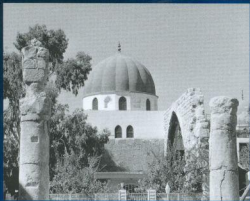


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THE CULT OF SAINTS
AMONG MUSLIMS
AND JEWS
IN MEDIEVAL SYRIA



Josef W. Meri

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This accessible study is the first critical investigation of the cult of saints among Muslims and Jews in medieval Syria and the Near East. Through case studies of saints and their devotees, discussion of the architecture of monuments, examination of devotional objects, and analysis of ideas of 'holiness', Meri depicts the practices of living religion and explores the common heritage of all three monotheistic faiths. Critical readings of a wide range of contemporary sources—travel writing, geographical works, pilgrimage guides, legal writings, historical sources, hagiography, and biography—reveal a vibrant religious culture in which the veneration of saints and pilgrimage to tombs and shrines were fundamental.

Jacket illustration: Mausoleum of Salāh al-Dīn (Saladin), Damascus, Syria.

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ISBN 0-19-925078-2



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Muslims and Jews in
Medieval Syria

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
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Dar es Salaam Delhi Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi Kolkata
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Published in the United States
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First published 2002

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Meri, Josef W.

The cult of saints among Muslims and Jews in medieval Syria / Josef W. Meri.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Muslim saints—Cult—Syria—History. 2. Islamic shrines—Syria.
3. Islamic shrines—Middle East 4. Muslim pilgrims and pilgrimages—Middle East
5. Zaddikim—Tombs—Middle East.
6. Jewish pilgrims and pilgrimages—Middle East I. Title.

BP188.8.S95 M47 2002

297.6'1'095691—dc21 2002066223

ISBN 0-19-925078-2

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Typeset in Sabon
by SNP Best-set Typesetter Ltd., Hong Kong
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
T.J. International Ltd.
Padstow, Cornwall

YKS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS study began as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Oxford under the supervision of Wilferd Madelung and Daniel Frank, to whom I am grateful for their continued support and friendship. For the sake of brevity, I wish to collectively acknowledge with the most profound gratitude and admiration all those individuals and institutions who contributed to shaping this study in its early stages. A special thank you to friends and colleagues at the University of Oxford and Wolfson College.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the committee members of the Oxford Oriental Monographs Committee and the Delegates of the Oxford University Press for agreeing to publish this study and the anonymous Press reader for providing invaluable comments and for their enthusiasm. I would like to express the utmost appreciation to the highly efficient editorial staff of the Oxford University Press: the senior commissioning editor Hilary O'Shea for seeing this book through the lengthy review process and understanding the worries of an expectant author. Jenny Wagstaffe for facilitating contractual matters. Enid Barker for patiently enduring my innovative impulses and for demonstrating that time-honoured procedures should indeed be followed. Lavinia Porter for helping me to navigate the page proofs. Finally, to the copy editor a debt of gratitude for reading and meticulously editing the typescript.

The ideas in this study have been further refined during my tenure as Research Fellow in Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where I have greatly benefited from the physical beauty of the Berkeley campus and the environs, but especially from its unparalleled intellectual environment which I have only begun to rediscover. At Berkeley, I wish to acknowledge the friendship and support of Ze'ev Brinner and Larry Michalak and thank them for sharing their ideas and listening to my constant self-criticism. This work has also benefited from the astute observations of Nezar AlSayyad, Chairman of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

I would like to thank Dwight Reynolds and his colleagues at the University of California, Santa Barbara for inviting me to

participate as a featured speaker in the 2001 Middle East Studies Regional Conference. I am grateful for the lively discussion of my talk on interfaith relations and the veneration of holy persons which went way beyond the allotted time. To Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and the Hagiography Society my appreciation for the opportunity to deliver a talk on Near Eastern Sacred Landscapes at the 2001 International Congress of Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, Michigan, in a session organized by the Hagiography Society. I would also like to thank the discussant John Howe for his valuable comments.

A special thank you to Jere Bacharach for reading a chapter, Joseph Sadan for sharing with me a number of publications, and Emilie Savage-Smith and Colin Wakefield for last-minute assistance.

At the University of California, Berkeley's Department of Near Eastern Studies, I would like to thank Yvonne Rosby and Sharlene Mulder for their utmost efficiency, assistance, and cutting through the bureaucratic red tape, at least for making it seem easier than it really is. Casondra Sobieralski of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies for her assistance and understanding.

I wish to acknowledge the support of the various libraries without whose assistance and resources I would not have succeeded: the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Cambridge University Library, Maktabat al-Assad (Damascus), Princeton University Library, and Doe Library, University of California, Berkeley. At the University of California, Berkeley Associate University Librarian James Spohrer for his assistance and Jo Lynn Milardovich and the highly efficient staff of the Interlibrary Borrowing Service.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the following non-partisan, non-political organizations and funding bodies who contributed to this endeavour from its inception: the Al-Falah Program of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley; the Barakat Trust, the Ian Karten Charitable Trust, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (New York), the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, the Social Science Research Council (New York), and Wolfson College Oxford.

J.W.M.

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ABBREVIATIONS

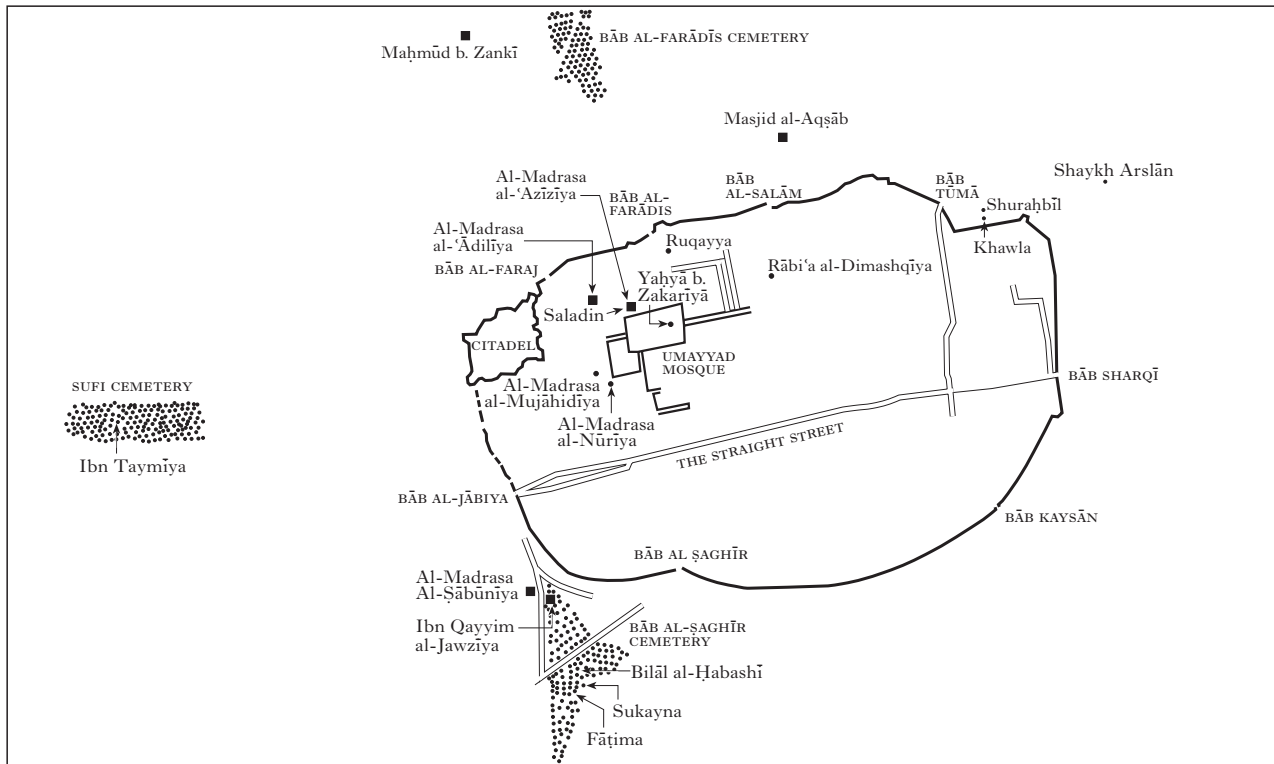
AI	<i>Annales islamologiques</i>
AO	<i>Ars Orientalis</i>
ARIS	<i>Ars Islamica</i>
BEO	<i>Bulletin d'Études Orientales</i>
EI(1)	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i>
EI(2)	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition</i>
EJ	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>
JE	<i>The Jewish Encyclopedia</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JSAI	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
MW(1)	<i>The Moslem World</i>
MW(2)	<i>The Muslim World</i>
PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
RA	<i>Revue africaine</i>
RAA	<i>Revue des arts asiatiques</i>
RAO	<i>Recueil d'archéologie orientale</i>
REI	<i>Revue des études islamiques</i>
SI	<i>Studia Islamica</i>

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND OTHER CONVENTIONS

FOR Arabic, the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* system of transliteration is employed with the following modifications: Hamza is represented by “”, ‘ayn by “”, alif maqṣūra by ‘ā’ and the masculine and feminine singular forms of the nisba are represented by ‘īy’ and ‘īya’ respectively.

Commonly accepted English forms are given for Arabic words—Hadith, hajj, imam, Kaaba, mihrab, muezzin, qadi, Qur’an, *umrah*; place names—Baghdad, Mecca, Medina, Mosul; names of dynasties—Abbasid, Ayyubid, Hamdanid; and religious and political groups, doctrines, and schools of thought—Hanbali, Hanafi, Shafi’i, Shi’i, Mu‘tazili, ‘Alid. All personal names are transliterated—Muḥammad, ‘Alī, ‘Umar. Expressions and salutations after names of persons, such as: ‘May peace be upon him’ and ‘May God be pleased with him’ are not used ordinarily.

