of Muhammad).

The most important of these questions is why he chose Hims and not Jerusalem for his residence when his role and the interests he had shown were directed towards both the Rock and the location of the *qibla*, and reflected the great tradition of the literature of praise, *Aḥādīth al-Faḍā’il*, when he described Jerusalem as one of the cities of paradise?

It seems that some Islamic sources have exaggerated Ka‘b’s role in Jerusalem, and that the later Islamic historians found his personality suitable for attributing these accounts to him when they began writing the literature of praise, *Aḥādīth al-Faḍā’il*, after the war of the Crusades.

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

6.3. Non-Islamic and Later Islamic Narratives and Sources

A careful analysis of the early narratives and sources mentioned above, and from the *Isnāds* of the narrators who told these accounts, shows that great development has

¹Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 7, p. 445.

taken place with accounts being expanded and embellished with the passing of time. This could be attributed to some earlier Syrian narrators. This development seems to be the cause for many of the contradictions and non-historical legends that appeared in later sources, which inaccurately report the activities that 'Umar undertook in Aelia, and the sites of the mosques of David, 'Umar and *al-Aqşa*.

The researcher argues that the reasons behind this expansion and embellishment, and the development of non-historical legends are: firstly, the later Islamic accounts and sources are produced in circumstances and social-political circumstances that affected the people of Syria in general and the people of Palestine and Islamic Jerusalem in particular after the crusade war.

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

To understand the reasons for this development, it is important to look at some non-Islamic sources which were close to the time of the early Islamic sources. Euty chius, the patriarch of Alexandria, who lived under Islamic rule and died in 262 AH/ 876 AD, reported:

Then Umar said to him (Sophronius): "You owe me a debt.
Give me a place in which I might build a sanctuary

(*Masjid*),” The patriarch said to him: “I will give to the commander of the Faithful a place to build a sanctuary where the kings of Rūm were unable to build. It is the rock where God spoke to Jacob and which Jacob called the Gate of Heaven and the Israelites the Holy of Holies. It is in the centre of the word and was a Temple for the Israelites, who held it in great veneration and wherever they were they turned their faces toward it during prayer. But on this condition, that the promise is in a written document that no other sanctuary will be built inside of Jerusalem”.

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

responded. “We will build a sanctuary and place the stone at the end of the sanctuary”. Thereafter Umar built a sanctuary and put the stone at the end of it¹

A similar Christian account was reported by the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes who died in the early ninth century, (284 AH/ 897 AD):

In this year Umar undertook his expedition into Palestine, where the Holy City having been continuously besieged for two years (by the Arab armies), he at length became possessed of it by capitulation. Sophronius, the leader of Jerusalem, obtained from Umar a treaty in favour of all the inhabitants of Palestine, after which Umar entered the Holy City in camelhair garments all soiled and torn, and making a show of piety as a cloak for his diabolical hypocrisy, demanded to be taken to what in former times had been the Temple built by Solomon. This he straightway converted into an oratory for blasphemy and impiety. When Sophronius saw this he exclaimed, “Truly this is the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, and it now stands in the Holy Place”, and he shed many tears.²

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

¹This translation of Eutychius account has been quoted from F.E. Peters, Pp. 187-188.

²This translation of Theophanes account has been quoted from F.E. Peters, Pp.188-189.

‘Umar in that place as is much reported in later Islamic sources, specifically from the start of the fourth century?

Secondly, were the Syrian narratives, from whom al-Ṭabarī took his information, not available to the other Muslim historians, specifically those who were closer to the time and place of the Syrian narrators and depended upon them more than him? Thirdly, one should ask: why were the early Syrian narrators and sources the only ones to mention these accounts while the other narrators cited nothing?

The researcher argues that the earlier sources of al-Ṭabarī were at least available to some historians, specifically to those who were close to the time, but in fact there are no such actions by ‘Umar to cite. These accounts are in fact no more than non-Islamic accounts, in particular of Christians, whose influences originated in Syria and which found their way to the later Islamic sources from the start of the fourth century.

In order to see how the Christian accounts influenced the Muslim sources at the time of al-Ṭabarī, it is important to realise that al-Ṭabarī began writing his history after 290 A.H/ 903 A.D, and finished it a short time before his death in 320 A.H/ 932 A.D. These two dates show that al-Ṭabarī’s time was later than the time of Eutychius who died in 262 A.H/ 876 A.D, and the time of Theophanes who died in the early ninth century, (284 A.H/ 894 A.D).

On the other hand the other early Muslim historians, such as the ones mentioned earlier, were dead before that time. This led the researcher to argue that these non-Islamic sources were not available to the early Muslim historians and narrators, in particular in Syria, before the beginning of the fourth century. They did not hear of such events from other sources, but they became known at the time of al-Ṭabarī.

This shows that the earliest mention of 'Umar building a mosque in Aelia is by the Christians. Also, it indicates where the later Muslim historians took their information from. Le Strange claimed that he was able to discover that the earliest mention of 'Umar's building a mosque in Aelia is the account found in the Chronicle of the Byzantine historian Theophanes.¹ On the other hand, K. A. C. Creswell, argues that the first source mentioning that 'Umar built a mosque in Jerusalem is Euty chius (939), but his account is full of elements branded as obviously legendary.²

Examining some later Islamic accounts regarding the interest that 'Umar had shown in the site of David's temple showed that most, if not all, of these accounts were taken from non-Islamic sources, in particular from Euty chius and Theophanes. Yāqūt al-Hamawī (d. 626 AH) reported that the mosque that 'Umar built and the prayer that he gave outside the church took place in the church of Bethlehem not Jerusalem. He states:

عندما جاء الخليفة عمر رضي الله عنه إلى بيت المقدس أتاه راهب من بيت فقال له: معي منك امان على بيت لحم، فقال له عمر: ما أعلم ذلك، فأظهره وعرفه عمر، فقال له الأمان صحيح ولكن لا بد في كل موضع للنصارى أن نجعل فيه مسجدا، فقال الراهب: إن بيت لحم حنية مبنية على قبلكم فاجعلها مسجدا للمسلمين ولا تهدم الكنيسة؛ فعفا له عن الكنيسة وصلى إلى تلك الحنية واتخذها مسجدا وجعل على النصارى إسراجها وعمارتها وتنظيفها، ولا يزل المسلمون يزورون تلك بيت لحم ويقصدون إلى تلك الحنية ويصلون فيها وينقل سلفهم عن خلفهم أنها حنية عمر بن

¹Le Strange, p. 91.

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

الخطاب، وهي معروفة إلى الآن لم يغيرها الفرنج لما ملكو البلاد، ويقال: إن فيها قبر داود وسليمان عليهما السلام.

When the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab came to Islamic Jerusalem, a monk from Bethlehem came to him and said: I have a treaty of safety (*amān*), from you on Bethlehem. ‘Umar said: I don’t know that, then the monk showed it to ‘Umar who recognised it and said: the treaty is correct, but we should put a mosque in every Christian place. The monk said, there is a *Hanya* in Bethlehem built towards your *qibla*, make a mosque for the Muslims and do not destroy the Church. ‘Umar left the Church to him and prayed to the *Hanya*, and took it as a mosque. He imposed upon the Christians to light and serve it. The Muslims still visit Bethlehem and seek that *Hanya* and pray in it. Their successors know from their primogenitors that it is ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab’s *Hanya*. The *Hanya* is still known until today; the Crusaders did not change it when they ruled the region. It is said that the graves of David and Sulaiyman, peace be upon them, are in it.¹

The analysis of Yāqūt’s account shows that it is full of contradictions as he mentioned that the monk had come to ‘Umar in Jerusalem without referring to when ‘Umar had visited Bethlehem. The question arising here is how the monk asked him to pray in the *Hanya* in Bethlehem when they were some 10 Km from the place! Furthermore, it could be understood from the account that the monk had a treaty of safety (*amān*) from ‘Umar personally before his arrival in the region while at the same time

¹Yāqūt, Vol. 1, Pp. 618-619.

there is no evidence referring to ‘Umar’s visiting the area after he become caliph or even after the rise of Islam! The question here is when did ‘Umar grant this treaty of peace to this monk?

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

Interestingly, we can see his claim that ‘Umar had prayed inside the church of Bethlehem and wrote to its patriarch forbidding the Muslims from congregations and assemblies for prayer in the place expect one after another.¹ Again, how could ‘Umar fear that the Muslims would take the church of Jerusalem from the Christians and not do the same in Bethlehem, and why would he not do the same thing in both cases?

Examining a few other later Islamic Syrian narratives of Yāqūt’s time such as Ibn al-Murajā, Mujīr al-Dīn, and others, shows clearly how such accounts are also quoted by Muslims from the Christian sources, (such as Yāqut’s) then they also added many fabricated details. However, they also attributed these accounts to some Muslim Syrian narrators, specifically to al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm (d. 205 A.H/ 820 A.D), and not to its original sources. One of Ibn al-Murajā and Mujīr al-Dīn’s important accounts read:

¹Ibid, Pp. 618-619.

أخبرني أبو الحسن علي بن موسى قال لنا علي بن يعقوب بن إبراهيم قال نا عبد الملك إحمد بن إبراهيم القرشي قال نبا محمد بن عائذ عن الوليد قال أخبرني [1] بن شداد عن ابيه عن جده أن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنهما فرغ من كتاب الصلح بينه وبين أهل بيت المقدس قال لبطريقها: دلني على مسجد داود عليه السلام. قال: نعم، فخرج عمر متقلدا بسيفه في أربعة آلاف من أصحابه الذين قدموا معه متقلدين سيوفهم فمن كان عليها، وليس علينا من السلاح إلا السيوف، والبطريق بين يدي عمر في أصحابه ونحن خلف عمر، دخلنا مدينة بيت المقدس حتى أدخلنا الكنيسة التي يقولون لها القمامة، فقال: هذا مسجد داود عليه السلام، فنظر عمر وتأمل مليا فقال: كذبت، لقد وصف لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم مسجد داود بصفته ما هي هذه. قال: فمضى به إلى الكنيسة التي يقال لها صهيون فقال: هذا مسجد داود فقال له كذبت. فانطلق إلى مسجد بيت المقدس حتى انتهى به على بابها الذي يقال له باب محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم وقد انحدر ما في المسجد من المزبلة على درج الباب حتى خرج إلى الزقاق الذي فيه الباب، وكثر على الدرج حتى كان أن يلزق بسقفه فقال: لا تقدر أن تدخله إلا حبوا فقال: ولو حبوا، فحبا بين يدي عمر وحبا عمر خلفه وحبونا خلفه حتى أفضينا إلى صخرة بيت المقدس واستوتينا فيه قياما، فنظر عمر وتأمل مليا فقال: هذا والذي نفسي بيده الذي وصف لنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم.

“On the authority of Al Walid ibn Muslim, it is reported as coming from a Shaikh of the sons of Shadād ibn Aus, who had heard it from his father, who held it from his grandfather, that ‘Omar, as soon as he was at leisure from the writing of the Treaty of Capitulation made between him

and the people of the Holy city, said to the Patriarch of Jerusalem: 'Conduct us to the Mosque of David.' And the Patriarch agreed thereto. Then 'Omar went forth girt with his sword, and with him four thousand of the Companions who had come to Jerusalem with him, all begirt likewise with their swords, and a crowd of us Arabs, who had come up to the Holy City, followed them, none of us bearing any weapons except our swords. And the Patriarch walked before 'Omar among the Companions, and we all came behind the Khalif. Thus we entered the Holy City. And the Patriarch took us to the Church which goes by the name of the Kumamah, and said he: This is David's Mosque. And 'Omar looked around and pondered, then he answered the Patriarch: 'Thou liest, for the Apostle described to me the Mosque of David, and by his description this is not it'. Then the Patriarch went on with us to the Church of Sihyun (Sion), and again he said: 'This is the Mosque of David'. But the Kalif replied to him: 'Thou liest'. So the Patriarch went on with him till he came to the noble Sanctuary of the Holy City, and reached the gate thereof, called (afterwards) the Gate Muhammad. Now the dung which was then all about the noble Sanctuary, had settled on the steps of this gate, so that it even came out into the street in which the gate opened, and it had accumulated so greatly on the steps as almost to reach up the ceiling to the gateway. The Patriarch said to 'Omar: 'It is impossible to proceed and enter-except crawling on hands and knees'. Said 'Omar: 'Even on hands and knees be it'. So the Patriarch went down on hands and knee, preceding 'Omar and we all crawled after him, until he had brought us out into the Court of the Noble Sanctuary of the Holy City. Then we

arose off our knees, stood upright. And ‘Omar looked around, pondering for a long time. Then said he: ‘By Him in whose hands is my soul!-this is the place described to us by the Apostle of Allah’.”¹

The investigation of some later Islamic narratives and sources and comparison with the Christian accounts shows that the Muslim historians in Syria not only quoted the Christians accounts, but also added a great amount of fabrications to them, and attributed them to Muslim Syrian narrators instead of their original sources. Furthermore, their literal copies and attribution led them to make many inaccuracies when they inaccurately reported the real activities of ‘Umar in Aelia, which shows the influence of the Christian accounts in Syria from the beginning of the fourth century, with regard to ‘Umar’s demarcate for the construction of the *Mihrāb* in Aelia.

6.4. Inaccuracies among modern scholars

It seems to the researcher that the developments of the Islamic narrations in the later Islamic Syrian sources were used by some modern researchers to support their claims that ‘Umar had shown interest in the site of David’s temple and that he or the Muslims some time later re-built *al-Aqsā* mosque including the Dome of the Rock.² Up to the present time, there are eleven different modern theories regarding the site of David’s temple. Four theories suggested different sites within the perimeters of *al-Aqsā* mosque,³

¹This translation has been quoted from Le Strange, Pp.141-142. See the original Arabic text in: Ibn al-Murajjā, p. 49. Mujr al-Dīn, Pp. 255-256.

²See Rosen, Myriam Ayalon. *The Early Islamic Monuments of Al-Haram al-Sharīf, An Iconographic Study.* (ed), p. 4-8. Oclely, Simon B.D, *History of the Saracens, Life of Muhammad and his Successors* (London, 1048), p. 124.

³See L. Martin, Ernest. *The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot* (Portland, USA, 2000), Pp. 108-113. Internet: www. Asklem.com

while the other seven suggested other sites in Jerusalem outside the perimeters of *al-Aqsā*.¹

From a historical viewpoint, it seems that the difference between these theories is related to religious reasons more than to admitted historical facts. This can be seen when we know that there is no scientific proof to support any of these theories despite the great amount of digging that has taken place and still continues in the perimeters of *al-Aqsā* after the Israeli occupation of the east part of the City in 1967.²

Similar opinions claim that *al-Aqsā* was built on the site of the ancient Christian church, which is supported by some scholars, and rejected by others.³ Ernest L. Marten, who put forward the latest theory regarding the issue of the site of the temple, rejected the idea that this site was within the perimeters of *al-Aqsā* area. He argues that the real site of the temple was located near Gihon spring (near Silwān) on the southeast and not in northwest where *al-Aqsā* is located.⁴ In addition, he rejected the idea that the Rock, where later Muslims built the Dome, is the same Rock that the Jews sanctify.⁵

¹Ibid, Pp. 108-113.

²See Al-Jawādī, 'Alaa' al-Sayyed. *al-Quds: Asālat al-Hawiyya wa-Muhāwalat al-Takhriyyb: Al-Quds: Original Heritage & Attempts at Effacement* (Ma'had al-Dirasāt al-Islāmiyya, London, 2000), Pp. 182-201.

³The scholars who belong to this school are: M. Ben Dov. *Western wall, Min* (Defence: Jerusalem, 1983). Benjamin, Mazar. *Mountain of the Lord* (New Yourk, 1975), p. 275. Sagiv, Yet. See his Web Page on Internet, www.templemunt.org. Robinson, R. *Travels Along The Mediterranean*. Pp. 304-304. Hogg, E. *Visit To Alexandria, Damascus and Jerusalem*. P.289. Williams, G. *Holy City*. p. 205 Blackburn, A. *A Handbook Round Jerusalem* (n.d, n. p), P. 120. Le, Strange, p. 90. The scholars who belong to this school are: Creswell, K. A. C. *Early Muslim Architecture Ummayyads: 622-750*. (Oxford 1940), Pp. 23-24. Martin, Ernest, Pp. 113-142. for more details about these arguments see Jasīr, Shafīq. *Tārīkh al-Quds*, Pp. 102-104.

⁴Marten, Ernest, Pp. 142-162.

⁵Ibid, Pp.122-127.

The Encyclopaedia Judaica, which was published in 1971, mentioned that the Jewish claim of sanctity for the Wailing Wall, which is located within the perimeters of *al-Aqsā* mosque, only appeared for the first time after 1500 A.D.,¹ and no evidence is found of this before. Ernest L. Marten based his argument on the Bible, and an account mentioned by Euty chius stated that the rock that the Patriarch Sopronius pointed out to ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb was actually a “stone” that could be carried by humans and ‘Umar took it into the region of *al-Aqsā* mosque and made this portable “rock” part of his *qibla* in the area which was to become known as *al-Aqsa* mosque.²

Indeed, Marten, who gave a logical theory on the site of the temple, fell into many errors when he claimed that ‘Umar carried the stones of David’s temple from Gihon spring (near Silwān) and used them for building *al-Aqsā*. This, according to Marten, means that all or some of the stones of *al-Aqsā* are the same stones from David’s temple which was built more than sixteen hundred years before the arrival of ‘Umar in Aelia, and was burnt at least three times by the *Babiluan* and the Byzantines. In addition, he claims that ‘Umar built a mosque in Aelia during his visit, contradicting the fact that ‘Umar had stayed a only short period in the city which made it impossible for him to complete the construction even if the stones used were found on the site of the building itself.

It seems that some claims were based on biblical statements. Some had taken the later narratives and sources as admitted facts and measured them with other studies which indicated that the Dome of the Rock was the mosque of ‘Umar. Others claimed that the

¹See El-‘Awaisī, *‘Umar’s Assurance*, p. 43. (in Arabic).

²Ernest, Marten, Pp. 127-138.

present *al-Aqsā* is actually ‘Umar’s mosque on the basis of some material they claimed to have found in the ground which was destroyed later on.¹

Again, it seems that these arguments are based on later Islamic sources such as Naṣir Khisrow (438 A.H/1047 A.D), al-Harawī (531 A.H/1173 A.D), al-Suyūṭī (end of the 15 century), and others relating to the same period which mention the names of *Mihrāb* ‘Umar and *Mihrāb* Mu‘āwiya in *al-Aqsā*² which made them inclined to believe that this building was constructed by ‘Umar and Mu‘āwiya themselves. It could be argued that ‘Umar only demarcated the construction of the mosque and Mu‘āwiya probably rebuilt the mosque because of the earthquake that hit the city.³

6.5. The Reasons Behind the Influences of Non-Islamic Narratives in the Later Islamic Sources

The question to be asked here is: what are the reasons behind the development in the Islamic narratives in Syria and the influences of Christian’s narratives and sources in the later Islamic Syrian narratives and sources with regard to the inaccuracies of interests that ‘Umar showed in the site of David’s temple? Also, what are the reasons behind the attribution of such accounts to some Syrian narrators and not to their original sources?

It seems to the researcher that the reasons can be summarised as follows: Firstly, the significance of Jerusalem to the Christians reflected their interest in telling

¹Abdullah, Ahmad, Pp. 62-63.

²For more details about that see: Elad, Amilam. *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship, Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*, E.J. Brill, Leaden. New York. KOLN, 1995), Pp. 8-9.