For Hebrew, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* system is employed with the following modifications: ṣomekh is represented by ‘ṣ’, medial alef by “”, ‘ayn by “” and quf by ‘q’.



Map of late medieval Damascus pilgrimage sites. Not to scale.

Introduction

CAIRENES flock daily to the shrines of Ḥusayn, Sitt Zaynab, and other saints for blessings and intercession. On the anniversaries of saints' deaths, they celebrate *mawlid*s, which are accompanied by great pageantry.¹ Syrian, Iranian, and Central Asian pilgrims descend upon Damascus's Small Gate Cemetery, where they make the circuit around the tombs of the members of the Prophet's household and his Companions. In stark contrast to their ancestors who performed pilgrimage on foot and beast, today busloads of Iranian pilgrims converge upon Damascus with cameras in tow, while vendors peddle cameras, Iranian cloth, assorted baubles, fragrances, posters, and postcards. Collection boxes are affixed to shrines where pilgrims deposit their vows. A Damascene caretaker at the shrine of the medieval Sufi saint Ibn al-ʿArabī rebukes a visitor for depositing money in the glass case surrounding the cenotaph. In Cairo, aggressive women vendors dressed in black pounce on visitors to shrines, peddling miniature booklets containing verses from the Qur'an, fragrances, and plastic goods. In Galilee Jews visit the tombs and shrines of the Talmudic sages and in the Negev and elsewhere Jews of North African descent visit the tombs and shrines of Maghribi saints. Such scenes typify today's pilgrimage culture. It is a material culture far removed in its conception, form, and enactment from that of medieval devotees. Or is it? There is something almost ethereal and museum-like about a number of Damascene pilgrimage sites, where the cenotaph is protected by green cloth, glass panes, and transparent vinyl covers. The

¹ A *mawlid* also commemorates the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. See F. de Jong, 'Cairene Ziyāra-Days: A Contribution to the Study of Saint Veneration in Islam', *Die Welt des Islams*, ns 17 (1976-7), 26-43 and H. Fuchs and F. de Jong, 'Mawlid', *EI*(2), 6. 895-7 and more recently concerning the *mawlid* of Sitt Zaynab in Cairo, N. Abū-Zahra, *The Pure and Powerful: Studies in Contemporary Muslim Society* (Reading, 1997). For the medieval context cf. B. Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge, 1993).

process of mediation is mediated. Vestiges of ancient structures stand restored and reconfigured, sometimes bearing little resemblance to what they once were. But that is the way it has always been done. The past is always reconfigured, effaced, and memorialized in new and diverse forms. In events from their sacred past, 'people find themselves defined, that is, judged, enlightened, and put into fundamental touch'.²

Shrines were destroyed and rebuilt and inscriptions effaced. Patrons honoured the saint and God. For devotees, the past is alive in the present, though they could hardly be aware of the manner in which their ancestors venerated saints like Ibn al-ʿArabī or why they had forsaken the saint's shrine in Mamluk times. Times change. Boundaries shift. People change.

During the modern era Jews, Christians, and Muslims have nationalized religion, transforming it into a weapon of national struggle. The holy places of Jerusalem and the West Bank have become symbols of that struggle and continue to be fiercely contested, especially among Jews and Muslims. For Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the act of devotion to God is symbolic of political action and reaction. The recent tragic events of the Al-Aqṣā *intifāda*, or second Palestinian uprising, which began in late Summer 2000, catapulted Palestinians and Israelis further into the throes of utter despair, violence, and senseless killing. Out of rage and desperation Palestinians in Nablus desecrated the historic shrine of the Prophet Joseph, setting fire to it, a place historically venerated by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Since 1967 Muslims and Samaritans have been prevented from visiting the place and since the early 1980s it has been turned into a Jewish seminary. At the Cave of the Patriarchs, of greater religious and historical importance to Muslims and Jews as well as to Christians, the act of venerating Abraham and his family has since 1967 become contentious and is characterized by a culture of political defiance, religious extremism, and violence. In 1994 it became the scene of a massacre of Muslim worshippers at the hands of a Jewish settler, who was in turn killed. The physician gunman, whom devotees transformed into a martyr-saint, continues to be venerated as a holy person despite the dismantling of the shrine which stood over his grave. Holy and righteous individuals were known for healing through

² R. L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Columbia, SC, 1995), 5.

their blessings and the fulfilment of prayer and supplication. Pilgrims no longer go to Hebron and Nablus to venerate the Patriarchs. The militancy of blindly nationalistic ideologues, who fervently believe that God has favoured them to reclaim the Land, has led to the desacralization and politicization of holy places. The situation is thus because Muslims and Jews have a shared past, which includes shared holy persons and holy places. Never before in the history of Muslim–Jewish relations did such conflict over holy places occur. By contrast, the medieval scene was markedly different, though, for instance, Jews and Christians were not always allowed in mosques containing shrines. The Crusaders prevented non-Christians from entering the holy places of Palestine, in the same way that Jews generally would not have allowed non-Jews to enter their synagogues. It is all too easy to fall victim to understanding the medieval Near East through the eyes of the modern political observer for whom nationalism and modern political ideologies and considerations impose themselves upon a period of history long before the advent of the nation state and national ideologies. In Palestine as elsewhere, Jews and Muslims venerated holy persons at some of the same holy places out of devotion and religious conviction. Muslim and Jewish keepers served together at shrines in Iraq. Indeed, Muslims suggested to Jewish travellers that they visit holy places in Galilee and elsewhere. In Damascus, Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians visited the tomb of a medieval Muslim saint to make supplication there. Such scenes are lamentably unthinkable today.

The goals of this study are to understand the nature and practice of the cult of saints among Muslims and Jews in the medieval Near East from the eleventh to sixteenth centuries, its conception and articulation. It will draw upon examples from Greater Syria (Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon) as well as Iraq and Egypt, so as to situate the cult of saints within the context of a widespread phenomenon, which assumed similar ritual and physical dimensions throughout the Near East. A favourable political and social climate under various Sunni and Shi'i dynasties and, at times, war and persecution facilitated the circulation of scholars, ascetics, devotees, and mystics throughout the Islamic world. Similarly, devotional objects, relics, and 'sensory markers for sanctity'³ (e.g.

³ C. Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines', *Speculum*, 72 (1997), 1079.

perfume, soil, and water) circulated. This study does not deal extensively with the intellectual tradition of Islamic and Jewish mysticism, nor does it explore chronologically every facet of saint veneration. With few notable exceptions, such as the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, the shrine of Moses at Jericho, and the shrines of Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ and Cairo, the historical evidence for cult centres is fragmentary and hence cannot sustain a chronological analysis. Moreover, ritual acts do not readily lend themselves to periodization, as often and with few exceptions, the origins of festivals and *ziyāra* traditions are shrouded in legend. Apart from endowing and constructing shrines and the occurrence of holy days, which necessitated the performance of fixed forms of ritual at specific times, ritual in the context of saint devotion is not always bound by time as it is by occasion, local custom, and tradition. A second underlying premise is that the text is a living tradition, sometimes sacred, which can be employed to understand the nature and practice of saint veneration and that those traditions in turn, can be used to answer how and why Jewish and Muslim devotees turned to saints and made pilgrimage to shrines.

Oriental Christians are merely represented in this study. Unlike their Muslim counterparts or European pilgrims and travellers, the Oriental Christian communities did not produce pilgrimage guides, nor did they record detailed descriptions of the shrines or the devotees and the rituals they performed. Only brief and scattered descriptions from Muslim writers, travellers, and historians as well as European Jewish and Christian travellers and pilgrims have been preserved.⁴

The veneration of saints serves as an example of the relatively harmonious relations that existed between Muslims, Jews, and Christians in the Near East, as illustrated in the discussion of pilgrimage to Ṣaydnāyā outside Damascus and the tomb of Shaykh Arslān in Damascus itself. This study is not merely concerned with possible Jewish and Christian influences on the Islamic cult of saints and vice versa. Nor is it a vindication of sainthood, pilgrimage, or the infrequent occurrences of what might be regarded as questionable or sometimes irreligious acts by today's standards. These events are best understood, as medieval Muslims and Jews understood them. This study does not explore at great length the scrip-

⁴ A study of European Christian travellers and pilgrims' visits to the Christian holy places of the medieval Near East has yet to be written.

tural and exegetical bases concerning those venerated, prayer, or canonical pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Mecca. Not only did striking similarities exist in the devotional practices of Jewish and Muslim devotees, but saints and pilgrimage dramatically affected their lives in similar, yet distinct ways and penetrated into many aspects of devotional life. Yet, the *ziyāra* (lit. a visit, visitation), the Arabic word for pilgrimage and visiting sacred places, was a multi-dimensional phenomenon influenced by geography and local custom as well as by religious tradition. Syrian pilgrimage culture was distinct from that of Egypt and Iraq in its articulation, conception, and practice, but a common language of ritual idiom and practice existed throughout the Near East.

METHODOLOGY

Studies of saints in non-Christian contexts have all too often assumed the centrality of Christian paradigms. Expressions such as ‘cult of saints’, ‘saint’, ‘hagiography’, ‘sainthood’, and ‘praesentia’ (i.e. the physical presence of the holy) have distinctly Christian meanings.⁵ However, these and other concepts essentially correspond to certain shared aspects of saint veneration.⁶ Muslims, Christians, and Jews visited each other’s shrines in Syria and elsewhere. Muslim writers also listed Christian pilgrimage places in their works.⁷ ‘Sainthood’ merely refers to the state and condition by which one is designated a saint, irrespective of the process.