³See Russell, Kenneth. *The Earthquake Chronology of Palestine and Northwest Arabia from the Mid-8th century A.D.*, (Bulletin of the American school of Oriental Research, no 260, 1986), Pp. 37-59.

and writing such accounts in order to depend upon them as proof in their hands to confront any attempts that might arise by the Muslims to take over their properties or Holy places in the city.

Secondly, the traditional conflict between Christians and Jews in the area, specifically in the region of Aelia, could be seen clearly from the investigation of the contrary accounts of each side. Some Jewish sources claimed that the Jews of Syria were “patiently waiting” the arrival of the Muslim armies in Syria because they were groaning under the rule of the tyrannical Byzantines a long time before the rise of Islam.¹

Others claimed that the Jews welcomed and assisted the Muslims and that a group of them joined the Muslim armies and assisted them particularly during the siege of Aelia.² Furthermore, it is claimed that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb was accompanied by Jewish wise-men and that he played the role of arbitrator or forceful mediator between them and the Christians as well as allowing seventy Jewish families from Tiberius to settle in the south of Jerusalem, and that he rejected the Christians’ requests not to allow them to settle in Aelia.³

Contrary to this viewpoint, the Christian sources claimed that the Jews indicated to ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb that he should tear down the crosses on the top of the church on the Mount of Olives if he wanted his building to stand up when he began to build a

¹Ben Zeev, p. 35.

²Ben Zeev, Pp.36-37. See also Armstrong, Karen. *A History of Jerusalem: One city, Three faiths* (HarperCollins publishers, London, 1996), p. 230. Crone, Patricia and Cook, Michael. *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world* (Cambridge University press, 1976), p. 156. Moshe, Gil argues that “One cannot conclude from these sources that there were Jews in the ranks of the Muslims army”. Furthermore, he accusation Patricia Crone and Michael Cook saying that they “ exaggerate in seeing here proof of general Muslim-Jewish collaboration”. Gil. *A History of Palestine*, p.71.

³Ben Zeev, p.39. El-‘Awaisī, ‘*Umar’s Assurance*, Pp. 58-59. Gil. *A history of Palestine*, Pp. 70-75. Ernest, Marten, Pp. 143-162.

mosque in Aelia.¹ In addition, they claim that ‘Umar refused to pray in Aelia’s church because of his fear that the Muslims would take it and convert it into a mosque.²

However, the same Christian sources claimed that ‘Umar had accepted to pray in David’s temple and that he took it over and constructed a mosque in its place.³ One example of such bias is Simon’s assertion; he argues that:

‘Umar has left the churches to the Christians and built a new mosque in the place where Solomon’s formerly stood.⁴

In addition, other sources claimed that ‘Umar accepted the Christians’ request to exclude Jews from residing in the Aelia region because they wanted Aelia to remain a Christian city.⁵ These contrary claims show clearly how the traditional conflict between the Christians and Jews in Aelia was reflected in their sources. It also shows the attempts of each party to claim that they were the group who obtained the honour and favour of the Muslim conquerors, specifically from the caliph ‘Umar personally, while he dealt with indignity with the others.

Thirdly, with regard to the early Islamic sources, it seems that there are no events or activities such as the ones reported in the above-mentioned sources, and that the early writers and historians found nothing to cite. It seems to be without doubt that the later

¹Theophanes, p. 39.

²Eutychius in F.E. Peters, Pp. 187-188

³Theophanes, in F.E. Peters, Pp.188-189.

⁴Simon, Ocley. B.D, p. 124.

⁵See Sahas, Daniel J. *Patriarch Sophronious, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb and the Conquest of Jerusalem*. In Hādiyya Dajānī-Shakīl and Burhān Dajānī. *Al-Sirā’ al-Islamī al-Firanjī ‘Ala Filstīn fī al-Qurū al-Wstā (The Islamic Frankish (Ifranj) conflict over Palestine during the Middle Ages* (The Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, 1994), p. 54.

Islamic narratives are not related to the period of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia, but rather they are greatly different from the real activities that 'Umar undertook in Aelia.

The researcher argues that these accounts, which were quoted by the later Muslim historians in Syria, reflect the conditions which affected the position of the Muslims in Syria. In particular, after the Crusades, the Muslims found in the Christian accounts, good material to counteract the Crusaders' claims of violence faced by Christian pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. They perhaps aimed to show them how the first Muslim conquerors dealt honourably with the Christians and bestowed favours upon them when they entered Aelia for the first time.

It seems to the researcher that the mingling among Jerusalem's inhabitants¹ makes the Christian accounts well known in Syria, not only to the historians but also to the public, which make it easy for the later Muslim writers and historians to quote from them. The development of the legendary accounts in later Islamic Syrian sources did not stop at quoting Christian accounts and attributing them to Muslim Syrian narrators; it also affected the great traditions from the literature of praise, *Aḥādīth al-Fadā'il*, which contained a lot of myths. Part of these *Aḥādīth* were attributed to persons who converted to Islam after the death of the prophet Muhammad such as Ka'b al-Ahbar who had never seen the prophet or heard him, as has been mentioned earlier. These great traditions are the same as the historic narratives that appeared in Syria after the Crusades, calling to liberate the area, and in particular *al-Aqsā* mosque from the Crusaders.

¹Al-Maqdisī. *The Best*, p.152. He claims that the Jews and the Christians were a majority in Jerusalem and they control most of the public services.

The many inaccuracies that the later Muslim Syrian historians made were that they did not attribute the accounts to their real sources but to some early Syrian narrators. This also led most modern scholars to make the same errors when they used the later Islamic sources as admitted historical fact to show that Muslims built *al-Aqsā* on the structure of David's temple.

The researcher argues that there is no doubt that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb did nothing, rather than demarcate the re-construction of a mosque in Aelia on his first visit. He also did not find any difficulty in reaching the area where he demarcated a mosque at the place where *al-Aqṣa* was built some time later. This is in light of the fact that this area was empty and it was some distance from the residential area and the holy places inside the walled city, as can be clearly seen from the Ma'dabā mosaic.¹ On the other hand, it is unexpected that there is any connection between 'Umar praying in front of the rock and the location of the *qibla* because there is no proof that the rock within the perimeters of *al-Aqsā* was the same rock as that of the Jewish sanctuary.

In addition, the geological survey of the perimeters of *al-Aqsā* showed that all these areas consist of one rock. In other words, the entire area of *al-Aqsā* is a huge rock.² The top of this rock is the site where the Muslims built the Dome of Rock.

All these facts led the researcher to argue that 'Umar had chosen this part for prayer for two main reasons. Firstly, because it is more plateau than the top and secondly, it could hold the large number of Muslims who entered Aelia with him, among whom

¹This is the oldest map of the holy city of Jerusalem, dated 548 CD. See Avi-Yonah, Michael. *The Madaba Mosaic Map: With Introduction and Commentary* (Published by the Israel exploration society, Jerusalem, 1954), Pp. 1-54.

²This information has been taken from Haytham al-Ratrūt which is included in his PhD thesis on *The Architectural Development Of al-Aqsā Mosque in Islamic Jerusalem in the Early Islamic period: the Sacred Architecture in the shape of "The Holy"*. University of Strathclyde (September 2002).

those who came with him from Madīna and those who besieged the walled city at the eve of his arrival.

6.6. The first Building of al-Aqsā Mosque during Islamic rule

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

Furthermore, it seems that the early sources did not mention the first construction of *al-Aqsā* because the initial re-construction was a rudimentary one consisting of planks and beams. These sources, however, paid great attention when the Muslims constructed the Dome of the Rock and renewed the mosque by using magnificent architecture during the rule of the Ummayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik and his son al-Walīd.¹ This explained why the traveller Arculf was the earliest source to mention a mosque in Aelia after the first Islamic conquest of the city. Arculf, a Christian pilgrim who visited Jerusalem in 680 AD, described the earlier mosque as follows:

But in that renowned place where once the Temple had been magnificently constructed, placed in the neighbourhood of the ‘city’ wall from the east, the Saracens now frequented a quadrangular house of prayer, which they have built rudely, constructing it by setting planks and great

¹See: Ibn al-Murajjā, Pp. 58-62. Mujīr al-Dīn, Vol. 1, Pp. 280-285.

beams on some remains of ruins: this house can hold three thousand men at once.¹

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

Furthermore, all of the inhabitants of the Aelia region were Christians and there were no Muslims among them before ‘Ubāda Ibn al- Sāmit resided there, and also all of the Muslim conquerors left the region with ‘Umar after the conquest. It can possibly be said that ‘Umar appointed ‘Ubāda Ibn al- Sāmit after the end of the conquests of Syria and during his second visit to the region after the plague of ‘Imwās in 18 AH or sometime later when the Muslims began to settle in Palestine and in Islamic Jerusalem in particular.²

It could be argued that after the end of the conquests, Muslims began to settle in the areas which belonged to those amongst the Byzantines who left Aelia. Therefore,

¹See the text in Creswell, p. 34.

²D. Goitein. *Jerusalem During the Arab period*, p. 175. He argues that shortly after the conquest, the Muslims began to settle in Jerusalem.

their properties were owned by the conquerors, including the area outside the walls of the city. This made it necessary for the Muslims to build not only a mosque, but also a governor's residence or *Dār al-Imāra* when 'Ubāda Ibn al-Sāmit was appointed a judge in Palestine and Imam in Bayt al-Maqdis.

Conclusion

It is fair to say that the analysis of the early and some later sources led the researcher to argue that during his first visit to Aelia, 'Umar demarcated the reconstruction of *al-Aqsā* Mosque. All the accounts which reported that 'Umar had shown interest in the location of David's temple in Jerusalem and that he built a mosque (*Al-Aqsā*) in its place are non-historical and legendary accounts founded under conditions which greatly differ from the first Islamic conquest of Aelia.

These accounts are mentioned only for the first time in Christian sources as part of the traditional conflict between them and the Jews in Aelia. The aim of such Christian accounts were to confront the Jewish claims regarding Muslims, specifically, that Caliph 'Umar allowed them to return to Jerusalem after more than five hundred years of absence from the region after being expelled in 135 A.D by the Byzantines. Then, after the Crusades, the Muslim Syrian sources quoted these accounts and added many fabricated events to them with attributions to some Syrian Muslim narrators.

In the light of these facts it can be understood why none of the early Islamic sources cited any text, either long or short regarding the activities that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb undertook in Jerusalem. Furthermore, the influence of the Christian narratives and sources shed light on why all the accounts reported by Syrian sources, narrated only

by Syrian narrators, were not mentioned by any other early sources or narrators from other regions in the Islamic state.

It seems that one of the main reasons behind the influence of the Christian accounts between later Muslim historians in Syria is the war of the Crusades. Muslim writers gathered these accounts and the great traditions from the literature of praise, *Ahādīth al-Fadā'il*, for two reasons.

The first was to deflect the Crusaders' claims that the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem were faced with violence by the Muslims while they were on their way to Jerusalem, by quoting and emphasising their accounts, which showed the great honour that they received from the Muslim conquerors. The inaccuracies that Muslim writers fell into was that they did not attribute these accounts to their original sources but to some earlier Syrian Muslim narrators, without noting that the Christians had in fact reported these accounts to reflect the significance of Jerusalem to the Christians, and in addition as a part of their traditional conflict with the Jews in the area.

Secondly, one of the aims behind the great interest of the later Islamic writers and historians in such accounts was to encourage the Muslims to liberate Islamic Jerusalem from the Crusaders by reminding them of the sanctity of this area in the Islamic traditions and faith.

Lastly, some modern scholars made the same errors as the later Islamic writers when they depended upon these sources to support their claims concerning the location of David's temple and that the Muslims built *al-Aqsā* on its structure. However, they forgot, that the roots of these accounts belonged to the Christian sources.

Chapter Seven

The Attitude of the People of Aelia Towards the First Islamic Conquest in the light of ‘Umar’s Assurance of Safety (*amān*) to its people

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Introduction

The Islamic Assurance of Safety (*amān*) that Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb granted to the people of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) during his historical visit to the region in the form that is known in history as al-‘Uḥda al-‘Umariyya, is regarded as being a major turning point in both historic and juristic terms. Nevertheless, this Assurance may be viewed as one of the most important results of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia, not only in the history of the area, but in Islamic history in general.¹

Indeed, this Islamic Assurance of safety (*amān*), may be viewed as an important document which reshaped relations between the people of diverse faiths who inhabited the region.² In addition, it enabled the followers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam for the first time in history to live together in a holy city such as Aelia.

The problem of the historic authenticity of ‘Umar’s Assurance, and the interpretation of some of its versions³ was examined by ‘Abd al-Fattah, El-‘Awaisī, in

¹See: El-‘Awaisī. *Umar’s Assurance*, Pp. 47-49.

²Ibid, p. 47.

³Islamic narrators and historians reported many versions of this document while others reported the content of the assurance without any text. See Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, V.1. Pp. 124-125 Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp.144-145. Al-Muḥhar Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 355 A.H/ 966 A.D), V, 85. Ibn ‘Atham. Vol, 1&2. p. 230. Al-Azdī, p. 259. Ya’qūbī. *Tārīkh*, op. cit. V. 2. p. 147. Euty chius. P.120. On the other hand Al-Ṭabarī provides the famous version quoted from Sayf Ibn ‘Umar, this text reads: “In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. This is the Assurance of safety (*amān*) which the servant of God, Umar, the Commander of the faithful, granted to the people of Jerusalem. He has given them an Assurance of safety for themselves, their property, their churches, their crosses; the sick and the healthy of the city, all the rituals that belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited (by Muslims) and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land, on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their property will be damaged. They will not be forcibly converted. No Jews will live with them in Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem must pay the poll tax like the people of the (other) cities, and they must expel the Byzantines and the robbers. As for those who will leave the city, their lives and property will be safe until they reach their place of safety, and as for those who remain, they will be safe. They will have to pay the poll tax like the people of Jerusalem. Those of the people of Jerusalem, who want to leave with the Byzantines, take their property, and abandon their churches and their crosses, will be

his important article “*Umar’s Assurance of Safety to the People of Aelia (Jerusalem): A critical Analytical Study of the Historical Sources*”. On the other hand, other researchers discussed it briefly or at length in their studies of early Islamic history in general¹ such as Danial Sahas, Zakariyyā Al-Qudā, Cohen, Mark R. and others.²

El-‘Awisī argues that undoubtedly that the versions of ‘Umar’s Assurance “have been expanded and embellished with passing of time. However, he claims that there is no doubt that an assurance of safety existed and that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb granted the people of Aelia an assurance of safety for themselves, their property, their churches, and their religion, in return for their paying tax”. He added that “as for additions and conditions (expel the Jews from residing in Aelia) attributed to ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb, they are the product of later historical periods, resulting from socio-political circumstances that differed greatly from the time of the first Muslim conquest of Jerusalem. He totally rejects the claims made by Daniel J. Sahas that the first Muslim conquest led to the “emergence of an opportunity for the Christian of

safe until they reach their place of safety. Those villagers (*ahl al-ard*) who were in Jerusalem before the killing of so-and-so may remain in the City if they wish, but they must pay the poll tax like the people of Jerusalem. Those who wish may go with the Byzantines, and those who wish may return to their families. Nothing will be taken from them until their harvest has been reaped. If they pay the poll tax according to their obligations, then the contents of this letter are under the covenant of God, are the responsibility of his Prophet, of the Caliphs, and of the faithful. The persons who attest to it are Khālīd b. al-Walīd, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āsī, ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Awf, and Mu’āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān. This letter was written and prepared in the year 15 / 636-37”. Tābarī. *Tārīkh*, V. X II. Pp. 191-192. Furthermore, there is a new version of ‘Umar’s assurance published by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem in 1953 claiming to be a literal translation of the original Greek text, which is kept in the Greek Orthodox library in the Phanar quarter of Istanbul in Turkey. This Arabic text is registered under number 525 in the library of the Greek Orthodox in Jerusalem. In addition of that, in the light of the development in the Islamic narratives and sources, in the 5th A.H/ 11th A.D century we begin to see much enlarged texts of the terms of the pact of ‘Umar (‘Ahd ‘Umar; also al-Shurut al-‘Umariyya “Stipulation of ‘Umar”). The first text was given by Ibn ‘Asakir (d. 539 A.H/ 1144 A.D), in the name of ‘Ahd ‘Umar to Bayt al-Maqdis and other cities in Syria. This text, with little variation was reported by al-Musharaf Ibn al-Murajjā (d. 442 A.H/ 1050 A.D), p. 54-55. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751 A.H/ 1350 A.D), Vol, 2, 657-660. Mujīr al-Dīn and others.

¹See chapter one Pp. 3-4.

²Sahas, Al-Qudā, Zakariyyā, Vol. 2, Pp. 271-283. Cohen, Mark R. *What was the Pact of ‘Umar’s? Literary-Historical Study* (Journal of Jerusalem Studies In Arabic and Islam= JSAI, 23, 1999), Pp. 100-192.

Jerusalem to contain the Jews, with the help of the Muslim Arabs, through the concessions granted to them in ‘Umar’s Assurance’.¹ He concluded his argument saying:

In short, the attitude of conquest, or what I shall term at the end of this article as “**the first Muslim liberation of Jerusalem**”, was contrary to that of both Jews and Christians towards the City. The Muslims liberated the Christians from the Byzantine occupiers of the City, rid the Jews of oppression at the hands of the Byzantines, and restored their presence in the City after an absence of five hundred years. These events were in keeping with the teaching of Islam based on the methodology of *Tadafu*‘ or counterbalance, the concept of justice based not only on plurality and recognition of others, but on determining their rights, duties, treatment, and means of co-existence.²

Although the reasons put forward by El-‘Awaisī might in fact be sufficient, the researcher would like to draw attention to another reason, a question arises here regarding the great difference in the texts between early and later sources with regard to what later texts contain about the conditions, in addition to the exceptions and restrictions; in particular the exclusion of the Jews from residing in Aelia, and the conditions that the people of Aelia wrote themselves as later sources indicated.

¹El-‘Awaisī. *Umar’s Assurance*, Pp. 75-78.

²El-‘Awaisī. *Umar’s Assurance*, Pp. 78-79.

The researcher argues that there are several different reasons for these differences. Firstly and most importantly, the fact that the events of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia, as well as Islamic history in general, were written about 100-200 years later and the Muslims depended on verbal narratives until then. Moreover, many narrators and historians and the narrators quoted in the sources are affected by the first internal conflicts in Islam (*Fitna*) that took place between 35-40 A.H/ 655-660 A.D, in addition to the later conflicts between the Umayyads and opposition parties such as the Khawārij and the Shiites. Later developments affected the position of the people of the book (*Dhimi*) during certain periods of history, especially the 'Abbasid and the Fatimid states until the Crusades.

Using verbal narratives for a long time from one age to another makes it impossible to follow a narrative literally; the matter becomes more difficult when dealing with document. This method of telling history led to some changes in the language from historical sources and the narrators quoted another according to the conditions and the time and place of the narrator and the persons who heard from him. 'Abd al-Fattah El-'Awaisī argues that historical sources, depending on their narrators and authors, reflect the general circumstances and socio-political developments prevailing at the time they were written. The sources are coloured by the personality of their author, the time of the recording and by local and religious interests.¹

In addition, the method of verbal narrations make it possible that the same narrator may narrate the same event using different words or language, then each person who heard it narrated it as he heard which led to different texts in different sources that were taken from the same narrator. This matter can be seen from the texts

¹See El-'Awaisī. *'Umar's Assurance*, op. cit. p. 51.

of Eutychius (d. 262 AH/ 876 AD), and al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284 AH/ 896 AD), who were close to the same period and reported similar texts with little variation of words with regard to 'Umar's Assurance. Despite none of them mentioning the *Isnād* of the narrators quoted, it seems that they took their information from the same source.

Furthermore, differences in the texts not only happened in using verbal narrations, but also in the case of later quotations. The version of Mujīr al-Dīn who quoted 'Umar's assurance from al-Ṭabarī, has shown differences in some phrases. For example, he mentions Muqīmuha wa Barīuha instead of Saqīmuha wa Barīuha with regard to the churches in Jerusalem. In addition he does not mention al-Ṭabari's phrase "before the murder of *Fulan* (so-and so)".¹

Secondly, concerning the problem of the Jews who resided in Aelia after the first Islamic conquest, some scholars argue that the Jews were residing in Jerusalem immediately after the Muslim conquest which is in contrast to the passage that forbade them to do so in al-Ṭabarī.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the attitude of Aelia people towards the first Islamic conquest in the light of in the light of 'Umar's Assurance of Safety (*amān*) to its people.

7.1. The Christians

Politically, throughout their extensive history, both Palestine and Jerusalem were subordinated to the superpower states that ruled the area, the longest and most important of these being the rule of the Romans.² As mentioned earlier, the region of

¹Mujīr al-Dīn. Vol, 2. Pp. 253-254.

²The Byzantine rule of Jerusalem began in 63 B.C and continued until the first Islamic conquest in 16 A.H/ 634 A.D excluding the period of Persian rule between 614-628 A.D. However, the Byzantine rule of Jerusalem may be divided into two periods. The first from 36 B.C until 395 B.C then after the

Aelia was founded in 135 A.D by Emperor Hadrian when he destroyed Jerusalem, burned the Temple and ordered that the Jews be excluded from residing in the area. He renamed it Aelia after the war of Bār Kūhba 132-135.

Indeed, Palestine has been continuously inhabited extending beyond 3000 B.C as all the archaeological studies indicate. This area is where many Arab tribes from the Arabian Peninsula migrated when they were forced to leave their homelands as a result of drought,¹ in addition to other people who came to this area from outside the Arab regions.²

Before the rise of Christianity, the region of Aelia was inhabited by several Arab tribes in addition to the Byzantines. Among the tribes who resided in Aelia were branches from Ghassān with their own homelands near Damascus.³ ‘Irfān Sadīd argues that the Ghassānīs formed the majority population in Palestine Second⁴ in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D, in addition to their being the first to reside in Palestine First. According to him, proof of this is the existence of towns to the north of Rāmallah which still retain their Ghāssanid names.⁵

Empire’s division into western and eastern states, Jerusalem was submissive to the eastern state until 634 A.D.

¹See ‘Umar , Fārūq fūzī and Husin, Muhsin Muhammad. *Al-Wasit fī Tārīkh Filastīn fī al-‘Asr al-Islāmī al-Wasīt* (Dār al-Shurūq, Rāmallah, Filastīn, 1994), Pp. 13-15. Zhiḥr al-Dīn, Pp. 15-32. See also: Msāliha, Mahmūd, Pp. 17-25.

²Some of those people were called *al-Pilist* from whom the name Palestine has been taken. They came from Crete, Greece and occupied Palestine at the end of the thirteenth century. See: Msāliha, p. 20.

³See: al-Mas’udī, ‘Alī Ibn al-Husān. *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma’ādīn al-Jawhar*, edited by Bariby di Mīnar (Pares, 1861), New edition, edited by Sharl Bila, (Beirut, 1970), Number 1084.

⁴During Byzantine era, Palestine was divided into three parts: the first part Palestine Prima (Filastīn al-Ulā) included the coastal area, Judea and Samaria, and its capital was Caesarea. The second sector Palestine Seconda (Filastīn al-Thānia) contain Galilee, and the western part of Peraed, its capital was transferred from Bayt Jān to Tiberius. The third sector Palestine Tertia (Filastīn al-Thālitha) which included areas of Edwm an Mu’āb. See: Farūq, ‘Umar, Pp. 13-14. Gil. *A history of Palestine*, Pp. 110-111. ‘Umar , Fārūq, Pp. Zifr al-Dīn, Pp. 19-20.

⁵Sadīd, ‘Irfān. *Byzantine and the ‘Arab in the sixth Century* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995), p.556. He mentions the town of Gophna near Rāmallah which may be attributed to the Ghasani tribe

Branches from the Kinda tribe resided in the three Palestinian administrative areas, in particular to the south west of the Jordan river, al-‘Arabāt valley, al-Jalīl, in addition to the Negev desert and the desert north of Sīnai.¹ Among other Arab tribes who resided in Aelia was the ‘Āmila tribe who lived by the west of the Dead Sea.² ‘Asqalān was inhabited by branches from Lakhm and Judhām and included branches from Kināna and other tribes.³

Lastly, there is some evidence mentioned that there were Arabs living within the walled part of Aelia and that they contributed in resisting the long Islamic siege of the enclosure. Sources mention the name of Abī al-Ju‘ayd who was involved in the battle of al-Yarmūk, as one of the local leaders in the walled part of Aelia (‘Adhīm min ‘Udhamā’ihim). He was the person who negotiated with Patriarch Sophronius and Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb on the conditions of the capitulation.⁴ Moreover, he was present when the Muslims took over the walled part of the region and advised the Christians not to rebel against the Muslims when some of them attempted to do so during prayer.⁵

because their kings were known by the name *Al Gophna*. The researcher would add the town of Dayr Chassāna which is also located near Ramallah. Indeed, the researcher argues that the area north of al-Ramla is located near to the centre of Jerusalem. In other words, as is seen from the maps shown in chapter one, this area is part of the Byzantine Aelia region. See the maps in chapter two, P. 52, 53, 55.

¹See: ‘Athāmina, *Filastīn, Fi Khamsat Qurūn*, Pp. 54-55.

²Ibid, p. 48

³Regarding the residents of Lakhm and Judham in Palestine before the conquest, see al-Hamadhānī, al-hasan Ibn Ahmad Ibn Abī Ya‘qūb. *Sifat Jazīrat al-‘Arab*, edited by David Millar (Laden, 2 nd. ed, 1968), Pp. 243-245. Ibn al-Jawzī, ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn ‘Alī. *Al-Muntazam fī Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, edited by Mohammad ‘Atā and Mustafā ‘Atā (Beirut, 1992), Vol. 2, p. 30. Al-Dūrī, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. *Al-‘Arab wal-Ard fī Sūriyya fī Sadr al-Islām*. Tuqān, Fawuaz Ahmad. *Al-Hā’ir Fī al-‘Imāra al-Umawiyya al-Islāmiyya*, al-Mutamar al-Dawlī li Tārīkh Bilād al-Shām (Jordan University, ‘Ammān, 1974), Pp.25-26. ‘Athāmina, *Filastīn, Fi Khamsat Qurūn*, Pp. 44-47.

⁴ Azdī, p. 254. Ibn A‘tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 227.

⁵Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 152-153. He reported that Abī al-Ju‘ayd proved to them that it was the Muslims who were truly the righteous mentioned in both the old and the New Testament (Torah and

In addition to the tribes mentioned above, there are many Arabs who resided in the Aelia region on a temporary or permanent basis, or resided frequently for several reasons, especially trading. From the few accounts which are found in different sources we know that there are some Hijāzi people especially from Makka who resided in the Aelia region and Palestine, generally. Many of them owned properties there.¹

It is important to note that the domains of the tribes were subject to change from one time to another in the light of the Bedouin habit of regularly moving from their abodes in the search for water and pasture land to feed their cattle.

Most of the Arabs of the Aelia region converted to Christianity after the efforts of Emperor Constantine who ruled between 288?-327 A.D. He patronised the religion throughout the empire, which led to it being made the official state religion.² Other sects (to be discussed below) did not amalgamate or combine with the Hellenist culture (the culture of the state), which was the culture of the majority of the non-Arabs in the region.³ The Arab tribes remained within their tribal system;⁴ additionally

Injil) as after the Christians displayed the valuables in their possession, on his advice, none of the Muslims laid a hand on them. See al-so Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 227.

¹See Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, p. 493.

²See Ziyāda, Nicola. *Filastīn min al-Iskandar Ilā al-Fatth al-'Araby al-Islāmī* (al-Maūsū'a al-Filastīniya, al-Mujald al-Thānī, al-Dirāsāt al-Tārikiyya), Pp. 182-185, 185-201.

³See: 'Athāmina, *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, Pp. 129-130.

⁴In the tribal structure administrative system, life was regulated according to a set of customs and norms which became well established. There is blood kinship between the members of each tribe who may also have allies from other tribes. Each tribe has a chief named *Sheikh*, who was the person in charge of running the affairs of the tribe. The *Sheikh* was elected by all the members of the tribe but his authority was symbolic and he did not enjoy an absolute or non-restricted authority. For more details about the Arab tribal system see: al-Galaqashandī. *Nihāyat Al-'Arab fī Ma'rifat Ansāb al-'Arab* (Cairo, 1959), p. 13. Ibn Qutayyba. *Uyūn al-Akhbār* (Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1925), Vol,1, p. 226. Ibn Khuldūn. *Muqadimat Ibn Kuldun* (Lajnat al-Bayān al-'Arabī, Cairo, 1957), Pp. 435-537. Al-Maymūnī. *Al-Tarā'if al-Abiyya* (Lajnat al-Ta'lif wal-Tarjama, Cairo, 1937), p. 3. Al-Alyūsī, M.S. *Bulūgh al-'Arab fī Ahwāl al-'Arab* (1896), Vol. 1, p. 18. Al-Duri, 'Abd al-'Aziz. *Al-Nuzum al-Islamiyya* Mtba'at Najib, Baghdad, 1950), Vol. 1, p. 7. 'Alī, Jawād. *Al-Mufasal fī Tarikh al-'Arab qabla al-Islam* (Dār al-'Ilm

they retained relations with their tribal branches in the Arabian peninsula, and the Yemen. Moreover, the Arabs remained bigoted or narrow-minded in support of their tribes and their lineage to Qays and Yemen even after most of them had converted to Islam and intermixed with the new tribes who migrated to the area after the conquests.¹

On the other hand, after Christianity had become the official religion of the Byzantine state, in addition to its propagation across the world, Aelia became one of the greatest and most important cities in the Empire; it is rather more important than one of the famous five Patriarchal cities of the Christian world; in addition to Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome. It was also the centre of pilgrimage for Christians the world over.² Owing to the significance of Jerusalem to Christians, it seems that many Christian sects resided in it which led to a sharp increase in the number of its population, particularly inside the walled part of the Aelia region.³

These included the Arab and non-Arab Christians who resided in the Aelia region who did not comprise one uniform society, but were divided into different sects and cultures. In addition to the Byzantine forces, there were the Greek Orthodox who were known as the *Milkānis* and from whom the Patriarchs of Jerusalem were

Lilmalāyyn, Beirut, 1971), Vol. 5, p. 587. Al-Tel, Othman. *Mafhūm al-'Jamā'a fi Sadr al-Islām* (Risalat Majistar, Jami'at al-Najah al-Wataniyya, Nāblus, Palestine, 1997), (unpublished), Pp. 21-30. 'Āqil, Nabīh. *Al-Asbāb al-Iqtisādiyy wa al-Ijtimā'iyya limu'aradhat Quraiyh al-da'wa Ilā al-Islām* (Majalat dirāsāt Tārīkiya, Jāmi'at Dimashq, 7 issue), Pp. 93-100. Al-'Alī, Salih. *Muhādarāt fi Tārīkh al-'Arab* (Matba'at al-Ma'arif, Baghdad, 2 nd. ed, 1959), Pp. 152-126. Al-'Alī, Salih. *Al-Tandhūmāt al-Ijtimā'iyya wa al-Iqtisādiyya fil-Basra fi al-Qarn al-Awwal al-Hijrī* (Dār al-Taly'a, Beirut, 2 nd. ed, n.d.), p. 150. Bashīr, Sulaymān. *Tawāzun al-Nagā'id: Muhādarāt fi Tārīkh al-Jāhiliyya wa al-Islām* (Jerusalem, 1978), Pp.52-53. Judī, Jamāl. *Al-Awdā' al-Iqtisādiyya wa al-Ijtimā'iyya lil-Mawālī fi Sadr al-Islām* (Dār al-Bashīr, 'Ammān, 1989), Pp. 25-26.

¹Athāmina, *Filastīn, Fi Khamsat Qurūn*, Pp. 226-230.

²See: Nicola Ziyada. *Filastīn min al-Iskander Ila al-Fath al-'Araby al-Islāmy*, p. 201, pp. 210-211.

³Ibid, Pp. 208-210.

appointed.¹ The people were a mixture of Greeks and Syrians with a few Arabs who belonged to the *Milkāni* rite. Each sect of those people had their own language and culture.²

Furthermore, there were many other sects who resided in Aelia, such as the Ahbāsh (Ethiopians), Maurines, Armenians, Copts and others.³ Most of these sects belonged to the *Milkāni* church but had their own churches; most of them spoke the Armenian language which is known today as Syriac.⁴ Moreover, there were many other Christian sects from all over the world who resided temporarily or permanently especially for religious purposes.⁵

The division into different sects with regard to language, culture, civilization, and social behaviour affected the religious life of the Christians in the Aelia region. This could be clearly seen after the rise of the problem over the nature of Christ among them; the disagreement about this issue founded two different sects among the population. The first believed in the unity of Christ (God and man). This sect, with its official church in Antioch, was known as the Western Church.

The second sect most of whom belonged to the Hellenic culture and to the Alexandrian church, believed that Christ had only God's nature. This nature was reflected in the father (God) and the son (Christ) who shared with the father his divine nature and his mother Mary (the mother of God) "Theotokos" because of the

¹See: Yusūf al-Shammās, al-Ab. *Khulasat Tārikh al-Kanysa al-Malakiya* (Sayda, 1949), Vol, Pp. 5-7. Jāsir, Shafīq. *TāriKh Al-Quds*, p. 58.

²It is important to note that the Muslim conquerors used translators when they negotiated with the people in Syria in general, and in Aelia in particular, when they dealt with non-Arabs. See Wāqidī, *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 145.

³See: Jāsir, Shafīq. *TāriKh Al-Quds*, Pp. 51-79.

⁴Al-Shammās, Vol, 1, p. 5. Jāsir, Shafīq. *TāriKh Al-Quds*, p.69.

⁵See: Nicola Ziyada. *Filastīn min al-Iskander Ila al-Fath al-'Araby al-Islāmy*, Pp. 208-210.

immortality of her son who would abide for ever.

The sect who believed in the unity of Christ was supported by the Byzantine state who won the struggle and succeeding in exiling those who believed in the Chalcedonian principle relating to the dual nature (God and man) of Christ; which is the most important edict after the failure of the ecumenical council which was held in Ephesus in the year 431 A.D to end that struggle. Indeed, the people who believed in the unity of Christ, in particular the local Arab population, suffered from religious violence as well as the non-Arab sects who shared their beliefs.

The attempts of some Palestine patriarchs, who disobeyed the decisions of the Chalcedonian Ecumenical Council to exile the Patriarch of Jerusalem who accepted this decision and wanted to apply it in the city, were faced by military action from the Byzantine state and this led to their exile from Palestine. Some of those patriarchs sought refuge in Iraq and established churches there owing to the favour that they were shown by the rulers of the Persian state in the light of the traditional conflict between the two states.¹

The local people, in reaction to the religious violence of the Byzantine policy had established independent churches in the form of what was known as the Jacobite church, attributed to its founder Jacob (Ya'qūb al-Barādhi'ī),² while there were some local people who followed the policy of the state whether convinced or unconvinced, or did so to protect themselves as a necessity.

Finally, in addition to the religious violence, the Arabs under the Byzantine rule were also growing out of political submissiveness. Sources report that the

¹Ibid, Pp. 208-210.

²Gil. *A History of Palestine*, Pp. 355-356.

Byzantines drew upon Arab tribes from Bahrā', the Kalb, the Sulaīh, the Tanūkh, the Lakham, the Judām, the Ghassān and other (Kanū Ydhribūn 'Alā al-'Arab al-Dhāhiya min Bahrā' wa Kalb, wa Sulaīh, wa Tanūkh, wa Lakham, wa Judhām, wa Ghassān al-Bu'ūth) to send against (to fight) their enemies.¹

In short, the Aelia region was a setting for traditional religious conflict between Christians and Christians firstly, and secondly, between the Christians and the Jews. The conflict between the states that ruled the area, especially the Byzantines, was started a long time before the rise of Christianity and continued, strongly, after it.

Indeed, the real end of the traditional conflict between the Christians and the Jews began with the arrival of the Muslim conqueror in Syria at the start of the year 13A.H/ 634 A.D and was completed with the arrival of the caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region and his granting of the famous Assurance of Safety (*amān*) to the people of Aelia. In other words, 'Umar's Assurance placed an end to the destruction, killing, and displacement that had characterised the Aelia region throughout history until then.

The Muslim forces arrived in the Aelia region in order to conquer it at a time that the population in Syria in general and in the Aelia region in particular was suffering from a factional division of different sects and cultures. It is true that the Byzantine state imposed its authority and control upon the people, but still religious struggle appeared from time to time and was almost always accompanied by violence.

Regarding the arrival of the Muslims in Syria and the issue of their treatment of the native population, it is important to distinguish between two periods and the relationships between two groups of the population. The first period was that of military operations between 13-16 A.H/ 634-376 A.D and the second was the period

¹Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X.1. Pp. 76.

after 16 A.H/ 634 A.D; in other words, the periods before and after the arrival of the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region and his granting the people of Aelia his Assurance of Safety (*amān*). The two groups were the Byzantines (*al-Rūm*) and the Arabs, the groups mentioned above, and the monks and the local population, especially those who were not involved in military activities or resistance against the conquerors.

It seems that the intense attachment that the Muslims showed with regard to the walled part of the Aelia region during the period of military operations is due to three main reasons. Firstly, the walled part of Aelia was not the only area that resisted after all of Palestine was taken, but rather all of the historical Syria (*al-Shām*). Secondly, there was the presence of a great number of Byzantine forces who sought refuge in the walled part after their defeat, especially in the battles of *Fahil* and *Ajnādīn* and later on *al-Yarmūk*. Indeed, these forces checked the movement of Muslim forces within the region.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the Muslims feared that the Byzantines would try their best to reinforce their forces and population in Aelia in the light of Jerusalem’s significance to them. Therefore, before the battle of *Ajnādīn*, Heracles directed his forces towards ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ, in order to prevent the Arabs from reaching Aelia as is reported by *al-Wāqidī* and *Ibn Kathīr*.¹

Moreover, the people of Aelia asked Heracles to provide them with reinforcements² which made him direct his forces to *al-Yarmūk*.³ The Muslim fear is

¹*Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya*, Vol. 7&8, S, 7, Pp. 54.

²*Azdī*, Pp. 151-152.

³*Ibn A‘tham*, Vol. 1&2, p. 152.

shown in the advice of ‘Ali Ibn Abī Ṭālib to the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb to accept the Muslim request for help and to go to Aelia to reinforce them. ‘Ali said to him that because Bayt al-Maqdis was the holiest place for the Byzantines and they performed pilgrimage to it, they would not delay in reinforcing Aelia’s population with their troops and oppose the Muslims and make their attempts to control it more complicated.¹

There is much evidence that shows that the Muslims distinguished between the Byzantine forces, the monks and civilians. Ibn A‘thām al-Kūfi states that one of the reasons that made Abū Bakr decide to direct the Muslims towards al-Shām (historical Syria), was to free it from the hands of the Byzantines because of their oppression over the people there.²

Other sources report that the Muslims replied to the Byzantine offers to grant them money and gifts if they returned to the peninsula with another offer that the Byzantines should leave Syria to them because it was their land which they inherited from their father Ibrāhīm (prophet Abraham). Moreover, many peace treaties that the Muslims concluded with the people of Syria show that, in several cases, one of their conditions is that the people must expel the Byzantines from these regions. This condition is found in the peace treaty of the people of Jordan³ and Aelia.⁴ ‘Abd al-Fattah el-‘Awaisī argues that:

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, p. 148.