This study does not take Christianity as the basis for understanding Jewish or Muslim pilgrimage and saint veneration, though medieval Muslims acknowledged that certain ritual practices originated with Christians and Jews. Rather, it derives its inspiration from texts and elucidates the ritual acts which they depict, and

⁵ C. S. Taylor, *The Cult of the Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Ph.D. diss. Princeton University, 1989). Taylor adapts a number of such concepts from Brown’s *The Cult of Saints*, including ‘praesentia’. Cf. P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), 86–105. Robert Cohn adapts Christian categories to argue against the existence of saints and sainthood in Judaism. ‘Sainthood on the Periphery: The Case of Judaism’, in R. Kieckhefer and G. D. Bond (eds.), *Sainthood: Its Manifestations in World Religions* (Berkeley, 1988).

⁶ For a useful theoretical discussion, see Kieckhefer and Bond (eds.), *Sainthood*, pp. vii–xii, 243–53.

⁷ The listing of Christian pilgrimage places did not imply that Muslims made pilgrimage to them.

which may have certain features in common with the Christian veneration of saints. This study is not strictly comparative since the evidence for Jewish veneration of saints is significantly less than the Islamic. Notwithstanding, it situates the diverse and complex Jewish experience within the Islamic cultural context of which it was an integral part.

Ritual is a cornerstone of human relations, indeed of human existence. Traditional methods of interpreting Islamic and Jewish texts unravel the relationship of traditions to texts without understanding the human dimension of spirituality, the production of ritual, the establishment of custom, and the motivations, crises, and personal dramas in which medieval devotees partook and which are fundamental to this study. It is insufficient to examine how Jews and Muslims prayed, read liturgical texts, examined or invoked traditions, but rather it is essential to understand how these traditions were employed in the performance of *ziyāra* and the veneration of holy persons. Only in this way can a better understanding of the richness and diversity of the human experience be achieved. To that end, this analysis draws upon the experiences of Jews and Muslims, rulers, theologians, and common people, who contributed to the cult of saints' vitality.

Understanding ritual performance demands an intimate awareness of the social context which engenders it. Pilgrimage rites involve the surrender of one's idiosyncrasies, material world, and sense of affiliation.⁸ In their quest, devotees invest their spiritual journeys with a sacred quality derived from Scripture and tradition, a sense of self-purpose and historical awareness. Although today the cult of saints is regarded as a part of popular belief, it was not merely so in the medieval context. The cult of saints was intertwined in various physical, ceremonial, political, and economic aspects of devotional culture.

STUDIES

The works of the Hungarian Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher represent the most comprehensive treatment of saint veneration in the Islamic world to date. Along with a brief essay entitled 'The Cult of Saints

⁸ This idea is adapted from Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*.

in Islam', which appeared in *The Moslem World* in 1911, his far more extensive 'Veneration of Saints in Islam', originally published in 1888, appeared in a supplemented translation of his *Muhammedanische Studien* in 1971.⁹ Exploring the historical factors that contributed to the development of the cult of saints in Islam, Goldziher argues that it took its inspiration from the person and life of Muḥammad, the Prophet's influence on the development of the Islamic understanding of sainthood and miracles, and the regional characteristics and diversity in the cult of saints in the modern Near East and North Africa.

Janine Sourdél-Thomine's 'Les Anciens Lieux de pèlerinage damascains d'après les sources arabes' represents the first effort to systematically address sources for Damascene pilgrimage and the sites Damascenes frequented from time immemorial. Yet her most important contribution is the publication of the Arabic text and annotated French translation of the oldest extant medieval Arabic pilgrimage guide—*Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā Mārifat al-Ziyārāt* (*Guide to Pilgrimage Places*)¹⁰ of the ascetic scholar 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, who travelled throughout the Near East and the Mediterranean during the last quarter of the twelfth century and who recorded 'the wondrous sites, structures and monuments . . . along with the idols, ruins, and talismans in the inhabited and civilized region'.¹¹

D. S. Margoliouth's brief essay on the relics of the Prophet Muḥammad and Jean-Michel Mouton's recent work on relics and devotional objects focus on aspects of saint veneration and devotional culture which have not been effectively integrated into the study of Islamic hagiography, partly since relics and devotional objects did not assume as central a role as in Christianity.¹² Both studies emphasize relics associated with the Prophet. This study looks at these and other types of relics associated with saints and talismanic objects, which have yet to be explored within the

⁹ I. Goldziher, 'Veneration of Saints in Islam', in S. M. Stern (ed.), *Muslim Studies*, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, 2 vols. (London, 1967-71), 2, 255-341.

¹⁰ Lit. *The Book of Indications of the Knowledge of Pilgrimage Places*.

¹¹ *Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā Mārifat al-Ziyārāt*, ed. J. Sourdél-Thomine (Damascus, 1953), 3; *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, trans. J. Sourdél-Thomine (Damascus, 1957), 6.

¹² D. S. Margoliouth, 'The Relics of the Prophet Mohammed', *MW*(1) 27 (1937), 20-7; J.-M. Mouton, 'De quelques reliques conservées à Damas au Moyen-Âge: Stratégie politique et religiosité populaire sous les Bourides', *AI* 27 (1993), 245-54.

broader context of the cult of saints. The visual, symbolic representation of the holy as it is perceived by the devotee at the shrine, which is an important aspect of this study, is the focus of Cynthia Hahn's innovative work on the cult of saints in the western and eastern Christian contexts.¹³

Christopher Taylor's *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyara and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* represents the first critical investigation of the 'locus and practice of the cult of saints' in late medieval Egypt. Taylor demonstrates that the cult of saints was a burgeoning phenomenon, which manifested itself in diverse literary, historical, and devotional genres, most notably the pilgrimage guides.¹⁴ Taylor's enterprise departs from conventional studies of historiographical sources by focusing on a particular *ziyāra* tradition for which he explores the theological, historical, and architectural dimensions of saint devotion and the *ziyāra*.

In the Jewish context, Elchanan Reiner's *ʿAliyah va-ʿAliyah le-Regel*, which relies on travel itineraries and letters, concerns medieval Jewish Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, though the second part of the study is devoted to pilgrimage to tombs.¹⁵ Joshua Prawer's study of the *History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* examines at length the travel and pilgrimage accounts of the Crusader period.¹⁶

A number of essays focusing on various aspects of Islamic hagiography have appeared over the years, which attempt to bridge the gap between the Islamic and Western experiences and situate the former in the broader framework of the field of hagiography. Although useful for its extensive bibliographic coverage, a collection of essays edited by Stephen Wilson on the cult of saints does not sufficiently address the Jewish or the Near Eastern Islamic cases.¹⁷ With the publication in 1999 of *The Cult of Saints in Late*

¹³ Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing', 1079–1106.

¹⁴ C. S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyara and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden, 1999). Also, see Taylor, *The Cult of the Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*.

¹⁵ E. Reiner, *ʿAliyah va-ʿAliyah le-Regel le-Erez Yisra'el* (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988).

¹⁶ J. Prawer, *The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1988), 169–250.

¹⁷ S. Wilson (ed.), *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* (Cambridge, 1983).

Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, a collection of essays co-edited by James Howard-Johnston and Paul A. Hayward, the cult of saints in Islam came to be represented for the first time alongside diverse western and eastern Christian experiences.

In a study of miracles in the medieval Persian context based on Arabic sources, Denise Aigle suggests that hagiographies can be employed to understand social and political history through the classification of saintly miracles according to a tripartite scheme of type, pre-text, and result or consequence, an approach which has yet to be implemented in the social-historical context.¹⁸ Aigle's study does not address the relationship between saints and prophets in the posthumous production of miracles. Similarly, authority, as will be demonstrated herein, did not merely shift from qadis and ulema to saints, at least not in the Syrian context, but rather co-existed, though the saint at times exercised spiritual and moral, though not legal, authority.¹⁹

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1, which focuses on sacred topography, provides a backdrop for the discussion of pilgrimage sites and the manner in which Jews and Muslims employed Scripture to refer to sacred places. It explores how Jews and Muslims understood sacred space through similar means. How did sacred topography as depicted in Scripture and shaped by physical environment and sensory and ritual means inform and transform the process of rediscovering sacred space? *Baraka* (lit. blessing) lay at the foundation of Jewish and Muslim conceptions and perceptions of the sacred. The consecration of sacred space as well as popular stories and traditions informed the way in which devotees venerated saints at shrines and interacted with each other.

Chapter 2 focuses on the saint and explores the doctrine of sainthood in Islam and the absence of a doctrine in Judaism. It looks at the sanctity of persons as embodied in historical and biographical accounts and theological discussions concerning the saint and

¹⁸ D. Aigle, 'Charismes et rôle social des saints dans l'hagiographie persane médiévale (x^e-xv^e siècles)', *BEO* 47 (1995), 15-36.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 27.

miracles in medieval Islam. What were the attributes by which a saint was recognized? The Muslim saint was a mediator, holy person, miracle worker, healer, and a warrior for the faith. It will also look at the potent force of *baraka*, which manifested itself in the persons of saints and their belongings and the value with which devotees invested their persons and effects. One devotee's understanding of who was a saint was not always another's. This invariably led to tension between Sunnis and Shi'is in Iraq and in Damascus, which sometimes engendered acts of violence. The absence of living saints and a medieval tradition of saints in Judaism did not preclude the emergence of belief in miracles, which were displayed through the merits of the ancestors at their shrines.