²Ibn A‘tham. *Futūh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, Pp. 80-81.

³Al-Azdī, p.140. Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp 191-192. (The version of ‘Umar’s Assurance on the authority of Sayf Ibn ‘Umar).

⁴Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II, Pp. 191-192. (The version of ‘Umar’s Assurance on the authority of Sayf Ibn ‘Umar).

The common factor that prompted 'Umar Ibn al-khattab to put the Byzantines and robbers in the same category is that they were all thieves. The Byzantines had occupied and stolen the land and its resources, while robbers had stolen people's possessions.¹

Moreover, the Muslims, in general, usually exempted monks from paying the *Jizya* (tax), as sources confirm. These facts clearly illustrate that the Muslims used two different ways of dealing with the inhabitants of the Aelia region; they distinguished between the Byzantine forces (*al-Rūm*) and other groups, Arab or non-Arab from among the local or foreign population.

After the capitulation of the walled part of the Aelia region and the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in 16 A.H/ 637 A.D, and the granting of his famous Assurance to its people; in other words, after the total submission of the Aelia region to Muslim authority, it seems that the Muslim governors and caliphs did not interfere in the internal religious matters of the Christians. This was apparent in particular with regard to the appointment of Jerusalem's patriarch and the diocese of the churches, posts which formed a part of the Byzantine state apparatus prior to the conquest.

This may explain the problem of the appointment of the Patriarch of Jerusalem after the death of its patriarch Sophronius in 17 A.H/ 638 A.D. The patriarch chair in Islamic Jerusalem remained empty until 61 A.H/ 681 A.D. The Muslims made no attempt to appoint a new patriarch despite the importance of this position to them because it was the sole line of communication between the Christians and the Islamic state or the local Muslim administration in the region. On the other hand, the

¹El-'Awaisī. *Umar's Assurance*, p. 65.

Byzantine state could not impose its authority upon its Christian opponents as it did prior to the loss of its control of the area. Furthermore, Karen Armstrong argues that:

Muslims made no attempt to build mosques in the Christian parts of Jerusalem and showed no desire to create facts on the ground there until after the Crusades, which permanently damaged relations between the three religions of Abraham in Jerusalem. But until the Crusades, Jerusalem remained a predominantly Christian city and Muslims remained in the minority.¹

The researcher argues that the reason behind the vacancy of the patriarch chair in Jerusalem is the disagreement between the different Christian sects about the principles of the new patriarch. This disagreement was about whether he would be among those who believed in the Chalcedonian principle relating to the dual nature of Christ (God and man) or among those who believed in one nature. This problem of the patriarch chair in Islamic Jerusalem led some patriarchs to attempt to control it as the patriarch of Yāfa (Jāffa) did before the great patriarch deposed him and put an end to his ambition.² This disagreement between the local population and the Byzantine state continued until 61 A.H/ 681 A.D when control was returned to the authority of the state as it had been before the Muslim conquest.³

Despite the Muslims' non-interference in the Christians' internal religious matters, it is unexpected that the Muslims would remain completely distant from these matters. Some sources report that in some cases the Muslims tried to forcefully help

¹Karen Armstrong. *Sacred Space*, Pp. 14-15.

²See: Al-Shammās, Vol. 1, p. 8.

³See: 'Athāmina. *Filasīn, Fi Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 144.

the different Christian sects to resolve their differences through playing the role of arbitrator and neutral mediator between them in Islamic Jerusalem. In the events of the year 21 A.H/ 642 A.D al-Ṭabarī reported on the authority of Sayf Ibn ‘Umar on the authority of Kālid Ibn Mi‘dān that the Ya‘āqība and the Marinates went from Islamic Jerusalem to Mu‘āwiyya Ibn Abī Sufyān in Damascus asking his help to mediate between them in some religious disagreement.

The Muslims’ policy of non-interference in the Christians’ internal religious matters in the Aelia region in the early Islamic period, is also demonstrated by the continuation of the Christians’ pilgrimage to Bayt al-Maqdis, in addition to the continuation of building and restoring churches in the area.¹ The difficulties that faced the Christian pilgrims to Islamic Jerusalem before the capitulation of the walled part of the Aelia region may be best understood through the military operations in the region. In war time, it is normal that people usually stop visiting such places in order not to endanger themselves even if they want to perform pilgrimage. Reports confirmed that pilgrims continued to reach Bayt al-Maqdis and Bethlehem.² The Copts continued, in keeping with their religious tradition, to attend the yearly Easter celebrations in Jerusalem.³

A clear example of this is that pilgrimage to Islamic Jerusalem continued especially from the western world, as Bishop Arculf who stayed and wrote about the

¹See Kaegi, Pp. 222-223. Schick, Robert. *The Faith of the Christians in Palestine during the Byzantine-Umayyad, transition, 600-750*, the Forth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām During the Umayyad Period. (2-7 Rabī’ 1 1408 A.H/ 24-29 October. English Section, Vol. 11, Edited by Muhammad ‘Adnān Bakhīt and Robert Schick (‘Ammān, 1989), Pp. 37-48.

²See *Palestine Pilgrim’s Texts Society*, (New York, 1971), Vol,111, Pp. 4-5. Wilkinson, Jone. *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (1971), Pp. 2-8, 95.

³See Kisrū, Nāsir. *Sifir Nāma: Rihlat Nāsir Kisrū*, translated by Yahyā al-Khshāb (Cairo, 1942), Vol. 2, p. 36. Al-Maqryzī, Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad Ibn ‘Alī. *Iti’ādh al-Hunafā’ bi Akhbā ral-A’īma al-Fatīmiyyin al-Khulfā’*, edited by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Sha’yyāl (Cairo, 2 nd. ed, 1996), Vol, 2. p. 143-144.

walled city in an early period after the Muslim conquest reported.¹ Lastly, pilgrimage continued to Islamic Jerusalem in the early Islamic period as has been confirmed by many modern scholars who claim that it was not cut off during any period.²

The researcher argues that the inability of the Byzantine state to reconcile the contradictions among the people of Aelia in particular over its decision in appointing a patriarch in the city, in addition to the Muslim policy of non-interference in this matter, led to a kind of independence of each Christian sect in the city, so that its leaders had great concessions especially with regard to judgment.³

The granting of religious independence to each Christian sect in Islamic Jerusalem is seen clearly in most versions of 'Umar's Assurance. The Assurance granted the people of Aelia safety for themselves, their properties, churches and crosses. The plural form with regard to the churches and crosses rather than singular form means the followers of these different churches because when we say the church we mean its followers as a group and not the number of the churches.

In the light of the above analysis, the researcher argues that the first Islamic conquest of Islamic Jerusalem liberated the Christians, in particular the local population of Aelia region, from the religious oppression of the Byzantine occupiers. This may be seen clearly from the Muslim internal policy towards the Christians in the Aelia region when they did not interfere in their internal religious matters, in addition to the independence of each religious sect under Islamic rule.

¹See his described the earlier mosque in Jerusalem in Creswell, p. 34.

²See: *Palestine Pilgrim's* Vol. 111, Pp. 4-5. J. Wilkinson. *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, Pp. 2-8, 95. Kaegi, Pp. 222-223. Schick, Pp. 37-48.

7.1.2. The Attitude of the Christians towards the

Islamic conquest

Some modern scholars attempt to find differences in the attitudes of the Christian sects in Syria towards the Muslim conquest, in order to claim that the attitude of the Arabs in addition to other groups is greatly different from the Byzantine attitude. However, the researcher argues that there was a great unity among all the Syrian groups despite their disagreement with regard to their religious matters, especially about the nature of Christ. All the groups tried their best to resist the conquest. It is important to distinguish between the attitudes of the different Syrian groups in two different periods: firstly the period of military operations in Syria between 13-16 A.H/ 634-637 A.D, and secondly, the period after the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab in Aelia region and the granting of his famous Assurance to its people.

The root of the Byzantine attitude towards Islam in general and the conquests in particular can be understood from an earlier period related to the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Firstly, in 628 A.D. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sent a message to Emperor Heracles, who was in Jerusalem at that time, calling him to embrace Islam. Al-Bukhārī in his Sahīh and Ibn Sa'd, on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 A.H/ 667A.D) mentioned this story which communicates that Heracles invited all the heads of the Byzantines to assemble in his palace and suggested following Muhammad (peace be upon him) or paying him the

³See: Al-Shammās, Vol. 1, p. 17.

Jizya (tax) or giving him southern and eastern Syria, but they refused all three alternatives, which made him leave for Constantinople saying “farewell, land of (southern) Syria”.¹ Secondly, the battle of Mu’ta in 8 A.H when the first military clash between both sides took place in Syria,² and then the great battles when the Muslims arrived in Syria, at the time of the caliph Abū Bakr in 13 A.H, such as *Fahil* and *Ajnādīn*, and then later *al-Yarmūk*.³

The Byzantine state paid great attention to protecting the Aelia region. It has been mentioned earlier that Heracles had directed his forces from Hims towards ‘Amr Ibn al-‘As to prevent the Arabs from reaching Palestine, and in particular the Aelia region;⁴ thus the *Ajnādīn* battle occurred. He did the same thing on another occasion when he directed his forces to *al-Yarmūk* in a final desperate attempt to help and protect Byzantine Aelia.

On the other hand, with regard to attitudes towards the Arabs, some modern scholars, among them Father (al-Ab), Ya’qūb al-Shammās and Phillip Ḥittī argue that Arab Christians welcomed the Muslim conquest of Syria in the light of their religious and political disagreement with the Byzantine state, especially with regard to the nature of Christ. Father (al-Ab), Ya’qūb al-Shammās reported that the Muslims did not interfere in Christian religious matters and the bickering over the independence of each of the sects. He added that the Muslim caliphs favoured the Ya’qūbis more than

¹See Bukhārī, Muhammad Ibn Ismā‘īl. *Sahih al-Bukhārī* Arabic-English, edited and translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khān (Dār al-‘Arabiya, Beirut, 4 th, ed, 1985), Vol. 1, Pp. 7-14. Ibn Sa’d, Vol, 1, p. 259.

²For more details about this battle see Waqidi, *Maghāsī*, Vol. 11, P. 760-770. Ibn Sa’d, Vol, 2, p. 1291-131. Ibn Hishām, Pp. 532-535. Tabari. *Tarikh*, Vol. X. 111, Pp. 153-156.

³For the Byzantine attempts to protect Syria see Faīsal, Shukrī. *Harakat al-Fath al-Islāmī fī al-Qarn al-Āwal* (Beirut, 1975), pp. 48-54.

⁴Wāqidī. *Futūh*, S, 1, p. 10. Ibn Kathir, *Bidayah*, Vol. 7&8, S,7, p. 54.

the Milkānis:

The conqueror, excluding the payment of the *Jizya* (tax), did not intrude upon anything; they left every thing as before. The new matter which was for those who loved heretics was that each sect was given independence with great judgment concessions to its religious. It is natural that the Ya'qūbis were closer to the caliphs than the Milkānis because they were too far from what may remain of the Roman state. This liberality continued until the seven century.¹

Moreover, some modern Arab Christian scholars, among them Phillip Ḥittī, who seems to have quoted from Christian sources, argues that many Christian writers showed their pleasure with the policy that the Muslims employed towards them. Ḥittī reported that one of the Eastern Church patriarchs wrote in a letter saying:

As you know, the Arabs whom God did grant the authority upon the world in this time lived among us. They did not take up antagonistic attitudes towards Christianity. But contrarily, they eulogize our religion, honour the priests and the saints; they lavish payments upon the churches for rituals and practices.²

Phillip Ḥittī argues that the Syrians, with regard to their languages and sects, were closer to Arab Muslims than to the Byzantines, so they welcomed the Muslim conquest of Syria because of their political and religion disagreement with the Byzantines. The Christians hoped that they would have better treatment from the conquerors. In addition, Ḥittī claims that the Arab Christians in Syria looked upon

¹See: Al-shammās, Vol. 1, p. 17.

²Philip Ḥittī. *Tārīkh al-Arab*, translated by Muhammad Mabruk Nafi' (Beirut, 1957), Vol. 2, p.143.

Islam as a Christian sect because of their great hatred for the Byzantines which made them welcome this change.¹

This argument agrees with Rinsman's view; he also seems to have quoted Christian sources when he reported that the Antioch patriarch who was Jacobean (Ya'qūbī) was very pleased with this change.² Furthermore, he quoted an account attributed to unknown Nestorian historians who say that:

The hearts of the Christians were pleased for the Arab emporium. May God increase this emporium and make it eternal.³

It seems to the researcher that there is a great exaggeration of such an argument. These accounts deal with the Muslim policy towards the conquered people (the Christians) after the conquest rather than the attitudes of those people towards the conquest during military operations. In other words, these accounts were not related to the period of the conquest between 13-16 A.H/ 634-637 A.D but to the period after the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab in the Aelia region, while it is a fact that there is a major difference between both periods (before or during and after the conquest).

Furthermore, such arguments contrast with several early Islamic sources which report that great numbers among the Arab Bedouin (Al-'Arab al-Ariba) joined the Byzantine forces during the battle of Mu'ta in 8 A.H,⁴ then, secondly, during the period of the conquest, in particular the tribes from Lakham, Judhām, Balqīn, Bāly

¹Ibid, p. 143.

²Steven, Rinsma. *Tārīkh al-Hurūb al-Salybiyya*, translator by al-Sayd al-Bāz al-'Urany (Beirut, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 38.

³Ibid, p. 39.

⁴Wāqidī, *Maghāsī*, Vol. 11, p. 760. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 2, p. 129. Ibn Hishām, Pp. 532-533. Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. X. 111, Pp. 153-154.

and Ghassān and others.¹ This was despite their relation with their tribal branches, in particular the Ghassānī and the Ansār (Aws and Khazraj) who belonged to the same tribe and came from a common homeland in Yemen, and were in touch before Islam.² They called each others cousins during the war.³

However, it seems that some of the Arab tribes who joined the Muslims embraced Islam for several reasons, which is beyond the scope of this research, as may be understood from al-Balādhurī and al-Ya‘qūbī when those tribes asked ‘Umar to include them in the Register (diwān), while he wanted to exclude them.⁴ Al-Tabari on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq, reports a good example, he states that some Arab Christians from the Lakham and Judhām tribes joined the Muslims when they went to confront the Byzantines, but they fled and escaped to the neighbouring villages when they saw the severity of the fighting, and let the Muslims down.⁵

Lastly, there are two important examples that show the Syrian Arab attitudes towards the Muslims. Firstly, when Jabala Ibn al-Ayham al-Ghassānī, the leader of Ghassān, left Syria with a great number of his tribe for the Byzantine territories. He refused to pay the *Jizya* (tax) and to live under Muslim rule.⁶ Secondly, the Arab Christians of Banu Thaghliq also refused to pay *Jizya* and started to leave Syria for the Byzantine territories before the caliph ‘Umar accepted to take it from them under the

¹See Waqidi, *Futūh*, S, 1, Pp. Tābarī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p. 76. Vol. 11, p. 132.

²See: *Dīwān Hasān Ibn Thābit: Sharh Dīwān Hasān Ibn Thābit al-Ansārī, Dabt wa Tashīh ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Barqūdī* (Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Tijāriya, 1920), p. 414.

³See; Waqidi, *Futuh*, Vol. 1&2, S. 1, pp. 101-103.

⁴See: Abī ‘Ubayd, p. 263.

⁵Tabari. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. 11. p. 133.

⁶Ya‘qubī. *Tarikh*, Vol. 2, p. 147.

name of Sadaqa.¹ Interestingly, one of the conditions of ‘Umar’s Assurance allowed those who wished, of the inhabitants of the Aelia region, to leave with the Byzantines if they did not want to stay and pay the *Jizya*. This important condition reads:

Those people of Aelia who want to leave with the Byzantines, take their property, and abandon their churches and their crosses, will be safe until they reach their place of safety.²

In the light of the above analysis, it seems that there is an agreement between the attitudes of the Arabs and the Byzantines towards the Islamic conquest. However, it seems that some changes began to arise among the Arabs when they knew that the conquest had become a fact and there was no hope of any resistance. It seems that they began accepting Islamic rule as a fact and believing that a new era in the history of the area had begun. Al-Azdī on the authority of Jurjā (a person who embraced Islam during the conquests) gives a significant description of the Arab Christians’ attitude in Syria towards the Muslim conquerors after the great victories of the Muslims in Syria. He states that:

One kind (subjects) was of the religion of the Arabs and was with them; another kind was serious Christians, and was with us; one kind was less serious Christians who said: we don’t want to fight against people of our religion and don’t want to help the aliens (*al-‘Ajam*) against our people either (*qaūm*).³

¹Balādhurī. *Futuh*, Pp. 181-183. Abū Yūsuf, Pp. 240-244, 250.

²Tabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X. II. pp. 191-192.

³Azdī, Pp. 68-169. See also Ibn Hibaysh. *Kitāb Dhikr al-Khazawāt* (Makhtūtāt Leaden) MS.OR 343, page 75B

In short, the researcher argues that all the population in Syria, in general, opposed the Muslim conquest and tried their best to resist it despite their disagreement with regard to their religious matters, especially about the nature of Christ. The Arabs of Syria had joined the Byzantine armies in all battles in the area. However, the Arab tribes in Syria generally begin to change their attitude towards the Muslims after the Byzantines were defeated, in particular in the battle of al-Yarmūk. They begin to look to the new era, i.e. Islamic rule, as a fact. Furthermore, a large number of Arab tribes embraced Islam a short time after the conquests.

7.2. The Jews

It is clear that there had been no Jews residing in the Aelia region for a very long time before the first Islamic conquest; since the Byzantines had prevented them from entering or residing in this area in 132 A.D. The important questions that arise here are; did ‘Umar’s Assurance exclude the Jews from residing in the Aelia region as is reported in al-Tābarī’s version (on the authority of Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamimī)? When did the Jews begin residing in Aelia (after the conquest)? And what was Muslim policy towards the Jews residing in the Aelia region?

The problem of excluding the Jews from residing in Aelia has been the subject of many studies, in particular, an important article of ‘Abd al-Fattah el-‘Awaisī and some other scholars, in particular the Israelis D. Goiten, H. Busse, Moshe Gil whom researched the topic in their studies of Islamic history and the history of Palestine in general.

The researcher, in this section, aims to examine Muslim policy towards the Jews residing in Aelia in the light of ‘Umar’s Assurance. Additionally, the relation

between both will be discussed.

Daniel Sahas claims that the first Muslim conquest led to the:

Emergence of an opportunity for the Christians of Jerusalem to contain the Jews, with the help of the Muslim Arabs, through the concessions granted to them in Umar's Assurance.¹

In contrast 'Abd al-Fattah El-'Awasī totally rejected his claims, and argues:

The question that arises here is: what grounds would the Christians of Jerusalem have for containing the Jews, when they themselves had forbidden them residence in the City for several centuries and expelled them from it? If this assertion were true, why did the Patriarch Sophronius ask Umar Ibn al-Khattab to renew Hadrian's law and forbid the Jew residence in the City? His request was rejected by Umar Ibn al-khattab. The concessions that the conquering Muslims granted the inhabitants of the City were not requested by the Christians of Jerusalem, but were a gift from the Caliph of the Muslims to the people of the City, based on the principles laid down by Islam for dealing with non-Muslims, particularly the People of the book. If there had been Jews living in the City at the time of the conquest, they would have been granted the same

concessions as the Christians, which may be summarised as giving them safety for themselves, their property, synagogues, and religion in exchange for paying the tax. Sahas made his claim closely resembles the Orthodox Patriarchate's text of Umar's Assurance. The researcher has proved that this was fabricated or concocted to serve the political and religious of the Greek Orthodox sect in Jerusalem.¹

'Abd al-Fattah el-'Awaisi also rejected the idea that Caliph 'Umar excluded the Jews from residing in Aelia. He states:

As for additions and conditions attributed to Umar Ibn al-Khattab, they are the product of later historical periods, resulting from socio-political circumstances that differed from the time of the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem.²

The researcher argues that there is no doubt about the Jews residing in the Aelia region after the first Islamic conquest. However, but the difficulty is in following Muslim policy towards this issue in addition to knowing the exact time of its development. Early Islamic sources do not provide any details with regard to any Jews living in the Aelia region for the remainder of the rule of the Umayyad state (41-132 A.H / 661-750 A.D), and probably a long time after.

However, some later sources reported a few accounts of a number of Jews who

¹Daniel J. Sahas, p. 54.

¹ El-'Awaisi. *Umar's Assurance*, Pp. 77-78.

lived in the Aelia region for the remainder of the period mentioned above. Ibn al-Murajjā (d 442 A.H/1050 A.D), who is the first source, reported that there were Jews in Aelia during the rule of the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwān who ruled between 66-86 A.H/686-705 A.D. He reported that there were Jews among the servants of the Haram (*al-Aqsā*) who were not subject to the *Jizya* (tax). He added that the number of these people was ten men, but their families increased and the number rose to twenty.¹ However, al-Maqdisī (d. 390 A.H/ 1000 A.D) in *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma‘rifat al-Aqālīm* reported that in his time there were many Christians, and these behaved distastefully in public places and that Christians and Jews were predominant in Jerusalem.²

With regard to non-Islamic sources, Moshe Gil, who based his argument on the Jewish manuscript Cairo Geniza, which dates from the eleventh century A.D³ and a few other accounts, claims that:

‘Umar’s guiding line appears to have been to adopt the most decent attitude possible towards the local population and enable it to continue to pursue its customary mode of life and earn its living in its own fashion from then on, also to nourish the Arab tribes.⁴

Moreover, according to his claim, the Jews’ request to ‘Umar to settle in Jerusalem was granted.⁵ A letter by Solomon Ibn Broham al-Qara’i who lived in the

¹El-‘Awaisī. *Umar’s Assurance*, Pp. 76-77.

²Al-Maqdisī. *The Best*, p. 152.

³See: Moshe, Gil. *The Jewish Quarters of Jerusalem*, Pp. 261-278. Ibid, *A History of Palestine: 634-1099* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. viii & xiv.

⁴Gil, *A History of Palestine*, p. 73.

⁵Gil, *A History of Palestine*. p. 73. This manuscript, which dated from the eleventh century A.D, claims that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab played the role of arbitrator or forceful mediator between the Christians and

first half of the tenth century A.D. in Islamic Jerusalem, states that the Jews were allowed to enter and reside in the city from “the beginning of Ismā’il’s dominion”, meaning from the first Muslim conquest of Aelia.¹ Jewish sources also claim that the Jews were allowed to pray in Islamic Jerusalem after the Muslim conquest.²

Much prior to the date of the Jewish manuscript Cairo Geniza, the traveller Bishop Arculf, who visited Jerusalem as a pilgrim in 50 A.H/670 A.D. during the caliphate of Mu’āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān, who ruled between 41-60 A.H/661-680A.D, recounts that he found two groups of Jews in Jerusalem: the first had converted to Christianity and the second remained Jewish.³

Moreover, Micheil Asif claims that small groups of Jews were already living in Jerusalem and that they increased with time. By the end of the first century A.H, according to his claims, there was a large Jewish community in Jerusalem divided into two groups, each with their own synagogues and schools.⁴

The researcher argues that the most important reason behind the early and later

the Jews in Jerusalem. According to this document, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb invited the Patriarch Sophronius and representatives of the Jews to a meeting he attended in person, so as to resolve the issue of Jews residing in Jerusalem. After a long and contentious debate about the number of Jewish families who would be allowed to reside in Jerusalem, ranging from seventy on Sophronius’ side to two hundred on the Jews’ side, ‘Umar decided to allow seventy Jewish families from Tiberius to settle in the south of the City. See the manuscript in Israel Ben Zeev (Abu Zuaib), *Ka’b al-Ahbār: Jews and Judaism in the Islamic Tradition*, prepared for publication by Mahmud ‘Abbāsī, (Jerusalem, 1976), p.39. Fred McGraw Donner quotes some accounts which say that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab negotiated sympathetically over Jewish interests. Other accounts quoted by Donner say that Sophronius imposed a condition on ‘Umar that Jews should not live with them in the City. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 71.

¹Neubauer, *Ausader Peteburger Bibliothek*, 109. Vol. 11, p. 12 cited in Israel Ben Zeev (Abu Zuaib), *Ka’b al-Ahbār*, p.40.

²See: Mann, J. *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs* (Oxford, 1969), Pp.43-47 Muir. *Annals of the Early Califate*, p. 212 cited in el-‘Awaisī. *Umar’s Assurance*, p.59. Dubnow, *Geschichte des Judischen Volkes*, vol. 111, p.410 cited in Israel Ben Zeev (Abu Zuaib), *Ka’b al-Ahbār*, Pp. 37-38. See also Gil, *A History of Palestine*, p.71.

³Arculf, *Eines Pilgers Reise mach dem Heiligen Land um 670 aus dem Lateinischen ubersetze und erklart von paul mickley*. (Leipzig, 1971), Pp. 29-31 cited by Israel Ben Zeev (Abu Zuaib), *Ka’b al-Ahbār*, p.38.

⁴Israel Ben Zeev (Abu Zuaib), *Ka’b al-Ahbār*, p. 40.

Islamic sources neglect in mentioning the Jews in the Aelia region is their paucity of numbers, and their insignificant role during the event of the conquest and for a very long time after. The sharp decrease in the number of Jews in Palestine took place in the light of their traditional conflict with the Byzantines after the rise of Christianity.

The Babylonians and Assyrians, in 587 B.C. during the era of Bukhtunsur or Nebuchadnezzar, attacked Palestine. They destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple, enslaved the Jews and exiled them to Iraq in what is known as the Bābylonian enslavement.¹ Nebuchadnezzar took the Jews to 'Irāq in order to prevent them from rebelling against him a second time because he had fought a fierce battle against them in 597 BC. The Jews were only able to return from Iraq in 539 BC when the Persian Emperor Qūrash who took control of the region, allowed them to do so.²

In the same region, in 167 B.C. the Jews rebelled once more against the Greeks in what was known as the Macābi Revolution. The same story repeated itself when Pompei reached Jerusalem in 63 B.C. He destroyed the walls of the city and killed a large numbers of the Jews there.³ Furthermore, the Byzantine Emperor, Titus attacked the Jews in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when they tried to rebel against the Byzantines who had taken control of the region. He also destroyed the city and burned the Temple.⁴

This resulted in the migration of large numbers of the Jews of Palestine, to the

¹See Al-Mas'ūdī, Abī al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn al-Ḥusaiyyin. *Murūj al-Dhhaab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar* (Dār al-Andalūs, Beirut). V.2. p. Tābarī. *Tārīkh*. V. P. E. Mendenhall, Georice. *Jerusalem from 1000-63 BC, in Kāmīl al-'Asalī. Jerusalem in History* (2 nd. ed, 1989), Pp. 63-66. Ibn al-Murajjā, Pp. 26-37. Peters, Pp. 30-31.

²Georgi, Pp. 66-71. Pp. Zhifr al-Dīn, p. 88. Peters, Pp. 107-124.

³Wilkinson. *Jerusalem Under*, Pp. 83-84.

⁴Wilkinson. *Jerusalem Under*, p. 86. Zhifr al-Dīn, Pp. 89-90. See also Al-Khatīb, Muhammad 'Abd al-Hamīd, p.32.

extent that one theory, which studied the origin of the 'Arab Peninsula Jews, proclaimed that they arrived there after the destruction of the Temple at the hands of the Emperor Titus in 70 A.D.¹ Finally, in 135 A.D. the Byzantine Emperor Hadrian destroyed the city and burned the Temple once more, issuing his famous decree on the basis of which the Jews were prevented from residing in the region, and gave it the new name of Aelia. Since this time Aelia extended its boundaries and become a well-known area, at least to the local Byzantine administration, in order to apply Emperor Hadrian's decree and prevent the Jews from entering and residing in the region.

Propagation of Christianity in the area did not put an end to the traditional conflict between the Byzantines and the Jews. In the year 311 AD Emperor Constantine renewed Emperor Hadrian's decree, while some Emperors who had ruled before him, i.e. Emperor Marcus Aurelius who ruled 200 years after Hadrian, allowed the Jews to enter Aelia in order to pray.² The struggle continued between both sides when the Jews joined the Persians who entered Palestine in 614 A.D. and destroyed most of Aelia's churches.³ Therefore, Emperor Heracles renewed, for the second time, Hadrian's decree and issued a decree in which he permitted the killing of the Jews wherever they were found.⁴

The few non-historical reports mentioned above with regard to the role of the Jews' -not only at the time of the conquest of Syria but also at the time of 'Umar' Ibn al-Khattāb's arrival in the walled part of the Aelia region and his granting of the

¹See Mahran, Muḥammad Baiyyūmī. *Dirasāt fi Tārīkh al-Sharq al-Adnā al-Qadīm 11: Tarikh al-' Arab al-Qadīm* (Dār al-Ma'rifa al-Jami'iya, al-Exandriya, Miṣr, 1988), Pp. 437-455.

²Zhif al-Dīn, p. 93.

³See Wilkinson. *Jerusalem Under*, p.102. Yonah, p.266. Julian Raby, Pp. 3-5. Walter, E. Kaegi. *Byzantium and The Early Islamic Conquests*. (Cambridge University Press), 1992), p. 177.

⁴See: Zhif al-Dīn, Pp. 132-133.

Assurance of Safety (*amān*) to its people -makes the researcher argue that there was no discussion regarding the issue of the Jewish-Christian conflict has taken place during 'Umar's visit. The researcher bases this argument on the fact that the Jews were a very small minority, totally submissive to the local administration in the regions in which they resided in Syria in general, and in Palestine in particular.

Secondly, there had been no Jews living in the Aelia region for more than five hundred year before the Muslim conquest. Al-Balādhurī, on the authority of Hishām Ibn 'Ammār, reported an important account which shows clearly the situation of the Jews at the time of the Muslim arrival in Syria. He states:

Hishām (Ibn 'Ammār) said that he heard from our Sheikhs who told that the Jews were to the Christians as Dhimi paying Kharāj to them, and therefore, they entered into a peace treaty with them.¹

By virtue of the small number of Jews in Syria in general, and in Palestine in particular, and their insignificance, as also reflected in the events of the Islamic conquest, the researcher found only four reports relating to the period between 13-17 A.H/ 634-678 A.D mentioning Jews. Al-Tabari states that:

According to Salim: When 'Umar entered Syria, a Jew from Damascus met him and said: peace be upon you, faruq! You are the master of Jerusalem. By God, you will not return before God conquers Jerusalem.²

The Jew witnessed the conclusion of the peace treaty.

'Umar asked him about the false messiah. The Jew said:

¹Balādhurī. *Futūh*, p.131. Ibn 'abd al-Ḥakam, p.148. Ibn Ja'far, Qudāma. *Al-Kharāj wa Ṣinā't al-Kitāba*, edited by al-Zubaydī, Muhammad (Baqhdād 1981), p. 295.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. X, II, p.189.

He is from the sons of Benjamin. By God, you Arabs will kill him ten odd cubits from the gate of Lydda¹

Al-Balādhurī reported that it was a Jew who revealed to the Muslims the secret entrance into Caesarea, which enabled them to end the long and tedious siege. He states on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Sa'd on the authority of al-Wāqidī that:

When Mu'awiyah at last took it (Kaisariyah) by storm, he found in it 700,000 (sic!) soldiers with fixed stipends, 30,000 Samaritans and 20,000 Jews. He found in the city 300 markets, all in good shape. It was guarded every night by 100,000 men stationed on its walls. The city was reduced in the following way:- A Jew named Yusuf came to the Muslims at night and pointed out to them a route through a tunnel, the water in which would reach a man's waist; in consideration for which information, safety was guaranteed for him and his relatives.²

Lastly, when the Muslims returned the tax which they had levied on the inhabitants of Hims, the Jews distinguished themselves by promising to prevent the Byzantine forces re-establishing their rule over the city. The inhabitants of Hims (Christians and Jews) said:

Your protection and sense of Justice are preferable to injustice and violence; therefore we shall stand together with your leader and protect the town from Heraclius' armies. The Jews of Hims even swore on the Torah that they would not permit Heraclius' governor to enter

¹Ibid, p. 190.

²Baladhuri. *Futūh*, p. 147. *The Origins*, p. 217.

Hims, and even locked the gates of the city, placing a guard at the gates. This was how the Christians and the Jews behaved in the cities which had earlier submitted to the Muslims.¹

The researcher has rejected the accounts of al-Tabarī because of ‘Umar’s coming to the Aelia region first, then after it was conquered, leaving with the Muslims for al-Jābiya. It is clear that the sources, and the Syrian narrators in particular, have incorrectly reported the reasons for the different visits of ‘Umar to Syria and the tasks which he carried out on each visit.

On the other hand, the researcher argues that without a doubt Ka‘b al-Ahbār did not play any role in this event nor did he pay any significant attention to Jerusalem as has been discussed. In addition to all of that, all the accounts which reported that ‘Umar had shown interest in the location of David’s temple in Aelia and that he prayed there and built a mosque (*Al-Aqsā*) in its place are non-historical accounts founded under conditions which greatly differed from those at the time of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia as we shall see later.

On the one hand, this treachery is not mentioned elsewhere in early Islamic sources, so it could be copied from Arabic historical writing (Noth 150) rather than being a report of a real historical event. On the other hand, it is not expected that the walled part of Kaisariyah could hold 20,000 Jews in addition to 700,000 Byzantines, 30,000 Samaritans and 100,000 guards. Moreover, it is well-known that Emperor Heraclius in 629 A.D. re-issued a decree which permitted the killing of Jews wherever they were, which makes it hard if not impossible to believe that the Byzantines would

¹Baladhuri. *Futūh*, p. 137.

allow such a large Jews of number to live in one city.¹

Therefore, according to their small numbers in the area, it seems that the Jews return to Aelia after the conquest was very slow and there is no evidence that they had faced any kind of challenge or objection from the Muslims upon return. According to the traveller Micheil Asaf, Benjamin al-Tutayli found one thousand and thirteen Jewish families living in Palestine when he visited it. Among those families were four men only who lived in Jerusalem and twelve in Bethlehem while the Jewish traveller Petachji did not find more than a single Jew living in Jerusalem.²

If the early Islamic sources did not provide any evidence about when the Jews began to resettle in Jerusalem after the conquest, and if we accept the reports of Bishop Arculf that he found two groups of Jews in Jerusalem in the time of Mu'āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān, this will place in front of us two possibilities; both of them lead to the same results with regard to the prohibition of Jews from residing in Aelia, as this passage reported in al-Tabarī's version on the authority of Sayf Ibn 'Umar indicated.

This exclusion was attributed to 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in later historical periods as 'Abd al-Fattah El-'Awaisī indicated.³ Secondly, the Muslim rulers after 'Umar did not pay attention to applying this condition; if we accept it as a historical fact. In other words, this exclusion did not become a law in Islam, which had to be followed literally or alternatively, broken.

It seems that the unapplied condition of excluding the Jews from residing (if it is true) in the Aelia region may be understood from two axiomatic angles. Firstly, 'Umar stipulation was not a law in Islam to be followed literally by the Muslims nor

¹See: *Zhifir al-Dīn*, Pp. 132-133.

²Asaf, p. 67.

³El-'Awaisī. *Umar's Assurance*, Pp. 76-77.

did they consider its valuation if they did not follow it. Then, secondly, it seems that great demographic changes took place among Jerusalem's inhabitants after the conquest, after being a purely Christian area, regardless of which sect was in the majority or the minority.

The researcher argues that it seems certain that the Jews were treated with favour by the Muslims; they were not only permitted to reside in Islamic Jerusalem, but also to own properties there. Some scholars claim that the Jews bought a piece of land on the Mount of Olives in the Aelia region and built a synagogue on it.¹ Moreover, the Jews were also permitted to move their religious council legislative body (al-Sanhedrin) from Tiberius to Islamic Jerusalem at the start of the tenth century;² in addition Mann claims that the Jewish Qarain sect were treated with greater favour by the Muslim rulers than the Orthodox sect of the Rabbis.³

In the light of the small number and fairly insignificant history of Palestinian Jewry during the Muslim conquest, it seems surprising that some researchers, in particular Patrica Crone and Michael Cook, in addition to Steven Ieder, claim that the Jews welcomed and assisted the Muslim armies and joined them, especially during the siege of Aelia.⁴ In other words, there was Muslim-Jewish collaboration during the conquest of Syria generally, and of Aelia in particular. However, the researcher argues that it should not be surprising that the Jews' sympathies, as a minority group who

¹See: Asaf, Pp. 114-115. Mann, Pp. 42-44. Hoyland, p. 239.

²See: 'Athāmina, *Filastīn, Fi Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 65.

³Mann, p.42.

⁴Crone, Patricia, Pp. 3-9, 156. Leder, Stefan. *The Attitude of the Jews and their role towards the Arab-Islamic conquest*, the Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām (English and French papers), edited by Muhammad 'Adnān al-Bakhīt. (University of Jordan, al-Yarmūk University, 1987), Vol. 1, Pp. 175-159.

were suffering from the Byzantines' cruel oppression and violence, were with the Muslim conquerors, hoping that the new era would improve their situation and change it for the better. There is, however, no evidence mentioned of any kind of Jewish role or involvement in the exciting and formative events of the years 13-17 A.H/ 634-638 A.D.

Conclusion

It is clear that in the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) the Muslims liberated the Christians, in particular the local population of the Aelia region, from the religious oppression of the Byzantine occupiers. This is shown clearly by the Muslim internal policy towards the Christians in the Aelia region when 'Umar's Assurance granted the people of Aelia safety for themselves, their properties, churches and crosses. Furthermore, the Muslims did not interfere in the Christians' internal religious matters. In addition they granted independence to each religious sect under Islamic rule. On the other hand, the Jews were treated with favour by the Muslims; they were not only permitted to reside in Jerusalem, but as well to own properties in the city.

With regard to the Muslim conquerors' policy towards the people in Syria generally, and the Aelia region in particular; in addition to the attitude of the population towards the conquest, the researcher argues that there are great differences between the two periods and two groups of the population. Firstly, the differences between the period of military operations in 13-16 A.H/ 634-376 A.D and the period after 16 A.H/ 634 A.D, in other words, the periods before and after the arrival of the caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region and his granting the people of Aelia his Assurance of Safety (*amān*). Secondly, between the Byzantines (*al-Rūm*) and the

Arabs, and between the groups mentioned above and between the monks and the local population, especially those who were not involved in resisting the conquerors.