Chapter 3 turns to pilgrimage and the *ziyāra* (lit. visit, visiting, visitation) in the Islamic context; here taken to mean not only pilgrimage, but also the culture of devotion of which pilgrimage and saint veneration were an integral part. *Ziyāra* did not always refer to making pilgrimage to shrines and tombs. Participating in the veneration of saints was for many a form of remembering God, the dead, the Hereafter, and one's religious duties. The nature of Syrian, Egyptian, and Shi'i pilgrimage guides and literature will be explored comparatively. Pilgrimage guides were not a minor literary genre as evidenced by established traditions of writing pilgrimage guides in the Egyptian, Syrian, and Shi'i contexts.²⁰ Although variety exists in the content and presentation of guides, they depict forms of ritual behaviour which were universal throughout the Islamic world. The lives of devotees, the rituals they performed, and the value with which they invested the *ziyāra* will also be explored. For some, *ziyāra* constituted a series of ritual acts which were performed at efficacious times, while for others it was a matter of habit to visit shrines at times of need. Jews and Muslims performed the rite annually during holy days when the shrine was most likely to produce miracles. However, for some Muslim and Jewish theologians, the performance of *ziyāra* rituals at saints' tombs was contentious and regarded as idolatry and heretical innovation. Yet its proponents came to its defence. The underlying causes for this tension will be discussed. In the Shi'i context it will explore the cults of Ḥusayn and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and in the Sunni

²⁰ H. Lammens and C. E. Bosworth regard guides as 'a minor literary genre', 'al-Shām', *EI*(2), 9. 261-73.

context, the cults of Ibrāhīm and Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā'. Muslim-Christian relations are examined, as are the uses of talismanic objects and their association with holy persons.

Chapter 4 turns to Jewish pilgrimage in the light of historical and devotional sources and pilgrimage accounts, travel itineraries, letters, and documents from the Cairo Geniza. It also discusses the objections of Jewish theologians to certain popular *ziyāra* practices and their general acquiescence to others. A number of popular pilgrimage centres in Greater Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine are explored including the shrines of the Prophets Elijah, Moses, Ezekiel, and Ezra. Herein, the nature of Jewish-Muslim relations at holy places is discussed in the light of Jewish and Muslim sources.

Chapter 5 explores the variety of shrines and other monuments to which devotees made *ziyāra* and the reasons for their proliferation during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Shrines emerged as important places for the fulfilment of supplication. As shrines came to be associated with mosques, the boundary between mosque and shrine as centres for the fulfilment of supplication often became blurred. Secondary structures, such as the *madrasa* and the mosque, figured prominently in *ziyāra* culture. What constituted a pilgrimage site depended on local tradition. Shi'i patronage of shrines and the reasons for the proliferation of shrine compounds from the twelfth century are considered.

The concluding chapter re-evaluates the centrality of the cult of saints in Islamic and Jewish traditions in the light of the most recent research concerning popular and high culture. Neither the traditional dichotomy of high (elite) and low (popular) culture, nor a fluid model as previously proposed, sufficiently considers the language writers employed and the nature of the rituals devotees performed.

Sacred Topography

THIS chapter is about Jews and Muslims mapping sacred landscapes¹ and ‘the construction of sanctity’² in the Islamic Near East with an emphasis on al-Shām (Greater Syria).³ Whether actual or perceived, holiness was a feature of the land as it was an intrinsic force which stemmed from the religious psyche. Muslims, Jews, and Christians perceived, interacted with, mapped, and wrote about the sacred. Devotees created and sustained ‘sanctity’ by building shrines, tombs, and other commemorative structures, writing about sacred topography, and performing rituals. Sacred topography encompasses those distinguishing characteristics of a place that its inhabitants, writers, and travellers identified as holy—monuments, such as tombs, sepulchres, mausoleums, houses, shrines, mosques, synagogues, and churches, as well as natural sites, such as mountains, wells, rivers, and caves.⁴ Sacred spaces formed sacred places. Continuity, balance, order and harmony of space were essential qualities that contributed to the formation of sacred topography. In building over sacred places and in their vicinities, patrons and builders of monuments achieved harmony in the cosmic order of things.⁵

As a methodological construct, ‘sacred topography’ is both selective and subjective.⁶ Dorothea French in a study of Christian

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are original.

² This expression is adapted from Hahn, ‘Seeing and Believing’, 1079–1106.

³ C. E. Bosworth *et al.*, ‘al-Shām’, *EI*(2), 9, 261–75.

⁴ Individual tombs and shrines, ritual practices, and establishing cults of saints will be addressed in subsequent chapters. For a discussion of topoi, see W. G. Moore, *A Dictionary of Geography* (London, 1967), s.v. ‘Topographic map’. More recently, see D. R. French, ‘Mapping Sacred Centers: Pilgrimage and the Creation of Christian Topographies in Roman Palestine’, in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband*, (Münster, 1995), 792–7.

⁵ C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, 1966), 10. Lévi-Strauss does not address the cult of saints.

⁶ J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago and London, 1987), 10.

topographies in Roman Palestine regards the ‘delineation of sacred places as a kind of “mapping” that occurs on the literal and figurative levels’.⁷ Physical mapping, which is employed in travellers’ and pilgrims’ inventories and itineraries, and geographical works, was often achieved through sight and smell. A writer observed that a particular place lay to the south of the city in the vicinity of a saint’s shrine or that the saint’s shrine was two miles south of the city gate. While passing through Sidon, a sixteenth-century Italian rabbi commented, ‘A quarter-mile outside the city, I saw the tomb of Zebulon. Originally, it stood between two large pillars and a carob tree.’⁸ The shrine formed a natural part of the medieval landscape, constituting a sacred centre vis-à-vis its surroundings. Rabbi Petahiyah of Regensburg observed:

At Sepphoris is buried our Holy Rabbi (R. Judah the Prince, compiler of the Mishnah). A pleasing odour ascends from his grave. This odour is smelt at the distance of a mile from his grave.⁹

By contrast, figurative mapping, which is not entirely dependent on the senses, refers to the ‘inner-spiritual’ and ritual processes by which holy places were mapped, perhaps in the first instance, mapping by association. Pilgrims commonly observed that places were holy and efficacious for prayer and supplication or declared that a holy person appeared in a dream. Both types often involved the invocation of Tradition, which constituted a fundamental part of the pilgrimage experience.

Medieval devotees identified holiness as an attribute of sacred places. Muslims referred to Palestine as the Holy Land, *al-arḍ al-muqaddasa*, the Temple Mount as ‘al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf’ (the Noble Sanctuary), and Jerusalem as ‘Bayt al-Maqdis’.¹⁰ Jews referred to Jerusalem and the Land of Israel as the Holy Land, *ereẓ ha-qodesh* or *ha-areẓ ha-qedoshah*. Muslims also referred to sacred places as *mubārak* (blessed or sacred) (lit. possessing *baraka*), or more commonly observed that they possessed *baraka*, while Jews referred to holy places as *qadosh* (holy, sacred). Holiness emanated

⁷ French, ‘Mapping Sacred Centers’.

⁸ Moshe Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣā’ot Erez Yisra’el le-Rabbi Moshe Baṣṣola*, ed. Y. Ben-Zevi (Jerusalem, 1938), 40.

⁹ E. N. Adler (trans.), *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages* (London, 1930), 86. (modified).

¹⁰ See S. D. Goitein, ‘Al-Ḳuds’, *EI*(2), 5. 322–39, esp. pp. 322–35.

from cities, natural sites, tombs, and monuments and also from prophets and saints. The geographer and cosmographer al-Qazwīnī (600/1203–682/1283) mentions that the northern Syrian city of Ḥimṣ possessed *baraka*, as did its water. If a garment were washed in its waters, ‘a scorpion would not come near to its wearer unless it is washed in other water’.¹¹

Devotees did not only know holiness through invoking place-names and dead and living saints. They perceived and experienced it. It was not only ‘Islamic sacred places’ that made these localities sacred in the eyes of their inhabitants. Indeed, all sacred places contributed a sense of harmony and continuity to a given locality in the eyes of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, who, though emphasizing their own holy sites, recognized the holiness of sites to devotees of other faiths. Devotees of all faiths perceived that shrines, wells, caves, and places of worship were sacred because of the occurrence of some miracle there, the appearance of a saint, or the performance of ritual acts.

Story, ritual, and place engendered sacred topography.¹² The story or text refers to Scripture, exegesis, pilgrimage guides, monumental inscriptions, or oral accounts, such as stories and legends. Ritual denotes the performance of a ritual act or rite in association with a spot, such as invoking Scripture, recounting a story, weeping, lighting candles, and celebrating, etc. A place can be man-made as a shrine or place of worship, or natural as a mountain, cave, spring, or river. This study considers the articulation of these categories in the context of sacred topography.¹³

GREATER SYRIA

For medieval Muslims, al-Shām was a holy land, yet not by the same measure as the canonical holy cities of Islam—Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. While other continuously inhabited cities are not mentioned in the Qur’an, such locales as Damascus and Aleppo are mentioned in Hadith. History provided the conceptual

¹¹ T. Lewicki, ‘al-Qazwīnī’, *EI*(2), 4, 865–7. Al-Qazwīnī, *Kitāb Āthār al-Bilād wa Akhbār al-Tbād*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1848), 123.

¹² Smith, *To Take Place*, 86.

¹³ See Chs. 3 and 4.

framework for Muslim writers who extolled the sanctity of their homelands and other places in the *faḍā'il* (merits) literature and works of regional and local history, such as al-Raba'ī's *Faḍā'il al-Shām wa Dimashq*, Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, and Ibn al-'Adīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab*. Transmitters and compilers of traditions, historians, and writers of pilgrimage guides drew upon Scripture, exegetical traditions, stories, myths, legends, and historical events to provide a context for the sanctity of holy places. Egypt's inhabitants regarded Egypt as a blessed land (*balad mubārak li-ablihi fihī*).¹⁴ Karbalā' was also a holy city for Shi'is as found in the following tradition of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn:¹⁵ 'God has taken the ground of Karbalā' as an inviolable and sacred sanctuary (*ḥaram*),¹⁶ which contains the Lord of the Martyrs and the Lord of the youths of the inhabitants of Paradise (i.e. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī).'¹⁷ Another tradition refers to Karbalā' as a 'blessed patch of land (*buḡa mubāraka*)'.¹⁸

A number of traditions which are an integral component of late medieval Syrian pilgrimage guides (*ziyārāt*) illustrate that al-Shām was a holy land.¹⁹ Such traditions generally mention God endowing al-Shām with His blessings, commanding His angels to protect it with their wings and His Prophets and righteous saints to watch over it and extol its virtues to the believers. Mu'ādh b. Jabal (d. 18/639), a Companion of the Prophet, said that the Land of Syria, which he defined as the region which lay between al-'Arīsh in Egypt and the Euphrates in Iraq, contained towns which the 'prophets maintain engendered *baraka*. It is mentioned that it is holy land (*ard muqaddasa*) in its entirety.'²⁰

¹⁴ Ibn al-Murajjā, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis wa-al-Shām*, Cambridge University, MS Qq. 91, fo. 15^r.