The Arabs in Syria in general opposed the Muslim conquest and tried their best to resist it despite their disagreement with regard to religious matters, especially about the nature of Christ. They had joined the Byzantine armies in all the battles in the area. However, the Arab tribes in Syria generally began to change their attitude towards the Muslims after the Byzantines were defeated, in particular in the battle of al-Yarmūk. They began to accept the new era, i.e. Islamic rule, as a fact. Furthermore, a large number of Arab tribes embraced Islam a short time after the conquests.

On the other hand, it might be said that the Jews were suffering from the Byzantines' cruel oppression and violence, and thus supported the Muslim conquerors; hoping that the new era would improve their situation and change it for the better. However, there is no evidence mentioned of any kind of role or involvement by the Jews in the events of the years 13-17 A.H/ 634-638 A.D.

Indeed, the first Islamic conquest of Aelia marked the real end of the traditional conflict between the Christians and the Jews. This began with the arrival of the Muslim conquerors in Syria at the start of the year 13A.H/ 634 A.D and was completed by the arrival of the caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in the region and his granting of the famous Assurance of Safety (*amān*) to the people of Aelia. In other words, 'Umar's Assurance brought an end to the destruction, killing, and displacement that had characterised the Aelia region throughout history until then.

'Abd al-Fattah El-'awisī argues that:

The Muslims liberated the Christians from the Byzantine occupiers of the City, rid the Jews of oppression at the hands of the Byzantines, their

presence in the City after an absence of five hundred years. These event were in keeping with the teaching of Islam based on the methodology of *Tadafu'* or counterbalance, the concept of justice based not only on plurality and recognition of others, but on determining their rights, duties, treatment, and means of co-existence.¹

¹El-'Awaisi. *Umar's Assurance*, Pp. 76-77.

Chapter Eight

The Administration of Islamic Jerusalem after the First Islamic Conquest

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Introduction

The problem of studying the administration of Islamic Jerusalem after the first Islamic conquest lies in the fact that the Islamic sources give very little information in this regard. This is not only apply to Islamic Jerusalem, but also about Palestine as one of the administrative regions in Syria. It seems that Palestine administration is the main point of argument among modern researchers with regard to the administration of Jerusalem after the first Islamic conquest. The orientalist and the Israelis among them, and some Arab researchers, argue that Jerusalem did not receive any special attention from the Muslims. They based their argument on Jerusalem not being the administrative capital of Palestine after the conquest. This can be found in the work of E. Sivan, Asaf, M. Gil, D. Goitein, F. Donner and others, and to a lesser extent in the writings of 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī, 'Ilās Shūfānī and others. However, Khalīl 'Athāmina in his study *Filstīn fī Khamsat Qurūn, Min al-fatḥ al-Islāmī ḥatta al-Ghazū al-Firanjī (634 – 1099)* attempted to prove that Jerusalem was in fact the administrative capital of Palestine after the conquest. This is a clear attempt by a Palestinian researcher to refute the claims made by the Israelis in the continuing conflict over the city. Therefore, the debate on this issue was restricted to whether or not Jerusalem was the administrative capital of Palestine.

In his study of the Muslims' organisation and the administration of Islamic Jerusalem as well as the interest they have shown in the region, the researcher will attempt to gather as many early historical accounts as possible. These will be discussed and analysed in order to reveal how the Muslims implemented their views on Islamic Jerusalem. Through the discussion of the arguments of modern researchers and the

Islamic sources and accounts, the researcher will be in a position to know whether or not the Muslims have shown special interest in it.

8.1. Initial Interest of the first administrative

The researcher argues that Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb paid special attention to Jerusalem and gave it a distinctive status. This is contrary to what D. Donner claims when he argues the point of ‘Umar’s visit to Syria and his arrival in Aelia. He claims that “in any case it makes it hard to say that ‘Umar should have shown any interest in Jerusalem”.¹

There is no doubt that this claim contradicts what has been mentioned by the Islamic sources in this regard. We have previously argued that the main reason for ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb arrival in Jerusalem was to reinforce the Muslims who were besieging it. During the same visit, ‘Umar appointed a special military and administrative governor for Islamic Jerusalem. This is what he did with the other cities in Syria, except in the case of al-Ramla, for which he also appointed a military governor for an interim period. The reasons for appointing a military governor for al-Ramla were quite different from the reasons behind appointing a governor for Islamic Jerusalem. ‘Umar cancelled the latter appointment shortly after these reasons were no longer in effect, as we shall see later. With regard to ‘Umar’s appointment of a special ruler for Islamic Jerusalem when he arrived there, Sayf Ibn ‘Umar (d. 180 A.H), Khālid Ibn Mī’dān (d. 103 or 108 AH/ 721 or 726 A.D) and ‘Ubada Ibn Nusayy (d. 118 A.H/ 736 A.D) mentioned that:

¹Dooner. *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 152.

ثم سرح إليهم ، وفرق فلسطين على رجلين، فجعل علقمة بن حكيم على نصفها وأنزله الرملة، وجعل علقمة بن مجزز على نصفها [الأخر] وأنزله إيلياء؛ فنزل كل واحد منهما في عمله في الجنود التي معه.¹

He then sent them [an army] and divided Palestine between two men, he put 'Alqamah b. Hakīm in charge of one half and stationed him in al-Ramlah, and he put 'Alqamah b. Mujazziz in charge of the other half and stationed him in Aelia. Each of them stayed in his province with the soldiers who were with him.²

Al-Ṭabarī related the same account from Sālim Ibn 'Abdullah who mentioned that 'Umar:

وعن سالم، قال: استعمل علقمة بن مجزز على إيلياء وعلقمة بن حكيم على الرملة في الجنود التي كانت مع عمرو وضم عمرا وشرحبيل إليه بالجابية، فلما انتهى إلى الجابية وافقا عمر رحمه الله راكباً، فقبلا ركبتيه، وضم عمر كل كل واحد منهما محتضنهما.³

According to Sālim ('Umar) appointed 'Alqamah b. Mujazziz governor of Aelia and appointed 'Alqamah b. Hakim governor of al-Ramlah. He the solders who were with 'Amr (Ibn al-'Ās) at their desposal. He orderd 'Amr and Shurahbīl to join him in al-Jābiyah. When they reached

¹Ṭabarī. *Tārikh*, Vol. 2, P. 449.

²Ṭabarī. *Tārikh*, Vol. X, 11, Pp. 192-193.

³Ṭabarī. *Tārikh*, Vol. 2, P. 449.

al-Jābiyah they found ‘Umar riding. They kissed his knee, and ‘Umar embraced them, holding them to his chest.¹

In addition to ‘Umar’s appointment of ‘Alqama Ibn Mujziz as a military and administrative governor of Islamic Jerusalem, there are other sources which indicate that ‘Umar appointed another person with ‘Alqama, whose name was Salāma Ibn Qayyṣar as an *Imām* (leader of prayer) in Islamic Jerusalem.²

The Islamic sources also mentioned the names of other people who were appointed governors of Jerusalem during the era of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb or shortly after that, i.e. during the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Among these was ‘Ubāda Ibn al-Ṣāmit (d. 34 A.H), whose tomb still today in Jerusalem. Abī Zir‘a al-Dimashqī, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqālānī mentioned that ‘Ubāda was appointed as a judge and teacher in Palestine and he lived in Islamic Jerusalem.³ Al-Maḳdisī, in *Muthīr Al-Gharām*, Ibn Manẓūr in *Lisān Al-Arab*, Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī in *Al-Uns Al-Jalīl bi Tārīkh Al-Quds wal-Khalīl*, mentioned that ‘Ubāda was appointed governor or judge⁴ in Palestine. It is noticed that al-Dhahabī narrated that he was the first Muslim judge in Islamic Jerusalem.⁵

¹Ibid, p. 193.

² Ibn Hajar, Vol. 3. p. 115. Al-Maḳdisī, Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrahīm Ibn Hilāl. *Muthīr Al-Gharām (Mukhtārāt) fī Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maḳdis fī Maṭūṭāt Arabiyya Gadiyya*, edited by Muḥammad Ibrahīm (Kuwait, 1985), Pp. 370-371. Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, Vol. 2. p. 414. Mujīr al-Dīn, Vol. 1, p. 266.

³ Abī Zir‘a, Vol. 1, p. 205, 224. (on the authority of al-Walīd Ibn Muṣlīm). Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Vol. 2, p. 450. Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, p. 118. Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, p. 422.

⁴ See Al-Maḳdisī. *Muthīr*, p. 363. Mujīr al-Dīn, Vol. 1, p. 261, 286. Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad Ibn Makram al-Ifriqī. *Lisān al-Arab*. (Dār Sādir, Beirut, 1968), Vol. 11, Pp. 301-310.

⁵ Dhahabī. *Tārīkh*, Pp. 422-424.

8.1.2. Later Interest of the first administrative

What further illustrates and confirms the continuous interest of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb in Islamic Jerusalem was his second visit to al-Jābiya and Islamic Jerusalem after the 'Imwās plague in 18 A.H. In his new administrative structure of Syria 'Umar cancelled the positions of the governors of Palestine and al-Ramla. He appointed Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān as governor of Palestine and the Mediterranean Coast¹ to serve under Abī 'Ubayda who was appointed as the general governor of Syria.² 'Umar ordered Yazīd to fight the people of Qisāriā³ during his first visit to Syria and later appointed Yazīd as the general governor of Syria after the death of Abū 'Ubayda.⁴

The cancellation of the two posts of the governors of Palestine and al-Ramla, the appointment of Mu'āwiyya Ibn Abī Sufyān as governor (*Emīr* or *Walī*) of all Syria⁵ and keeping 'Alqama Ibn Mujziz in his post as governor of Islamic Jerusalem, where he remained until his death in 20 A.H.,⁶ are all facts which confirm that 'Umar continued his great interest in Islamic Jerusalem. This fact is also confirmed by the appointment of

¹Wāqidī. *Futūh*, p.154.

²Balādhurī, Ahmad Ibn Yahyā. *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, S. 4, edited by Shlūznjr, murāja'at Kister, M.Y (Jerusalem, 1971), S, 4, Vol. 1, p.11. Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p.157. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, p. 384.

³Wāqidī. *Futūh*, p.154.

⁴Balādhurī. *Ansab*, Vol. S. 4, p.11. Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 1, p.157. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, Pp. 405-406. Dhahabī, p. 180.

⁵Balādhurī. *Ansab*, Vol. 1, S. 4, p.11. (on the authority of al-Mada'inī). Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*, Vol.1. P.157. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 7, Pp. 405-406.

⁶Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, Vol, 4, Pp. 460-461. Ibn al-Athīr. *Usd*, Vol. 4, p. 87.

‘Abd Al-Rahmān Ibn ‘Alqama Ibn Mujziz as governor of Islamic Jerusalem in place of his father, as both Ibn Sa‘d and al-Ṭabarī mention.¹

It appears that the temporary appointment by ‘Umar, of Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān as governor of Palestine and ‘Alqama Ibn Hakīm as governor of al-Ramla, was for military reasons dictated by the situation in the region at that time. The stationing of Alqama Ibn Hakīm with soldiers at al-Ramla, which is close to the Mediterranean coast, can be understood in the context that the coast was still under attack from the Byzantine military fleet, and this continued over a long period of time. The Islamic sources also indicate that the Muslims continued to pay attention to fortifying the Mediterranean Coast area and stationing military garrisons there from the first stages of the Islamic conquests and for a long time after ‘Umar’s era.² Furthermore, al-Ramla and adjoining regions were used as a centre for the concentration of Islamic forces which later advanced to conquer Egypt under the leadership of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ.³ The receding administrative importance of al-Ramla in favour of al-Ludda shortly after the Islamic conquest and the change in the situation afterwards required the cancellation of all the posts there. However, ‘Umar preserved these posts, i.e. the governor, the judge and the leader of prayer (*Imām*) in Islamic Jerusalem. These posts only existed in the centres where the governors resided as in the case of al-Kūfa and al-Baṣra in ‘Iraq for instance. In the case of Islamic Jerusalem, which was not the capital of Syria or even Palestine, the

¹Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 4, Pp. 253-254.

²Balādhurī. *Futūḥ*, Pp. 134-145.

³See Wāqidī. *Futūḥ*, Vol. 1&2, S. 2, Pp. 21-54. Balādhurī. *Futūḥ*, Pp. 214-225.

existence of these posts can only be interpreted in the context of the special interest 'Umar had in Islamic Jerusalem.

What further supports this deduction is what is understood from many accounts with regard to the appointment of the governor of Islamic Jerusalem and its judge who may have conducted the judiciary function in all Palestine and not just Islamic Jerusalem. The leader of prayer (*Imām*) was under the direct authority of 'Umar in Madīna and outside the authority of the governor of Syria, Mu'āwiyya Ibn Abī Sufyān, at the time. This was a unique position during that period. At that time, the governor used to reside in the capital city, where the main central mosque and government headquarters were located. From there he used to deal with the appointments and dismissals of the administrative governors in the respective regions, as well as other matters.¹

However, in the case of Islamic Jerusalem, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Ibn Manzūr, Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī in *al-Isti'bsār fī Nasab al-Ṣaḥāba min al-Anṣār*, and Ibn al-Athīr in *Usd al-Qhāba fī Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥāba* mentioned that there was a conflict between the governor of Syria, Mu'āwiyya, and the judge and teacher in Islamic Jerusalem, 'Ubāda Ibn al-Ṣāmit. The latter headed for 'Umar in Madīna in a state of anger against the former. It appears that 'Umar reinstated 'Ubāda in his position as judge and teacher and ordered him to go back to Jerusalem, reaffirming that he was not under the authority of Mu'āwiyya.² This clearly indicates that the issue of appointing 'Ubāda as judge and

¹See: Balādhurī. *Futūḥ*, p. 275.

²Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Vol. 2, p. 450. Ibn Manzūr, Vol. 11, p. 306. Al-Maqdisī, Ibn Qudāma. *Al-Istibsār fī Nasab Al-Ṣaḥāba min al-Anṣār*, edited by 'Alī Nuwaīḥid (Beirut, 1971), p. 190. Ibn al-Athīr. *Usd*, Vol. 2, p. 160.

teacher in Islamic Jerusalem did not fall under the authority of Mu‘āwīyya as governor of the region. Otherwise Mu‘āwīyya could have taken the initiative to fire ‘Ubāda and replace him with another person. Furthermore, at that time it was well known that the governors, judges and leaders of prayer (*Imām*) were only appointed in the major and important administrative centres which included the central mosque and the governor’s residency. In most cases, the governor used to lead the prayer himself.¹ Although Islamic Jerusalem was not a capital city or an administrative centre, it enjoyed a special status comparable to the status of the capital cities and administrative centres.

In addition, the Islamic sources mentioned the names of other people who were appointed in the position of governor and other positions in Islamic Jerusalem. Mujīr al-Dīn mentioned the name of someone called ‘Ubayd who was appointed to such positions.² Ibn Ḥazm in *Jamharat Ansāb al-‘Arab* mentioned that ‘Umayyr Ibn Sa’d al-Azdī took charge of posts in Islamic Jerusalem.³ Furthermore, Al-Maḡdisī Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Hilal in *Muthīr al-Qharām* and Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī in *al-Uns al-Jalīl* mentioned that the companion of the Prophet, Tamīm Ibn Aws al-Dārī,⁴ took charge of posts in Islamic Jerusalem.⁵ Other sources indicated that Mu‘āwīyya appointed Salāma Ibn Qaysar as governor of Islamic Jerusalem and appointed ‘Amr Ibn

¹See: ‘Athāmina. *Filastīn fī Khamsat Qurūn*, p. 214.

²Al-Maḡdisī. *Muthīr*, p. 373. Mujīr al-Dīn, Vol. 1, p. 286.

³Ibn Ḥazm, ‘Alī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Sa‘īd al-Andalusī. *Jamharat al-Ansāb al-Arab*, edited by ‘Abd al-Salām Ḥārūn (Cairo, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1962), p. 334.

⁴For more details about Tamīm Ibn Aws life see Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 7, p. 104, Pp.408-409. Khalīfa. *Ṭabaqāt*, Vol. 1, p. 160.

⁵Al-Maḡdisī. Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Hilāl. *Muthīr al-Qharām (Mkṭūbāt) fī Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maḡdis fī Maktūbat Arabīa Qadīma*, Ikhtiyār wa Taḥqīq Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (Kuwait, 1985), p. 364. Mujīr al-Dīn, Vol. 1, p. 1, p. 262.

Sa'īd al-Anṣārī to be in charge of some other posts in Palestine and Islamic Jerusalem.¹ However, these sources did not specify whether Mu'āwiyya made these appointments while he was governor of Syria during the era of 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān or after he became Caliph himself in 41 A.H/ 661 A.D.

'Umar had shown great interest in Islamic Jerusalem since its first Islamic conquest. He gave it special status and preference over other areas in Syria. This great interest is continued after 'Umar. The third rightly Guided caliph 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān who ruled between 24-36 A.H set aside the Silwān area for the poor of Bayt al-Maqdis.² In addition, many historical accounts and archaeological discoveries in the walled city confirm this interest. For instance, one of these archaeological operations, which was undertaken by Israeli scholars after the occupation of the eastern part of Jerusalem, revealed a magnificent Umayyad palace and a market beside the south and south-eastern wall of *al-Aqsā* Mosque.³ There is no doubt that this palace represents the headquarters (*Dār al-Imāra*) of the governor and the residence of the judge and leader of prayer (*Imām*). The location of that palace in the direction of the *qibla* is in agreement with general Islamic architecture after the conquest, where the leader of prayer (*Imām*) can reach the pulpit directly in front of the praying Muslims without the need to pass through them.⁴

¹Balādhurī. *Ansāb*, Vol. 1, S, 4, p.160.

²See: al-Maqdisī, p. 171.

³See: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. (New edition), (KHE-MAHI, Leaden, E.J. BILL, 1968), Vol. V, p. 325. See also D. Goiten. *Jerusalem During The Arab Period*, p. 194.

⁴Evidence for such a problem facing the Muslims is found in al-Balādhurī who reports that when Mu'āwiyya appointed Ziyād Ibn Abīh (d. 52 A.H/ 672 A.D) governor in al-Baṣra, Ziyād moved the official residence in al-Baṣra from the north to the-east, to the *qibla* of the mosque, He said: "It is not fitting that the

This palace, (*Dār al-Imāra*) which was more likely to have been built since the era of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb when he appointed ‘Ubāda Ibn al-Ṣāmit governor, judge, teacher and leader of prayer (*Imām*) in Islamic Jerusalem, was either expanded or had been demolished and rebuilt during the Umayyad reign either for the purpose of expansion or because of the earthquake which hit the area in the year 39 A.H/ 659 A.D.¹

What leads us to this result is the appointment by ‘Umar of a governor, judge and teacher (*Imām*) in Islamic Jerusalem who needed to reside in such a place so that they could easily shoulder the responsibilities assigned by their posts. Furthermore, it was known that Mu‘āwiyya visited Islamic Jerusalem quite often and stayed there for long periods. His conflict with ‘Ubāda Ibn al-Ṣāmit, which we have previously mentioned, indicates some of this. Ibn Sa‘d and other narrators mentioned that the famous pact between Mu‘āwiyya and ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Aṣ after the assassination of Caliph ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān was concluded in Jerusalem. That pact commences as follows:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم هذا ما تعاهد عليه معاوية بن أبي
سفيان وعمو بن العاصي ببیت المقدس بعد مقتل عثمان بن
عفان...²

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
This is what Mu‘āwiyya Ibn Abī Sufyān and ‘Amr Ibn al-
‘Aṣ have pledged to one another in Bayt al-Maqdis (Islamic
Jerusalem) after the assassination of ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān ...