¹⁵ E. Honigmann, 'Karbalā', *EI*(2), 4. 637-9.

¹⁶ O. Grabar, 'Al-Haram al-Sharīf', *EI*(2), 3. 173-5; E. W. Lane, 'Ḥaram', in *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863-93), 554-5. *Ḥaram* usually refers to the sanctuary at Mecca, *al-haram al-sharīf*.

¹⁷ Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Mazār* (Qum, 1988), 34.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 27. In the Qur'anic context (28: 30), 'al-buḡa al-mubāraka' refers to the blessed patch of land where God spoke to Moses. Also see C. E. Bosworth, 'Buḡa', *EI*(2) suppl., p. 154.

¹⁹ Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *al-Ishārāt ilā Amākin al-Ziyārāt*, ed. B. 'A. al-Jabī (Damascus, 1981), 7-13.

²⁰ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. S. al-Munajjid, vols. 1 and 2(1) (Damascus, 1951-4), 1. 139. Also see Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab*, ed. S. al-Zakkār, 11 vols. (Beirut, 1988-9), 1. 41.

Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. c.30/650), a storyteller and early Jewish convert to Islam said,

A man came to the [Prophet . . .] and said: 'I wish to leave; I am striving for God's bounty . . .'. The Prophet said: 'You must choose al-Shām; whatever is deficient from the blessedness (*baraka*) of other lands is increased in al-Shām.'²¹

The Prophet also said,

I saw the pillar of the Book (*ʿamūd al-kitāb*) forcibly extricated from beneath my pillow. Then I looked up, suddenly beholding light upon which it rested aiming for al-Shām . . .²²

In another tradition, Zayd b. Thābit, comments that the Prophet said,

'Blessed be al-Shām. Blessed be al-Shām. Blessed be al-Shām.' Somebody said: 'What is that, Oh Messenger of God?' 'Those are the angels of God . . . spreading their wings over al-Shām.'²³

Ka'b mentions that 'God . . . blessed (*bāraka*) al-Shām from the Euphrates to al-ʿArīsh.'²⁴ In the Jewish context, the expression from the 'Nile to the Euphrates' corresponds to the geographical boundaries of the Biblical Land of Israel (Gen. 15. 18–21). Such traditions reflect the commonly held beliefs of residents, writers, and travellers about the holiness of the land. The present discussion transcends a specific type of sacred place, aiming instead to take account of the most important manifestations of the sacred. Specific types of tombs and shrines are addressed in Chapter 5.

²¹ Al-Rabaʿī, *Faḍāʾil al-Shām wa Dimashq*, ed. Ṣ. al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1950), 7; cf. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ed. Y. Khayyāt and N. Marʿashī, 3 vols. (Beirut, 1970), 1. 66.

²² Al-Rabaʿī, *Faḍāʾil al-Shām*, 8; variation, pp. 13–14. Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, ed. A. M. Shākir, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1948), 4. 198–9: 'idh ra'aytu 'amūd al-kitāb uḥtumila min taḥṭi ra'sī'; 4. 198: 'fa-ḥamiltu 'amūd al-kitāb . . . fa-'amadtu bi-hi ilā al-shām' (I carried the pillar of the Book . . . I aimed with it for al-Shām). A variation on this tradition emphasizes the inhabitants of al-Shām's belief in God at times of trouble: 'On the authority of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar . . . who said, "The Prophet . . . said to us one day, 'I saw the angels in a night vision taking away the pillar of the Book. They took it and aimed with it for al-Shām (*'amadū bi-hi ilā . . .*). When times of trouble occur in al-Shām, belief will be [present there].'"'

²³ Al-Rabaʿī, *Faḍāʾil al-Shām*, 8, 10.

²⁴ Ibid. 11.

BARAKA AND SACRED SPACE

Baraka, which has a variety of meanings in the modern and pre-modern contexts, is an innate force, sometimes rendered as ‘blessing’, which prophets and saints possessed, as did objects and places with which they came in contact.²⁵ In the biographical account of the Sufi saint Shaykh Arslān (d. c. 550/1155), the water of the well he dug contained *baraka*. Ibn Ṭūlūn states:

Shaykh Arslān at first used to worship in a small mosque inside Bāb Tūmā, which at present is known as his station (*maqām*) in the vicinity of his house and his carpenter’s shop. He dug the well that is there with his hand. The people of that neighbourhood drink from it and receive blessings from its water (*yatabarrakūna bi-mā’ihā*). [Whoever has a stomach-ache or any pain and drinks from it will be cured with God the Exalted’s permission. Many have tried it.]²⁶

Baraka is the stuff of faith. Its supreme manifestation is the Qur’an and the five pillars of Islam.²⁷ *Baraka* sanctified a location through the presence or the apparent presence of a saint and his personal effects, which became devotional or ritual objects. In addition to commemorative places, such as shrines, portable holy objects, such as copies of the Qur’an and the sandal of the Prophet Muḥammad, which are addressed later, possessed *baraka*. Devotees made pilgrimage to obtain blessings from them as they did to tombs and shrines.²⁸ In both the Islamic and Jewish contexts, God was the ultimate source of holiness. ‘Objects, persons, sites and activities that are employed in the service of God, derive their sacred character from that relationship.’²⁹

²⁵ For a discussion of *baraka*, see G. S. Colin, ‘Baraka’, *EI*(2), 1. 1032; J. W. Meri, ‘Aspects of *Baraka* (Blessings) and Ritual Devotion among Medieval Muslims and Jews’, in a special issue of *Medieval Encounters: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue*, 5 (1999), 46–69. For the modern context, a number of anthropological studies illustrate this concept particularly well. See for instance E. Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London, 1969). In the Jewish context, see Y. Bilu, ‘Making of Modern Saints: Manufactured Charisma and the Abu-Hatseiras of Israel’, *American Ethnologist*, 19 (1992), 672–87.

²⁶ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Ghāyat al-Bayān fī Tarjamat al-Shaykh Arslān*, ed. A. Ibesch (Damascus, 1984), 48. The bracketed text is added from Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 89.

²⁷ E. Westermarck, *Pagan Survivals in Mohammedan Civilization* (London, 1933), 87.

²⁸ For a fuller discussion of *baraka* and devotional objects, see Chs. 2 and 3.

²⁹ ‘Kedushah’, *EJ* 9. 866.

Muslim writers never expressed a uniform conception of 'sacredness' or 'holiness'. Differences existed in definition and degree. In a tradition related by Abū 'Abd al-Malik al-Jazarī, al-Shām was blessed (*mubāraka*), Palestine was holy (*muqaddasa*), and Bayt al-Maqdis was the Holy of Holies (*quds al-quds*).³⁰

Thawr b. Yazīd (d. 153/770),³¹ a Damascene traditionist, said:

The holiness (*quds*) of the land is al-Shām, the holiness (*quds*) of al-Shām is Palestine, the holiness of Palestine is Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), and the holiness of Bayt al-Maqdis is the mountain. The holiness of the mountain is the mosque [i.e. Maṣjid al-Aqṣā]. The holiness of the mosque is the cupola (*qubba*).³²

Although al-Shām was a sacred land, Palestine and Jerusalem were always at the centre of the writer's conception of holiness. In the latter tradition, Jerusalem, the mountain, the mosque, and the cupola existed in a harmonious relationship. The dome graced many Islamic structures, but was the hallmark of shrines.³³

JEWISH CONCEPTIONS OF HOLINESS

Jews never regarded other cities of the Near East as holy as Jerusalem. Syria was outside the Land of Israel and Damascus was at its outskirts. Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah* defines Syria as comprising

From the Land of Israel outward, in the direction of Aram-Naharaim (Damascus) and Aram-Zobah (Aleppo). The entire basin of the Euphrates up to Babylonia, including such places as Damascus, Ahlab (i.e. Aleppo), Haran (i.e. Ḥarrān), Migbab (i.e. Manbij), and the like, up to Shin'ar (i.e. Babylonia) and Ṣahar . . .³⁴

³⁰ Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar Ta'rikh Dimashq li-Ibn 'Asākir*, ed. R. al-Naḥḥās, *et al.*, 29 vols. (Damascus, 1984-90), 1. 66.

³¹ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 12 vols. (Hyderabad, 1907-9), 2. 33-6.

³² Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar Ta'rikh Dimashq*, 1. 68.

³³ See Ch. 5.

³⁴ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah Hu ha-Yad ha-Ḥazaqah le-Rabeinu Moshe ben Maimun*, ed. S. T. Rubinshtain, 14 vols. (Jerusalem, 1956/7-1964/5), 139.

As discussed earlier, other regions, such as Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, were holy for Jewish residents and visitors who, like their Muslim counterparts, perceived holiness in the light of Scripture and exegesis. This conception of holiness did not preclude Jews since Antiquity from regarding as holy the burial places of the Talmudic sages in upper Galilee, many of which are not mentioned in the Talmud.³⁵ The same can be said for Egyptians and the Synagogue of Moses at Dammūh or Iraqīs and the shrine of Ezekiel.³⁶ Writing in the fifteenth century, Rabbi Yiẓḥaq Elfarra of Málaga reported seeing ‘a red stone, fixed in the wall, which Ezra had brought with him and which had been one of the stones of the Temple’.³⁷ Other such features of pilgrimage places will be addressed in Chapters 3 and 4.

For Eshtori, who travelled to the Land of Israel to rediscover the original sanctity of places, as well as for other travellers and pilgrims, holiness in its present manifestations had its roots in the Jewish past. He states:

It is appropriate to make the pilgrimage circuit to visit those holy places. However, at present there is no doubt that they truly contain a measure of their original sanctity . . .³⁸

Commenting that a place was holy (*qadosh*) indicates that holiness was present there. A place became holy when a devotee saw a prophet or saint in a vision who instructs him to build a shrine. Such details, which are generally unknown to devotees and travellers, are seldom recorded. Like Muslims, Jewish writers extolled in travel itineraries the sacred topography of holy sites throughout the Near East. This suggests that Jewish, Muslim, and Christian conceptions of sacred topography were not entirely dependent upon the sanctity of cities, towns, or villages as corporate entities, but also upon particular holy sites and those buried within them. Such is the case with even the holiest of cities in Judaism and Islam.

³⁵ S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 5 vols. (Berkeley, 1967–88), 5. 18–19, 508 n. 39.

³⁶ Concerning these shrines, see pp. 222–7 and 229–40.

³⁷ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 67.

³⁸ *Kaftor va-Perah*, ed. H. Edelman (Berlin, 1852), fo. 47^v. Quoted from J. Prawer, ‘R. Eshtori ha-Parhi-Rishon le-Hoqrei Erez-Yisra’el be-Mele’at 650 le-Sifro “Kaftor va-Perah”’, in Y. Aviram (ed.), *Erez Shomron: Ha-Kinnus ha-Arzi ha-Sheloshim le-Yedi’at ha-Areẓ* (Jerusalem, 1973), 112.

DEMARCATING AND PERCEIVING THE SACRED

Jewish and Muslim devotees perceived and demarcated the sacred through the senses and ritual. In both instances, they experienced extraordinary phenomena, which were anything but supernatural. Encountering manifestations of the holy in the pre-modern context occurred within the framework of religion which admitted the 'supernatural'. Devotees witnessed light, experienced visions, and smelled pleasant odours emanating from tombs and shrines. They recognized the importance of seeking, experiencing, and writing about the holy and constantly engaged the sacred through employing rituals. The unknown and mysterious were an essential part of this experience.

At dusk, lights descended from the heavens upon tombs, shrines, and other holy sites, or by some accounts, emanated from them, and illuminated the night sky. Such lights often designated the tomb of a prophet. The average Jew, Muslim, or Christian did not ordinarily doubt the holiness of such sites. The twelfth-century Iberian poet Judah ha-Levi characterized the divine presence as attaching itself to prophets and manifesting itself in places worthy of God's divine light:

Behold how the Divine Influence attached itself to Abraham, and then to all those who shared his excellence and the Holy Land. This influence followed him everywhere, and guarded his prosperity, preventing the detachment of any of them, it brought them to the most sheltered and best place, and caused them to occupy a degree worthy of such excellence. . . . HIS light shines in these places as in heaven although through mediums which are fit to receive this light. He sheds it upon them, and thus it is that is called love. It has been taught us, and we have been enjoined to believe in it, as well as to praise and thank Him in the prayer: 'With eternal love Thou lovest us' so that we should bear that it originally came from Him, but not from us.³⁹

In an earlier passage, the ruler of the Khazar describes the divine presence as it manifests itself in perceptible phenomena:

I understand the meaning of 'The Glory of God', 'Angel of God', and 'Shekhinah'. They are names applied by the Prophets to things percep-

³⁹ Judah ha-Levi, *Judah ha-Levi's Kitab al-Khazari*, ed. and trans. H. Hirschfeld (London, 1931), 100-1.

tible, as ‘Pillar of Cloud’, ‘Consuming Fire’, ‘Cloud’, ‘Mist’, ‘Fire’, ‘Splendour’, as it is said of the light in the morning, in the evening, and on cloudy days that the rays of light go forth from the sun, although it is not visible. Yet we say that the rays of light are inseparable from the sun, although in reality this is not so. It is the terrestrial bodies which, opposite to it, are affected by it, and reflect its light.⁴⁰

One of the most notable encounters with the holy in the Jewish context is that of the celebrated Andalusian Jewish poet Judah al-Ḥarizi (1170–1235 CE), who, while journeying to the Near East during the first quarter of the thirteenth century, was told of lights ascending from the tomb of Ezra the Priest in the Iraqi village of Basra.⁴¹ In chapter 35 of his *Taḥkemoni*, a series of *maqāmāt* (literary sessions), al-Ḥarizi, through his protagonist Ḥeman ha-Ezraḥi, comments that from the time of the discovery of Ezra’s tomb (which, according to him, was discovered 160 years prior to his visit in c.1056–60 CE),

there goes up from his grave on certain nights an illumination that dispels the thick darkness. Because of this phenomenon the people believe that the Glory of the Lord shines upon him (*kee-kavod ha-shem zarah’alav*) and many people make pilgrimage (*yā’aleh*) to him. Round about him are the graves of the seven upright saints. And on certain nights lights [descend] upon them, sparkling from the highest heaven and their rays come down upon earth (Ps. 73: 9).⁴²

Al-Ḥarizi, who was a first-hand witness to the tomb’s popularity, glorifies it through his narrator, who refers to the light of holiness which descended from the heavens and shone upon the tomb as ‘the Glory of the Lord’ (*kavod ha-shem*). Although al-Ḥarizi’s protagonist was at first sceptical of the holiness of this place, he eventually came to believe in its genuineness.

Then I prostrated myself upon his grave before the Lord. On certain nights I went out with a great throng to see its illumination and to investigate the brightness of its splendour. Now when we saw it with our very eyes, I did not believe it, for I said: Perchance the denizens of the village, the Gentiles who reside in the cities round about, desire to mock us and deceive us and have purposely lit before us [bonfires].

⁴⁰ Ibid. 77.

⁴¹ Concerning pilgrimage to the shrine of Ezra, see Ch. 4, also Index, ‘Ezra’.

⁴² Al-Ḥarizi, *Taḥkemoni*, ed. and trans. V. E. Reichert, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1973), 2. 208. Translations are Reichert’s with modifications.

So I paid close heed and looked because the light of a flame is red whereas the light of glory is pure as the sun.⁴³

In discerning the true nature of the light through rational means and his sense of sight, al-Ḥarizi observes:

For when the flame of brimstone goes up, is it not hidden in its darkness? Because the smoke of blackness is about its light so that it has not a bright light and its illumination is not pure and bright. But this light (which we saw over the grave) is pure and clear. It shines in the darkness, dancing to the left and right, going up and down, whereas the flame of brimstone ascends heavily or lies low. But the light of the Glory goes up swiftly and easily.⁴⁴

Al-Ḥarizi was not the only one to witness these lights. The twelfth-century Jewish traveller Petaḥiyah of Regensburg observes that

Ezra, the scribe, is buried on the boundary of the land of Babylon. When the pillar of fire is over his grave, the structure erected on it is not visible on account of the brightness over his grave.⁴⁵

Petaḥiyah's characterization of the light as a pillar of fire seemingly contradicts al-Ḥarizi's description. The difference can partly be explained by al-Ḥarizi's poetic language. Fire in the Biblical context was also a sign of holiness.⁴⁶ When Moses beheld the burning bush, God commanded him to remove his shoes, 'for the place on which you are standing is holy ground' (Ex. 3: 1–5). Before God revealed the Tablets of the Law on Mt. Sinai, Moses beheld the Glory of the Lord, which was 'like a devouring fire on top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel' (Ex. 24: 17). Similarly, in describing the tomb of the Companion Mudrik al-Fazārī, Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, a sixteenth-century author of a pilgrimage guide for Syria, *al-Ishārāt ilā Amākin al-Ziyārāt* (*Guide to Pilgrimage Sites*), commented that 'It is a lofty tomb (*ḍarīḥ*), great, containing friendly atmosphere (*uns*), light (*nūr*) and blessing (*baraka*) to an immeasurable extent . . .'.⁴⁷

So intimate, powerful, and profound was the effect of light and holiness that writers never needed to define it. Devotees from different backgrounds knew what *baraka* was. At the alleged tomb of

⁴³ Al-Ḥarizi, *Tabkemoni*, 2. 209.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 210. ⁴⁵ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 84–5.

⁴⁶ 'Kedushah', *Ej* 9. 867. ⁴⁷ Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 136.

Noah in the town of al-Karak near Baʿlabakk, Ibn al-Hawrānī ‘saw lights (*anwār*) rising from the tomb (*ḍarīḥ*)’.⁴⁸ In his *al-Nubdha al-Laṭīfa fī-al-Mazārāt al-Sharīfa* (*Concise Pamphlet Concerning Noble Pilgrimage Sites*), Yāsīn al-Biqāʿī (d. 1095/1684) associates the phenomenon with the tombs of prophets:

Many a time did I behold on Fridays and Mondays lights arising from the summit of . . . Mt. al-Rimthānī up to the sky. It is said that lights do not rise except from prophets’ tombs. . . . In the case of Ezra the light descends.⁴⁹

Writing in the twelfth century, the traveller al-Harawī mentions that

the village of Shayhān⁵⁰ contains a tomb standing on the mountain upon which light (*nūr*) descends and the people see it. People allege that it is the tomb of Mūsā b. ʿImrān. . . . God knows best.⁵¹

Referring to Wādī Jahannam outside of Jerusalem, al-Harawī comments that it

contains blessed sites (*mawāḍiʿ mubāraka*) and many tombs of the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*) and the Companions of the Prophet . . . except that they are no longer known because of the Franks taking control over the country.⁵²

Others like the thirteenth-century Aleppan historian Ibn al-ʿAdīm (588/1192–660/1262), speak of similar phenomena. In the first section of *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab*, an extensive biographical compendium of learned and prominent Aleppans of all ages, Ibn al-ʿAdīm speaks of the merits of Aleppo, which include light. Light was a sign of holiness and antiquity.