Imām should pass through the people. *Al-Maqṣūra* was installed and a door was also made in the *qibla* side of the mosque communicating with *Dār al-Imāra*". Balādhurī. *Futūḥ*, p. 342.

¹See: Kenneth, Pp. 37-59.

²Ibn Sa‘d, Vol, 4, p. 254.

Moreover, Mu'āwiyya, took allegiance as caliph in Islamic Jerusalem¹ after the arbitration process between him and 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib had failed following the battle of Ṣiffin.² This became the practice of a number of the Umayyad caliphs, i.e. they took allegiance as caliphs in Islamic Jerusalem.³ Indeed, the attempt by the Kharijites (al-khwārij) to assassinate Mu'āwiyya took place in Islamic Jerusalem, as was mentioned by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam and Ibn Manzūr.⁴ Therefore, there is enough evidence to suggest that the palace, which was discovered in Islamic Jerusalem, was built well before Mu'āwiyya became caliph. Mu'āwiyya used to spend long periods in the area after his appointment as governor of Syria. The plot to assassinate him was hatched in Makka⁵ and the person who was supposed to have carried it out headed straight to Islamic Jerusalem because he knew that Mu'āwiyya resided there.

The special attention paid to Islamic Jerusalem is further confirmed by the discovery of coins, which bear the names Aelia and 'Mu'āwiyya' and go back to 41 AH/ 661 A.D.;⁶ in other words, a very long time before the process of Islamization of the coins which was undertaken by caliph 'Abd al-Malik who ruled between 66 -86 A.H/ 686-705 A.D.

¹See: Ibn Manzūr, Vol. 25, Pp. 130-131.

²See al-Manqarī, Naṣir Ibn Muzāḥim. *Waq'at Ṣiffin*, edited by 'Abd al-Salām Harūn (Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-Arabīa. Cairo, 1356 AH), Pp. 621-644. Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr. *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ṭārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk): The first war*, translated and annotated by G. R. Hawting (University of New York Press, 1996), Pp. 104-110. Khalīfa. *Ṭārīkh*, Vol, 1, P. 216. Ya'qūbī. *Ṭārīkh*, Vol. 1, Pp.189-190. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 3, Pp. 32-33. Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2, p. 166-169. Ibn al-Athīr. *Kamil*, Vol. 2, Pp. 166-169.

³Ibn Qutayyba. *Ma'ārif*, p. 211. Dhahabī, Pp. 552-553.

⁴Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, p. 131.

⁵Ibn Sa'd, Vol, 3, Pp. 35-36. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, p. 131.

⁶See D. Goiten. *Jerusalem During the Arab Period*, p. 176.

In this context, some Syriac sources claim that Mu'āwiyya Ibn Abī Sufyān who took his pledge of allegiance (Bay'a) as caliph in Bayt al-Maqdis in the year 41 A.H/ 661 A.D prayed on this occasion at Golgotha, Gethsemane and the Tomb of Mariā. However, some researchers rejected this claim, giving as reasons that this was were politics repressing the state of mind of the time, and that Islam inheriting monotheistic religions.¹

8.1. Modern Researchers Arguments

The special attention which was paid to Islamic Jerusalem can clearly be seen through the appointment of a governor, a judge and an imam as well as the establishment of a government palace. However, the issue of Islamic Jerusalem not being the administrative capital of Palestine represented a political point view on which a number of modern researchers depended in their attempts to minimise the interest of the Muslims in Islamic Jerusalem. Contrary to this, the other side, which opposed these opinions attempted to confirm and prove that Islamic Jerusalem was the administrative capital of Palestine. The researcher argues that both sides lacked objectivity in this respect.

The Isra'ili orientalist, E. Sivan, claimed that Jerusalem had no significance in the early Islamic period and that it had not been the capital of Palestine at that stage.² Another orientalist, Asaf, followed the same claim and stated that Jerusalem was not the capital of Palestine, either during the Byzantine era or during the Islamic era. Furthermore, he claims that Jerusalem had not even reached the status of Qaşaba for the

¹Ibid, p. 324.

²E. Sivan. *The Sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam*, in Sharon, M. (ed): *Notes and studies on the history of the Holy Land under Islamic rule* (Jerusalem, 1976). (in Hebrew), p. 35, 42. In 'Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filaṣṭīn fi khamsat Qurūn*, p. 210.

area around it.¹ As far as Gil is concerned, he stated that Palestine during the Byzantine era was divided into three parts: Palestine prima, Palestine second and Palestine terita. The capital of the first part under the Byzantines was Caesarea but its capital after the Muslim conquest was undecided until Ramla was built.²

D. Goitein added:

Jerusalem never served, as an official capital of Falastīn (Samaria and Judaea) bore no negative connotations in those early years.³

In contrast, the Palestinian, Khalīl ‘Athāmina, in his study of the history and administration of Palestine, indulges in attempts to refute the claims made by the Israeli researchers in this regard. He attempts to prove that Jerusalem was the administrative capital of Palestine after the Islamic conquest. He argues that this continued to be the case until the capital was transferred to al-Ramla.⁴ ‘Athāmina depends on four main points in his discussion of the account narrated by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī in *Mu‘jam al-Buldān* in which he indicated that Jerusalem was the administrative capital of Palestine;⁵ ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s appointment of ‘Alqama Ibn Mujziz and ‘Ubāda Ibn al-Sāmit as

¹Asaf, M. *The History of the Arab Rule in Palestine* (Tel Aviv, Palestine. Davar Press, 1935), p. 47. ‘Athāmina. *Fisṭīn fī khamsat Qurūn*, p. 210.

²Gil, Pp. 110-111.

³D. Goitein. *Jerusalem During the ‘Arab Period*, p. 176.

⁴‘Athāmina. *Filastīn fī khamsat Qurūn*, Pp. 209-219. ‘Athāmina, Khalīl. *Al-Wajh al-Siyāsī Limadīnat al-Quds fī Sadr al-Islam wa Dawlat Banī Umayya*, (Majalt al-Abhāth, American University, Beirut, year 45, 1997), Pp. 61-95 particularly pages Pp. 71-73.

⁵*Ibid*, p. 210.

special governor and special judge for Jerusalem respectively;¹ the keenness of Mu'āwiyya to stay in Jerusalem, the place where he took allegiance as caliph, for an extended period;² and the discovery of the palace, which goes back to the Umayyad period in the city;³ all issues which have been previously examined.

What the researcher deducts from the claims of these modern researchers is that they come under the context of the present conflict over Jerusalem. The Israelis are doing their best to prove that Jerusalem was not important to the Muslims and they did not pay attention to it because they did not make it the capital of their state or even administrative capital of Palestine. On the other side the Palestinians particularly attempt, as in the case of 'Athāmina, to prove that Jerusalem was the administrative capital of the region. Thus the two sides lack objective discussion on the matter. The argument between them becomes restricted to saying that, if Jerusalem was not a capital, then it was not important and vice versa. In other words, if it was the capital then it was important, as if the historical importance of a certain area is decided only according to whether it is the capital of its region or not.

In this regard, the modern researchers present different analyses for the reasons why the Muslims did not make Jerusalem the capital of their state or even the administrative capital of Palestine. These analyses can be described as ambiguous and inaccurate. They range between acknowledging that the Muslims paid attention to

¹Ibid, Pp. 212-213.

²Ibid, p. 215.

³Ibid, Pp. 216-217.

Jerusalem and denying that they paid it attention. Once more, the argument goes back to whether it was the capital or not.

Although Khalīl ‘Athāmina confirmed that Jerusalem was the administrative capital of Palestine, ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz al-Dūrī totally ruled that out. The reason he gave was the unavailability of pastures in the region to meet the needs of the Muslim troops:

Bait al-Maqdis was not one of the administrative centres; since these centres were to be bases for the Arab *muqatila* (troops), to meet the need in pasture and climate, and to be directly linked to the Arabian Peninsula; Bait al-Maqdis with its Haram was hardly suitable.¹

This also contradicts the geographical sources’ description of the Islamic Jerusalem region as being mountainous and covered with trees.

M. Gil argues that the non-Muslim environment in Jerusalem was not comfortable for the Muslims. Their desire to take control of the coastal road and their awareness of the demographic unsuitability of al-Ludda as a capital prompted them to establish the city of al-Ramla. In this regard Gil stated that:

It seems that the genuinely non-Muslim surroundings were not congenial to the Muslims; on the other hand they undoubtedly, wished to dominate the roads, and when they realised that Lod was also not suitable as capital of the region, again because of the non-Muslim population, it was decided to lay the foundation of (or develop) Ramla.²

¹Al-Dūrī. *Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period*, p. 110.

²Gil, *A History of Palestine*. p.105.

Gil claims that the capital of Palestine prima under Muslim rule was undecided until al-Ramla was built. This means, according to his claim, that there was no administrative area for Palestine for 80 years. This results from his assumption that al-Ramla was built or developed during the era of Sulayymān Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik. However, this is in total contradiction with historical accounts such as al-Ya‘qūbī’s which mentions that al-Ludda, was the ancient capital,¹ and al-Maqdisī, who mentions that ‘Imwās was the capital of Palestine in olden times.² However, in another account he states that al-Ramla was the ancient capital,³ and even Jerusalem as ‘Athamina claims quoting Yāqūt.⁴

D. Goitein held the opinion that:

In view of the lack of written sources on the subject, we cannot know why Jerusalem finally did not acquire this status (as capital). For then available means of transportation, Jerusalem was perhaps too far away from the main lines of international traffic.⁵

However, Karen Armstrong gives two reasons why the Muslims did not take Jerusalem as their capital. She argues:

¹Al-Ya‘qūbī, Ahmad Ibn Abī Ya‘qūb Ibn Ja‘far Ibn Abī Wādiḥ. *Kitāb al-Buldān*, edited by M.Y. D. Goiege. (Leiden, 1891), p. 89.

²Maqdisī. *The Best*, p. 160.

³Ibid, p. 150.

⁴The researcher does not find any account in Yāqūt’s work mentioned that Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine as Khalīl ‘Athāmina claims. See ‘Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khmasat Qurūn*, p. 210. However, Yāqūt’s reports state that it was al-Ludda then it moved to al-Ramla. Yāqūt, Vol. 3, p. 79.

⁵D. Goiten, *Al-Kuds*, p. 326.

Holy cities are seldom capital cities in the Islamic world. There was no thought of making Makka the capital instead of Madinah in the early days, despite superior sanctity. But in the case of Jerusalem, it would clearly also have been difficult to make a city in which Muslims formed only a minority the capital of either a country or a province. And the Christian and the Jewish majority in Jerusalem was not the result of Muslim indifference to Jerusalem but of Muslim tolerance.¹

Gil hesitantly acknowledges that the Arabs at first ran the affairs of the region from Jerusalem,² then al-Ludda and finally al-Ramla. D. Goitein argues that the discovery of coins which bear the name Aelia Filastīn and go back to the period before ‘Abd al-Malik’s monetary reform lead to the presumption that Jerusalem was in fact the capital of the southern part of Palestine. He states:

Based on coinage pre-dating ‘Abd al-Malik’s monetary reform and engraved “Aelia Falastin” that is, Jerusalem of Filastin, it may be assumed that the city served for a time as capital of the southern part of the country.³

The discovery of the architectural establishments in the walled city, may have prompted him to say:

The extensive foundation of the building laid bare to the south and south west of the al-Aqsa mosque during the recent excavation of B. Mazar (1968 –76) suggest that the

¹Karen Armstrong. *Sacred Space*, p. 15.

²Gil, p. 105.

³D. Goiten. *Jerusalem During the Arab Period*, p. 194. See also *Ibid*, *Al-Kuds*, Vol. V, p. 325.

Muslims planned to do in Palestine what they had done in Ifrikiya (Africa), Egypt and Syria etc. to replace the Byzantine capital situated on the seashore (Caesarea) with an inland administrative centre.¹

Armstrong addresses the questions, which minimise the Muslims interest in Jerusalem because they did not make it their capital. She says:

It is often said that Muslims never bothered to make Jerusalem the capital of their empire or even the administrative capital of Palestine and that this is a sign of their fundamental indifference to the holy city. But this is not the case. In fact, it seems that the Umayyad caliphs did consider the possibility of making Jerusalem their capital instead of Damascus.²

However, these reasons do not appear to be sufficiently convincing and they need to be re-examined and analysed since the Muslims had no intention of making it their capital in the first place. First of all, Islamic Jerusalem is not that far from the main transportation routes. It is only some 50 km away from Gaza where these roads meet. Secondly, it is very close to the coastal region. Therefore, to say that the Muslims wanted to control the coast does not make it a condition that they should establish their capital there. The reverse is true; this is because a more secure city like Jerusalem would have been more suitable to be the capital than the coastal cities themselves. It is known that the Muslims usually keep away from the border regions when it comes to establishing

¹D. Goiten. *Al-Kuds*, Vol. V, p. 326.

²Karen Armstrong. *Sacred Space*, p. 15.

capitals and administrative cities, as in the case of Kūfa and Baṣra in ‘Irāq for instance. The Muslims’ desire to control the coast might have largely existed before they completed their conquests.¹ This is what prompted ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb to appoint ‘Alqama Ibn Ḥakīm as governor in al-Ramla, then cancel the post after the end of the conquests. ‘Umar did not even appoint any *Emīr* or *Wālī* governor of Palestine to replace Yazīd Ibn Abī Sufyān whom he appointed as general governor of Syria. Finally, with regard to the Muslims being a minority in Jerusalem or its surroundings being uncomfortable to them, it seems to the researcher that, what applies to Islamic Jerusalem undoubtedly applies to the other Syrian cities in the period that followed the Islamic conquest of the region. This is because the migration of the Arab tribes to Syria was very slow² compared to what had happened in Iraq where the majority of the tribes migrated there for economic reasons. Despite this, the Muslims still made Damascus the location where the general governor of the region resided.

Al-Dūrī takes onboard the same thesis and holds the opinion that Sulayymān Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik thought of making Jerusalem his capital, but understandably abandoned the idea.³ Al-Durī does not mention the sources upon which he depends in saying the above. Karen Armstrong depends on Mujīr al-Dīn, in saying the same thing. However, Mujīr al-Dīn is considered a very late source with regard to the Umayyad period since he died in 1404 AD / 706 AH. Furthermore, his account is an individual one with no strong transmission chain. Therefore, it is difficult to accept it as strong evidence. Despite this,

¹See: Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 274-287.

²See: ‘Umar. Farūq, Pp. 22-28.

³Al-Durī. *Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period*, p. 110.

and although he stated that Jerusalem was not an administrative centre, Al-Dūrī acknowledges that the Muslims granted Jerusalem special significance. He argues that Jerusalem had its governor and judge, due to its special position.¹

As a result of examination of the arguments put forward by the modern researchers and comparison of their analyses to the historical and geographical accounts it seems to the researcher that their discussion of the Muslims' interest in Islamic Jerusalem is restricted to a certain area. The Muslims' interest in Jerusalem with regard to the administrative aspects is limited to the issue of whether Jerusalem was the administrative capital of Palestine or not. Moreover, these arguments contain hesitant and inadequate opinions. They concentrate on the attempts to deny or prove that Jerusalem was the administrative capital of Palestine. Some researchers even deny that Jerusalem had received any attention from the Muslims. Others state that the architectural monuments recently discovered in Jerusalem somehow indicate that the Muslims might have thought about making it their capital and then changed their mind for some reason. These reasons differ from one researcher to another. What is more likely to be the case is that Islamic Jerusalem had never been the administrative capital of Palestine; and the Umayyads had absolutely no intention of making it their capital. Even if they had such an idea, then there were no convincing reasons to prevent them from carrying it out. The same thing applies to Khalīl 'Athāmina who also depends on an individual account for his belief that Jerusalem was the administrative capital of Palestine.

¹Ibid, p. 110.

It is worth mentioning in this regard that the Islamic historical and geographical sources did not use the word *'Āsima* (capital) to denote the political or religious centre for the state or the residence of the caliph in the same manner as the modern use of that word. In addition, the word *'Āsima* (capital) has never been mentioned in the books and lexicons of the Arabic language. The Arabic sources rather use terms such as *al-Madīna*, *al-Qasaba*, and *al-Kūura*¹ to indicate the main cities in the different regions. However, this does not mean that each city to which one of these terms applies was the capital or administrative centre for its region. In other words, it doesn't necessarily mean that each city had its own administrative governor, judge, central mosque and governor's residence. These are in fact matters which are crucial to the administrative centres.² In the case of Palestine, for instance, it is noticed that the geographical sources mention a lot of names for Palestinian cities, which range between *Kūura* and *Qasaba*. The number of these cities reaches twenty-five according to al-Maqdisī, thirteen according to Ibn Khurduadāba, fifteen according to Ibn Haūqal, eight according to Ibn Rusta and five according to al-Istakhrī, as indicated by Nicola Ziyāda.³ Jerusalem, on the one hand, is counted as one of these cities. In other words, there was nothing to indicate that it was the administrative capital of the region. On the other hand, the existence of the elements of an administrative capital in Jerusalem such as the governor's residence, central

¹For examples, al-Istakhrī used both terms *Qasaba* and *al-Madīna*. Al-'Iṣṭakhrī, Ibrāhīm Ibn Muḥammad al-Fārisī. *Masālik al-Mamālik*, edited by M.Y. D. Goiege. (Maṭb'at G. Brill, Leiden, 1927), p. 56,58, 67. Al-Maqdisī used the term *Qasaba*. (The translator of al-Maqdisī used the word capital instead *Qasaba*).

²See: 'Athāmina, Khalīl. *Filastīn fī Khmasat Qurūn*, Pp. 190-191.

³Ziyāda, Nicola. *Shāmīāt: Dirāsāt fī al-Hadārah wal-Tārīkh* (Riyyād al-Rayyīs lil-Kutub wal-Nashir, London, 1989), Pp. 121-122.

mosque, governor and judge indicate the attention the Muslims paid to Jerusalem. They organised Jerusalem's internal affairs and gave it special status and privilege over many other Syrian cities, but didn't make it administrative centre for the region.

The researcher argues that the choice of capitals in the Islamic State was governed by many other conditions, differing from the ones mentioned by modern researchers. Prophet Muhammad's choice of al-Madīna as capital came after a long time, i.e. after he presented Islam to the Arab tribes and the Aws and Khzraj tribes gave him their allegiance. In other words, the availability of supporters of Islam in Madīna was the crucial factor; and Madīna gained double strength as a result of the migration of large numbers of Muslims from Makka. Therefore, the very idea of moving the capital back to Makka was not on the agenda. The migration of large numbers of tribes to Iraq prompted the Muslims to build both Kūfa and Basra to accommodate the tribe's men and *muqātila* (troops) there.¹ When these cities, particularly Kūfa, turned into magnificent centres of power in comparison to Madīna, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib was prompted to move the capital from Madīna to Kūfa in search of supporters as well.² In the case of Syria, the emigration of a large section of the inhabitants of Damascus and their settlement in the Roman controlled areas, played a crucial role in choosing it as capital as large numbers of empty houses were then available to accommodate the Muslims. Al-Balādhurī narrated from Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, from al-Wāqidī that when the Muslims conquered Damascus, large numbers of its inhabitants moved out and reached Hercules in Antioch (Antākiyya). Therefore, large numbers of empty houses became available and thus the

¹Balādhurī. *Futūh*, Pp. 274-287.