In a village on this mountain known as Naḥla are graves upon which the spectator beholds light from the distance at night. When it gets close to them, he does not see anything. They have writing in Greek. Our friend

⁴⁸ Ibid. 143–7. J. Sourdel-Thomine, ‘Inscriptions Arabes de Karak Nūh,’ *BEO* 13 (1949–51), 71–84.

⁴⁹ Al-Biqāʿī, *al-Nubdha al-Laṭīfa fī-al-Mazārāt al-Sharīfa*, Damascus, Maktabat al-Asad 11386, fos. 41^v–42^r.

⁵⁰ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1866–73), 3. 209–10.

⁵¹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 18; cf. Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq al-Khaṭīra fī Dhikr Umarāʾ al-Shām wa-al-Jazīra*, ed. S. al-Dahhān (Damascus, 1962), 276.

⁵² Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 28.

Bahā' al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Khashshāb . . . told me that the Amir Sayf al-Dīn 'Alī b. Qilij commanded that that inscription be translated and commissioned one of the Byzantine theologians in Aleppo. He translated it and it was found to contain, 'This light is a gift from God the Great to us', or he mentioned words to that effect.⁵³

Muslim writers frequently mention other sacred qualities manifesting themselves at sacred places which were not perceived visually, but spiritually, in particular pilgrimage places possessing a friendly atmosphere (*uns*), awe (*mahāba*), reverence (*ijlāl*), dignity (*waqār*), and blessing (*baraka*). Jews similarly employed such words as 'awesome' (*nora'*) and 'holy' (*qadosh*) to describe pilgrimage sites. Such was the norm in medieval pilgrimage guides. Jewish and Muslim writers intended to capture the spiritual and ritual aspects of the *ziyāra* in order to create a lasting impression upon readers and to encourage them to undertake it. While invoking Scripture, Moshe Baṣṣola (16th cent.) commented that synagogues were holy or awesome because of visions which devotees experienced, as in the case of the synagogue of Elijah in Damascus which contained the Prophet's shrine: 'How awesome is this place (*mah nora' ha-maqom ha-hu*).'⁵⁴ For a place to be awesome was a measure of its holiness in the eyes of devotees.

Apart from lights, tombs and shrines possessed other extraordinary qualities. While on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1414 CE, Rabbi Yizḥaq Elfarra of Málaga was told that a cloud ascends from the tomb of Ezra the Scribe in the Aleppan village of Taduf.⁵⁵

At a distance of two miles from [Aleppo] is the tomb of Ezra the Scribe. There Ezra recorded the Torah. . . . This village is called Taduf [and contains] a synagogue. . . . They [also] say that every night year round a cloud ascends from the tomb of Ezra never departing.⁵⁶

Also writing during the fifteenth century, the Italian Rabbi Yizḥaq b. R. Me'ir Latif (1480–5 CE) mentions in a letter from Jerusalem that an old man reported great light over the tomb of the Prophet Amos at night which disappears when approached.

⁵³ Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-Ṭalab*, I. 426.

⁵⁴ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣā'ot Erez Yisra'el* (ed. Ben-Zevi), 68; cf. A. Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot Erez Yisra'el šhel 'Olim Yehudim mi-Yemei ha-Beinayim ve-'ad Reshit Yemei Shivat Ziyon* (Ramat-Gan, 1976), 152–3; Gen. 28: 17: *mah nora' ha-maqom ha-zeh*.

⁵⁵ Yāqūt renders it as 'Tādhif', I. 811.

⁵⁶ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 110. Cf. al-Biqā'ī's description above.

He also mentions a heavy cloud over the tomb of the Prophet Zephaniah.⁵⁷

The discussion has focused thus far on the physical manifestations of the holy and ways of perceiving it. Ritual performance at sacred places was a means of ensuring harmony and continuity in holiness. It was also an important and necessary dimension of experiencing the holy. Devotees consecrated the holy through prayer, supplication, votive offerings, and sprinkling fragrances and water. In so doing they experienced a sense of awe, fear, purpose, and spiritual fulfilment. These and other means of perpetuating the holiness of sites are contextualized in Chapter 3. Devotees also lay upon tombs and shrines and resided within their confines, circumambulated, touched and rubbed against them, and took soil and rock which contained *baraka* and applied it to themselves and their animals for blessing and to achieve a cure. Shi'is consumed soil from Ḥusayn's tomb for its curative properties and blessings, see below, p. 164. One Muslim theologian commented on people

praying to tombs, circumambulating them, kissing them, touching them (*istilām*),⁵⁸ rubbing their cheeks in their soil, worshipping their patrons, seeking aid from them, requesting from them aid, sustenance, health, fulfilling debts, dispelling worries, seeking aid against misfortunes or distress . . .⁵⁹

Suspending stones from a shrine, rubbing earth on oneself, and similar acts were portable means of receiving *baraka*. In Ḥimş devotees flocked to a talismanic object of a scorpion in order to be cured.⁶⁰ Al-Harawī observed that

[If] some of its earth is taken and applied to a scorpion bite, it is healed (*tubra*[?]). This is tried-and-proven (*mujarrab*), well known. It is transmitted throughout the lands.

Again, al-Harawī mentions that Aleppo

⁵⁷ A. Ya'ari (ed.), *Iggerot Erez Yisra'el: she-Katvu ha-Yehudim ha-Yoshvim ba-Arez le-Aḥeihem she-ba-Golah mi-Yemei Galut Bavel ve'ad Shivat Ziyon she-be-Yemeinu* (Ramat Gan, 1971), 96.

⁵⁸ *Istilām* also denotes kissing, touching, or wiping.

⁵⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān min Maṣāyid al-Shayṭān*, ed. M. H. al-Fiqī, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1986), 1. 220.

⁶⁰ Talismanic objects are discussed in Ch. 3.

contains a rock visible at the Jew's Gate on the road to which votive offerings are made (*yundharu labu al-nudhūr*) and upon which rosewater and sweet fragrances are sprinkled. Muslims, Jews, and Christians hold it in regard. It is said that beneath it is the tomb of one of the prophets . . . or saints (*awliyā'*) . . .⁶¹

Since this site at the Jew's Gate was separated from the profane space around it by the sprinkling of rosewater and sweet fragrances, Muslims, Jews, and Christians knew that it was sacred. Such rituals and the manner of demarcating sacred space were replicated in other contexts. The Aleppan neighbourhood near the Jew's Gate, which included the Jewish Quarter, contained other sacred sites, such as mosques, synagogues, and churches. This site was particularly sacred because of the holy person who lay buried beneath it.

Devotees' sanctifying a site by using liquids suggests that saints were no longer capable of producing the *baraka* necessary for the site's maintenance on their own. This did not mean that they could not perform miracles for the devout, but rather that they did not possess the capacity to perpetuate the sanctity of the sacred precinct within which they were buried. Lionel Rothkrug observed that in medieval Europe devotees sanctified saints' shrines by sprinkling holy water, or some other substance which demarcated them from other places around them. In essence, devotees were 'manufacturing' the odour of sanctity.⁶² These rituals marked a place with *baraka* and did not simply consecrate or create sacred space.

Just as devotees sanctified sacred places, they also desecrated them. Petahiyah of Regensburg observed that a gathering of 80,000 persons during the Feast of the Tabernacles, including unworthy persons, caused the pillar of fire over the grave of Ezekiel to disappear.⁶³ Tabernacles were erected in the sanctuary near the cemetery, which was also hallowed ground.

Three perspectives inform the designation of places as holy. First, original transmitters and recorders of traditions who drew upon ancient legends, stories, myths, and events from Scripture acknowl-

⁶¹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 4.

⁶² L. Rothkrug, 'The Odour of Sanctity, and the Hebrew Origins of Christian Relic Veneration', *Historical Reflections*, 8 (1981), 142.

⁶³ Petahiyah of Regensburg, *Travels of Rabbi Petahya of Ratisbon*, ed. and trans. A. Benisch (London, 1861), 31.

edged the existence of a core of sanctity within the confines of sacred space, stemming from the site, its association with a holy person, or both. Devotees situated the space within their religious framework. Second, the medieval writer, theologian, or traveller made pilgrimage to holy sites and often quoted contemporary and ancient traditions, either from his own religious perspective or from that of other religions, including traditions which either lacked or had no clearly defined Scriptural or exegetical basis. He also defined it in relationship to its physical surroundings. The medieval writer tried to rediscover the sacred site in the light of its 'original state of sanctity'. This was the objective of the fourteenth-century physician Eshtori ha-Parḥi who travelled to Jerusalem.⁶⁴ If not as explicit as Eshtori, other Jewish and Muslim travellers and pilgrims to al-Shām did exactly as pilgrims have done throughout the ages. They identified for themselves and for their reader the physical remains of the sacred past in the light of the most authoritative sources known to them, Scripture, and tradition. Apart from rare inscriptions, most ancient holy sites, with few notable exceptions, did not possess a written history before the Islamic era and were only 'rediscovered' during the Middle Ages.⁶⁵ Finally, the common person perceived the sacred through his own personal experience and like the medieval writer, invoked Scripture, stories, and legends in his veneration at the sacred site. Unlike medieval writers, other devotees did not actively invoke traditions, only essential elements contained within them, which were the basis for stories and legends. However, all devotees invoked Scripture.

What were the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities which prompted devotees and writers to comment on a locality's sanctity? Writers and other devotees perceived holiness through largely sensory and perceptual means as invoking visions and miracles and experiencing the extraordinary. Locations were not holy in and of themselves, but became so through their association with saints. *Baraka* was transmitted and miracles were performed within a locality that was sacred or was destined to become sacred. Identifying holiness thus constitutes the first essential component of 'figurative mapping'. In addition to these perspectives, the scholar of medieval

⁶⁴ See above, p. 19.