²See Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 3, Pp. P.31-33. Khalīfa. *Tārīkh*. Vol. 1, p. 199. Ibn A'tham, Vol. 1&2, Pp. 446-447. Ibn al-Athīr. *Kāmil*, Vol. 3, Pp. 104-105, 113-114.

Muslims moved in.¹ In addition to this, the tribe of Kalb, who lived in the Damascus area in large numbers after the conquest, embraced Islam. Mu'āwiyya firmly established his authority over Syria and married Mayysūn Bīnt Baḥdal al-Kalbī, the daughter of Kalb's chief, and the mother of his son, caliph Yazīd.² Thus the tribe of Kalb provided support for the Umayyads and a large military power to confront the parties which opposed them. In other words, this tribe played a central role in establishing Umayyad rule.³

These conditions make it difficult to accept that the Muslims had thought about making Jerusalem their capital. Had they really intended to do so, from the first Islamic conquest until the end of the Rightly Guided Caliph's era, there was nothing which could have prevented them from making that goal reality. Even during the Umayyad period, when circumstances were totally different from the previous period, as a result of developments witnessed by the Muslim community, had the Umayyads decided to make Jerusalem a capital they could have done so despite the difficulties that they might have encountered. Kamāl S. Ṣalībī argues:

The Umayyads, it is true, paid attention to other Syrian towns, notably Jerusalem and Ramla in Palestine; they also established some new garrison towns here and there to control the outlying regions. Damascus, however, remained their favoured city.⁴

The question we should ask here is not whether the Muslims thought about

¹Balāḍhurī. *Futūḥ*, p. 129. (on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ibn Sa'd on the authority Abū 'Abdullah al-Wāqidī).

²See Ya'qūbī. *Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 241.

³See: 'Umar. Farūq, p. 18.

⁴Ṣalībī. S. Kamāl. *Syria Under Islam. Empire and Trial: 634-1099* (New York, 1977), p. 25.

making Jerusalem their capital and then abandoned the idea, but why they didn't think about making it their capital in the first place, as long as their capitals, whether in Madīna or Damascus, were largely convenient to the state. As far as al-Ludda is concerned, it is clear that it had been the administrative capital of Palestine before the transfer of the capital to al-Ramla. However, the Islamic sources do not provide us with sufficient information about when it became the administrative capital. It is more likely that the event took place after the era of the rightly Guided Caliphs and might even be after the era of Mu'āwiyya Ibn Abī Sufyān. This gives the impression that Palestine had not been a separate administrative unit after the Islamic conquest of the region; and that its affairs were run from Damascus for a long period of time. If we take this into account, then there doesn't seem to be any inaccuracies in the Islamic sources with regard to this issue. If there are still some inaccuracies, then this goes back to 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb's appointment of 'Alqama as governor of al-Ramla and then his cancellation of that post afterwards with Palestine's affairs consequently run from Damascus. Then al-Ludda was made administrative capital of Palestine and soon after the capital was transferred to al-Ramla after it was rebuilt and renovated. This created some inaccuracies in various historical accounts. Some of these accounts indicate that the capital was al-Ludda in view of its being the administrative centre of Palestine whereas other accounts indicate that the capital was al-Ramla.

The researcher argues that it is hard or even impossible for the Muslims to make Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem/ Bayt al-Maqdis) the administrative capital of historical Syria (Bilād al-Shām), based on the fact that Aelia before and after the first Islamic conquest was considered a vast region and not just a mere city surrounded by walls. The question

arises here how one could imagine that an area that extended from the boundaries of Nāblus area (Ṣarṭaba) in the north to al-Kusayyfa in the south, as well as containing parts of the Dead Sea in the east, could function as an administrative capital.

On the other hand, there are many conditions which influenced the choice of capitals in the early Islamic period, none of them applying to the walled part of the Aelia region, as mentioned earlier.

The Muslim policy towards Jerusalem depended mainly on making it an open area for all the people, not only for the Muslims.¹ In other words, the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem made the area become an inclusive, not exclusive area, or as Karen Armstrong argues; from the start the Muslims developed an inclusive vision of Jerusalem which did not deny the presence and devotion of others, but respected their rights and celebrated plurality and co-existence.²

Conclusion

The researcher can say that the Muslims did not think about making Jerusalem the capital of their state after the capital was transferred from Hijāz. They did not even think about making it the administrative centre for Palestine, neither immediately after it was conquered nor even during the Umayyad period. Despite this, the Muslims showed great interest in and paid a lot of attention to Islamic Jerusalem. They granted it special administrative and organisational privileges, which were normally characteristic of administrative capitals, such as the appointment of a judge, *Imam* and a teacher in addition to building the governor's residence there. They did not pay such attention to

¹See: El-'Awaisī, *'Umar's Assurance*, p. 78.

²Armstrong, Karen. *Sacred Space*, Pp. 18-19.

Palestine in general since it was not made a separate administrative unit, and its affairs were run from Damascus. This is in agreement with the Muslim policy in dealing with Bilād al-Shām as one administrative unit and did not separate it until the end of the ‘Uthmān State after the first world war when the boundaries of Palestine had been delineated after it was occupied and separated from Bilād al-Shām (historical Syria). Moreover, the Umayyads, since Mu‘āwiyya established his rule over Bilād al-Shām (historical Syria), were keen to stay in Bayt al-Maqdis for long periods. They also took allegiance as caliphs there. Mu‘āwiyya went even further than this and minted coins on which the name of Aelia was engraved, in an early period which was well before the process of Islamization of the coins in Islam. All these matters do indicate and confirm that the Muslims showed a great deal of interest in Jerusalem. This interest in Jerusalem started in the era of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb and continued afterwards. This happened without any interference in the affairs of the non-Muslims who resided in Islamic Jerusalem, and without changing its style and demography.

Conclusion

This study has arrived at many important conclusions. On one hand, it shows that modern researchers, particularly the Israelis and most of the orientalists, for political and religious reasons, attempt to cast doubt on the authenticity of the early Islamic sources regarding most of the issues of the first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem). They attempt to play down the importance of Islamic sources relating to the period of the conquest, thus undermining the significance of Jerusalem in Islam, and presenting the history of Islamic Jerusalem from a single point of view. They not only cast doubt on the authenticity of the early Islamic sources, but also attempt to deny the historical fact of caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb's visit to the Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) region at the eve of the first Islamic conquest. They claim that the Muslim conquest is embellished with imaginary myths and legends, and that consequently there remain few authentic accounts from this stage. This is despite the fact that this event is confirmed by a host of Islamic and non-Islamic narratives and sources. It is confirmed by sources that were written approximately one thousand four hundred years ago. It is also confirmed by a great number of narrators who lived in different regions of the Islamic state and belonged to different tendencies and political or party affiliations, as well as being dispersed between the history school and the Jurisprudence school. Lastly, it is confirmed by many modern critical studies such as those of M. Donner and Hoyland and others.

It is true that the early Islamic narrators and historians were inaccurate and do contradict one another with regard to most of the events surrounding Aelia's conquest, but this is no reason to deny the historical fact of these important events.

With regard to the early Islamic narratives and sources, the researcher observed that there are no general rules to deal with the inaccuracies and contradictions of the early Islamic narratives and sources with regard to this problem; rather these differ from one task to another.

The critical analysis of the geographical sources shows that Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) before and after the first Islamic conquest was considered a vast region and not just a mere city surrounded by walls. This region at least extended from Mū'āb in the east to Ludda, Baīt Jibrīn and 'Imwās in the west, a distance of 35 miles. As for the north to the south, the region extended from Nāblus area (Ṣarṭaba) to al-Kusayfa and the area parallel to it. This distance reached 70 miles. The Muslim geographers, in particular al-Maḡdisī and Ibn Faḍlullāh Al-'Amrī, were inaccurate between the estimation of the area of this region they gave (forty miles) and the description they gave to the same region whose boundaries seem to have extended much farther than that. The reason behind their inaccuracies was that they did not use the mile as a unit for measuring distances except in very rare situations. In general, they used other terms in their estimations such as *al-Farsakh*, *al-Barīd*, *al-Yaūm* (a day's journey); and *al-Marḥala* (a stage). This means that they did not know exactly the distance of the mile. Thus, they give a description which appears to be far more accurate than that.

On the other hand, despite the fact that Islamic historical sources pay scant attention to the boundaries of the Aelia region, it seems that the Muslims preserved the Aelia region as it was during the Byzantine era. They did not introduce any major changes to the geographical boundaries of the region, which continued to be the same for a long time after the first Islamic conquest. This can be noted from the fact that sources

continued to use the Byzantine name for the region (Aelia) for a very long time after the conquest. The name is sometimes followed by a semi-note, which indicates that this region is the region of Bayt al-Maqdis. This fact led the researcher to conclude that the boundaries of Islamic Jerusalem are the same as those of the Byzantine Aelia.

This study has also shown that the caliph Abū Bakr made great efforts to conquer Aelia region. He directed a quarter of the forces he sent to Syria for this task. He also chose to send ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ to this region because of his great knowledge of the region, its topography and the Byzantine administrative division of the area.

The Muslims conquered most of the Byzantine Aelia except the small area surrounded by walls, which they put under siege, i.e. Sabastīā, Nāblus, ‘Imwās, Bayt Jibrīn, Yāfā (Jāffā), Bethlehem, Hebron and others during the life time of the caliph Abū Bakr, especially after the battle of Ajnādīn in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D. This led the researcher to argue that the period from 13 A.H/ 634 A.D until the capitulation of the walled part of Aelia in 16 A.H/ 637 A.D be considered an integral part of the events and could not be separated from the history of the conquest period.

On the other hand, as the Muslims wished to conquer the Aelia region, the Byzantines also made great efforts to prevent them from reaching this area. Emperor Heracles chose to direct his forces towards ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ in Ajnādīn in particular, although he was the farthest commander from Hīms. Again, Heracles directed his forces in a last attempt to help the inhabitants of the walled part of Aelia when they confronted the Muslims in the battle of al-Yamūk.

The critical analysis of the military operations in the Aelia region shows that the early Islamic sources pay scant attention to the period before the battle of al-Yarmūk in

15 A.H/ 636 A.D. from the history of this period, especially the period of the siege of Aelia's walled part. Furthermore, this period reflected badly on modern studies dealing with the first Muslim conquests in general. On the other hand, Islamic sources provided more information for the period preceding al-Yarmūk until the capitulation of the walled part of Aelia. However, these sources fall in errors about many important events, particularly dates and names in the period between 13-18 A.H/ 634-638 A.D.

With regard to the dates and the names of the conquerors of the Aelia region, the study shows that this area was conquered by many commanders, each of them playing an important role. Most of the region except the walled part was conquered by 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ - as the first commander-in-chief, then later under the command of Khālid Ibn al-Walīd, and some time later under the command of Abū 'Ubayda - between 13-15 A.H/ 634-636 A.D. During this period 'Amr received some assistance from other commanders particularly from Shurahbīl Ibn Ḥasana and the local commanders 'Alqama Ibn Ḥakīm and Masrūq Fulan Ibn al-'Akkī. After the battle of al-Yarmūk, Abū Ubayda besieged the the walled part of the Aelia region for four months until the arrival of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb. In addition, the study shows that most of the names of persons that Islamic sources claimed took part in the siege and the conquest are correct in the light of the military operations and the long siege that the Muslims imposed upon the walled part.

In addition, the study shows that the dates of the conquest of the Aelia region took place between 13-16 A.H/ 634-637 A.D, particularly in *Jumāda first or second* (March or April), 16 A.H/ 637 A.D, when the caliph 'Umar Ibn al- Khattāb entered the walled part and put an end to the military operations in this area.

The study confirms that the reasons behind the neglect of the period 13-15 A.H/ 634-636 A.D i.e. the battle of al-Yarmūk, in addition to the great inaccuracies and contradictions in the dates and the names of the conquerors of Aelia region are:

Firstly, the problem of the commander-in-chief of the Muslim army in the whole of Syria at the start of military operations in the area: it appears that there was no supreme commander of the Muslims in Syria when the conquests started during the time of Abū Bakr, but the commander is the one whose province they were fighting in. Secondly, the Muslims under the command of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ conquered most of the Aelia region in 13 A.H/ 634 A.D, and the sources pay attention only to the capitulation of the walled part of this region. Thirdly, the long siege that the Muslims imposed upon the walled part of Aelia explains why the sources mentioned a great number of names of persons claiming that they took part in the siege and the conquest. Those persons in fact took part in the events of the siege, and there were several forces and troops present in the area during the siege period as the Muslim forces periodically withdrew from the area. This makes it hard for narrators and historians to classify events, and hence has led them to fall into making many inaccuracies and contradictions. Lastly, the different terminologies that the Muslim narrators and historians used to refer to the Aelia region, particularly the names of Aelia and Bayt al-Maqdis led those historians to focus on the capitulation of the walled part of the region as the date of the conquest, and the commander of chief who was present at this time as the conqueror.

The study also succeeds in clarifying and resolving the inaccuracies that surrounded the reasons behind the caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattāb’s historic visit to Aelia and the purpose of this visit and the other visits that he made to the same region. Through

the critical analysis of the early narratives the study confirms without doubt that ‘Umar came to Aelia when requested to give his help after repeated attempts to conquer it had failed. On the other hand, the study rejects that premise that ‘Umar came to Aelia in response to a condition laid down by its inhabitants that he personally should be the one to conduct the treaty with them. Also it rejects the narratives which report that the inhabitants of the walled part of the Aelia region told the Muslims who were besieging them of the name and description of the only person who was capable of conquering it. In addition, the study also rejects the possibility that ‘Umar divided any spoils or established the register (*Diwān*) in his first historic visit to Aelia in 16 A.H/ 637 A.D. However, it allows that he dealt with such issues in the visit that he made to the region after the ‘Imwās plague in 18 A.H/ 639 A.D. In this visit he divided the inheritance of the people of Syria in the light of the collapse of the economic and administrative situation. Furthermore, in this visit, he included the Syrian tribes in the register (*dīwān*) which he established in Madīna some time before the visit.

The study accepts the Hijazī accounts for the reasons of the visit because these narrators do not enter into details like the other inaccurate accounts that mention the visit that ‘Umar undertook to the same region. They instead relate directly to the first Islamic conquest of Aelia. On the other hand, other narrators especially the Syrians, have inaccurately reported the reasons for the different visits that the ‘Umar, who visited the area at least three times between 14-18 A.H/ 635-639 A.D., made to the area, and deal with the issue as if it were one visit by inaccurately the various tasks that ‘Umar carried out on each of them.

With regard to the reconstruction of a mosque (*Al-Aqsā*) in Islamic Jerusalem, the study shows that the first demarcation took place in 16 A.H/ 637 A.D, but the building itself was erected some times later, after ‘Umar had left the region and returned to Madīna. The study rejects the claims that ‘Umar refused to pray in the church of Holy Sepulchre, because of his fear that the Muslims would take it and convert it into a mosque and he had shown great interest in praying at the site of the “Rock,” when he ordered the construction of a mosque in its vicinity. The study also shows that most of the narratives reported by later Islamic sources were taken from non-Islamic sources, in particular from the Christians Eutychius and Theophanes. Those reported it in the light of their traditional conflict with the Jews in the region and to counteract the Jewish sources which reported contrary accounts. In addition, the study rejects any role for Ka‘b al-Aḥbār in finding the location of the rock and that ‘Umar located the *qibla* (direction which Muslims face when praying) in front of the Rock in order not to combine both *Qiblas* (the *qibla* of Moses and the *qibla* of Muhammad). ‘Umar located the *qibla* behind the Rock because this area had more plateau than the top and could hold the large number of Muslims who had entered Aelia with him.

The study shows that the reason behind the silence over the activities that ‘Umar undertook in Aelia, particularly his visit to the Church of Holy Sepulchre and the site of David’s temple was that none of these events had taken place at that time. The later Islamic sources took the accounts which reported such activities from non-Muslim sources, some before and some after the Crusades. They added many fabricated events to them with attributions to some Syrian Muslim narrators. They aimed from that to refute the claims that the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem were faced with violence from the

Muslims by quoting and emphasising their accounts, which showed the great honour that they received from the Muslim conquerors. However, they did not attribute these accounts to their original sources but to some earlier Syrian Muslim narrators.

With regard to the Muslims dealing with the people of Aelia, the study distinguished between two periods and the relationships between two groups of the population. Firstly, the first period was that of military operations between 13-16 A.H/ 634-637 A.D (the period of war), in other words before the caliph 'Umar granted its people his famous Assurance of Safety (*amān*) and the period after that. Secondly, the Muslims distinguished between two groups; the Byzantines (*al-Rūm*) and the local population, especially those who were not involved in military activities or resistance against the conquerors.

In addition the study also shows that Aelia was inhabited by several Arab tribes who joined the Byzantine forces during the military operation in the region despite their disagreement with the Byzantine state about the unity of Christ (God and man). On the other hand, the study shows that the first Muslim conquest of Aelia liberated the Christians, in particular the local population of Aelia, from the religious oppression of the Byzantine occupiers. In their policy towards the Christians in Aelia the Muslims did not interfere in their internal religious matters. They not only left every religious matter as it was before the conquest but also helped the different Christian sects to resolve their differences through playing the role of arbitrator and neutral mediator between them.

With regard to the Jews, the study shows that there were no Jews residing in the Aelia region for a very long time before the first Islamic conquest. The Byzantines had prevented them from entering or residing in this area for more than five hundred years

before the arrival of the Muslims in the region. In addition, they were a very small minority in the whole of Palestine at the time of the conquest. They were totally submissive to the local administration and did not play any role in the events of the conquest. In view of this fact, on the one hand, it should not be surprising their sympathies were with the Muslim conquerors as a minority group who were suffering from the Byzantines' cruel oppression and violence, hoping that the new era would improve their situation and change it for the better. On the other hand, there is no evidence mentioned of any kind of role or involvement by the Jews in the events of the years 13-17 A.H/ 634-638 A.D.

Furthermore, the study shows that the Jews were treated with favour by the Muslims. The Muslims not only permitted them to reside in Islamic Jerusalem, but also to own properties there.

Lastly, the study rejects totally the arguments of modern scholars which claim that the Muslims did not pay attention to Islamic Jerusalem because they did not make it the administrative capital of Syria. However, the study shows that the Muslims, particularly the caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb, had shown great interest in Islamic Jerusalem since the first Islamic conquest. He granted it special administrative and organisational privileges, which were normally characteristic of administrative capitals. He appointed a special judge and leader of prayer (*Imām*), and allowed the Muslims to build a governor's residence (*Dār Imāra*) in the region, while these three things were not usually established outside administrative capitals in the early Islamic period. 'Umar also continued to show his great interest in Islamic Jerusalem after the conquest. He appointed a new governor of Islamic Jerusalem after its governor died in 20 A.H/ 640

A.D. Furthermore, this great interest in Islamic Jerusalem continued after 'Umar's time during the history of the early Islamic period.

The Muslim policy towards Jerusalem depended mainly on making it an open area for all the people, not only for the Muslims. In other words, the first Islamic conquest of Jerusalem made the area become an inclusive, not exclusive area. However, they did not think of making it the administrative capital of Syria and or even of Palestine. This was because it was a vast region, and not only a small area surrounded by walls. Furthermore, the conditions choice for administrative capitals in the Islamic State did not apply to the walled part of Islamic Jerusalem.

Finally, the researcher hopes that this thesis will encourage other researchers to carry out more research on this very vital period. Further researchers at the history of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem) in the early Islamic period, particularly the period of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and the Umayyad caliphate (41-132 A.H /661-750 A.D), are strongly recommended.

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