⁶⁵ This notion of rediscovering, rather than inventing, sacred space can be found most notably in the works of the sociologist of religion Mircea Eliade.

Islam assesses the aforementioned perspectives and by necessity applies his own criteria to understanding sacred space.

A locality's sanctity is defined by its place in Scripture and exegesis, its association with eschatological traditions, the transmission of legends, myths, and stories from various periods in its history, performance of ritual within its confines, importing and exporting from it sacred objects and substances (e.g. soil), the production and display of talismanic objects there, and finally, its association with living and dead saints. In French's analysis, a number of these categories would also constitute the metaphorical mapping of sacred space.⁶⁶ Sacred and holy places in the Near East have virtually become synonymous with urban centres. The medieval city was a sacred space, more precisely, a complex series of sacred spaces in convergence, divergence, and isolation. Shrines and other holy places proliferated largely, though not exclusively, in urban centres. However, shrines did not emerge exclusively through urban growth, nor were cities the only receptacles of the *baraka* of holy men and women which tombs, shrines, and places of worship possessed. As was suggested earlier, sacred places, such as the congregational mosque, the cemetery, the mountain and their constituent holy precincts collectively defined the character of Islamic urban and rural settlements. Traditions commonly mention that cities contained *baraka* many times over.⁶⁷ In city, town, and village, space and time combined with ritual (prayer, supplication, pilgrimage, etc.) to create the sacred. Although the city is the most developmentally advanced form of human settlement and the object of much scholarship, analyses of the Islamic city such as Lapidus's and subsequent studies have for various reasons virtually neglected the so-called peripheries, the hinterlands, the districts and suburbs. Peters, in his study of Jerusalem and Mecca, while attempting to draw parallels with holy sites in other localities, marginalizes ritual activities in the towns and villages surrounding both cities. He regards such places as part of a pilgrimage network without sufficiently addressing their unique sacred character, with

⁶⁶ French, 'Mapping Sacred Centers', 792.

⁶⁷ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 1. 238–9. In one such tradition Makhūl asks a man where he intended to dwell. He replies: 'al-Ghūṭa (the Oasis of Damascus)', Makhūl states: 'What prohibits you from dwelling in Damascus, the *baraka* there is manifold (*muḍā'afa*)?' Other traditions mention the efficacy of building in Damascus.

the notable exception of the Shi'i pilgrimage centres of Najaf and Karbalā'.⁶⁸ What were the varieties of the sacred and holy which manifested themselves in different settings: urban, rural, natural, man-made, or divinely inspired? Characterizing holy places as urban or rural is not as essential as understanding the existence of a variety of ritual practices and architectural forms which were common to cities and villages so that they constituted a continuum of sacred topography and which brought villagers to cities and urban dwellers to the periphery in search of the sacred. In order to better illustrate what underlies sacred topography, it is necessary to introduce a number of localities which will form the basis for the cult of saints in later chapters and which, for the purpose of the immediate discussion, will allow for understanding the variety and complexity of pilgrimage places that were found throughout al-Shām and elsewhere.

As it was Syria's most important city politically and economically, but more importantly, spiritually after Jerusalem, it is only appropriate to begin with Damascus and its outlying villages. The discussion then shifts to Aleppo, which enjoyed political and economic prestige throughout much of the Middle Ages and was an important devotional centre for Sunnis and Shi'is.

DAMASCUS

Damascene Jews and Muslims conceived of their city as the stage for the Coming of the Messiah at the End of Time. Traditions about holy sites such as mosques, synagogues, churches, temples, tombs, and shrines had circulated in Damascus as in other cities of the Near East since Antiquity. During the early Islamic period, the Prophet Muḥammad, his cousin and son-in-law 'Alī, and the former's Companions and their Followers as well as scholars of the eighth century, many of whom were of Damascene origin or were believed to have resided in or visited Damascus, such as Ka'b al-Aḥbār,⁶⁹ Ubayy b. Ka'b, Wahb b. Munabbih, Makḥūl, Ibn 'Abbās,

⁶⁸ F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem and Mecca: The Typology of the Holy City in the Near East* (New York, 1986).

⁶⁹ According to al-Ṭabarī, Ka'b died in Ḥims, *Tārikh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje *et al.*, 19 vols. (Leiden, 1879-1901), 3. 2474-5; M. Schmitz, 'Ka'b al-Aḥbār', *EI*(2), 4. 316-17.

and al-Walid b. Muslim,⁷⁰ narrated sacred traditions preserved in the *faḍā'il* literature, historical and geographical works which underscore the role and function of Damascus's sacred topography in the Messianic drama.⁷¹ Almost every site is assigned a role not only in the Messianic drama but also in the broader context of Islamic sacred history, from Mt. Qāsiyūn overlooking Damascus to city gates, cemeteries, caves, and sacred rocks, with the Congregational Mosque assuming the central role.⁷² The *faḍā'il* corpus for Syria which al-Rabā'ī (d. 444/1052) redacted during the eleventh century in his *Faḍā'il al-Shām wa Dimashq* consists of sayings and traditions attributed to the Prophet and his Companions which exemplify the sacred history of Damascus in stories, legends, and historical accounts about the founding of Damascus in pre-Islamic times, its construction, its natural features, and above all, its holy sites. Places came to be associated with holy persons like Muḥammad, 'Alī, Ḥusayn, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, Elijah, Hūd, and John the Baptist (Yaḥyā b. Zakariyā') and with events from the sacred past, such as the murder of Abel and the construction of the city walls and the Congregational Mosque. Such traditions were successfully propagated in the historiography of early and medieval Islam because they reflected widely held beliefs among the ulema, writers, and also the common people.

The following exegetical tradition, which can be classified as a literary topos, one of many narrated by al-Walid b. Muslim (d. c.195 or 196 H.), illustrates the principle of continuity of sacred space.⁷³ Sacred space is defined by a series of events and memories initially transmitted orally and later preserved in written form. Also, sacred space was not merely inherited or appropriated from older civilizations. For example, Masjid al-Aqṣā was not merely erected on the site of the Second Temple which was destroyed in

⁷⁰ Al-Walid b. Muslim, a client of the Umayyads and Damascene traditionist, was Yaḥyā b. Ḥārith's student and al-Awzā'ī's pupil. See Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 11. 151-5; *La Description de Damas d'Ibn 'Asākir*, trans. N. Éliasséff (Damascus, 1959), 12.

⁷¹ Whether or not these individuals actually narrated certain traditions is not for this present study to establish.

⁷² A relevant discussion of the sanctity of Damascus can be found in G. von Grunebaum, 'The Sacred Character of Islamic Cities', in 'A. al-Badawī (ed.), *Mélanges Taha Husain* (Cairo, 1962), 25-37.

⁷³ Such topoi do not fit perfectly within the scheme devised by Noth and Conrad. See ch. 3 of *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition* (Princeton, 1994).

70 CE or the Congregational Mosque of Damascus on the site of a Byzantine church, etc. This complex process included not only capturing in tradition and in monumental form Islamic civilization's superiority or debt to the ancient religions and civilizations of the Near East and physically appropriating and transforming sacred space and its symbolic dimensions, but also creating a new outlook which refocused and relocated the space within the broader framework of Islamic history, created Islamic symbols, and spurred the performance within it of distinctly Islamic rituals which demarcated it. Muslims did not rewrite history and tradition to accommodate pilgrimage sites.⁷⁴

Al-Walīd b. Muslim told us: 'When al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik ordered the construction of the Mosque of Damascus, Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik was the overseer with the artisans. They found in the southern wall of the Mosque a stone tablet with inscriptions. They brought it to al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik; [who] then sent it to the Rūm; they were unable to decipher it. Then he sent it to the Jews (*Ibrāniyūn*), who were also unable to decipher it. Then he sent it to those in Damascus from the rest of the peoples; nobody was able to decipher it. They referred him to Wahb b. Munabbih. [Al-Walīd] sent for him. . . . It is said that wall is from the Prophet Hūd's construction . . . and contains his tomb.'⁷⁵

The apocalyptic inscription turns out to be written during the reign of King Solomon.⁷⁶ The Umayyads, most notably al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik, Hishām, and Mu'āwiya, dominated the early historiography perhaps in an effort by compilers of traditions to not only assert Umayyad superiority over the Abbasids, but also to reclaim in ancient history and early Islamic tradition the sanctity of Syria and Damascus above that of the seats of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad and of the Fatimids in Cairo. These traditions originated in Umayyad Syria but were also revived by Zankī and his successor Nūr al-Dīn in their struggle against the Crusaders.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Peters, *Jerusalem and Mecca*, 12.

⁷⁵ Al-Rabā'ī, *Fadā'il al-Sham*, 34-5.

⁷⁶ Another example of this process of rediscovery can be found in a tradition narrated by Ubayy and his informants (*ashbyākh*) which states that at the time of the Conquest of Damascus during the reign of the Caliph 'Umar, a rock with Greek writing was found at Bāb Jayrūn. Neither the Christians nor the Jews are able to read the inscription, and bring a Greek (*Yūnānī*) who reads it. The inscription turns out to be of an apocalyptic nature. Al-Rabā'ī, *Fadā'il al-Sham*, 21-2.

⁷⁷ A. Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (New York, 1995), 12. This view was originally expressed by Goldziher.

The appropriation of figures from Syrian-Islamic history gave legitimacy to Syrian holy sites. An environment of intense rivalry and civil strife which pitted Sunnis against Shi'is during intermittent periods of Fatimid rule over a largely Sunni and Christian population in Damascus from 368/978 to 468/1076 also sustained active scholarly interest in propagating these traditions. Fatimid infighting resulted in the burning down of the Congregational Mosque, Damascus's holiest Islamic site in 461/1069, and likewise contributed to the zealous drive by Syrians to restore the sanctity of their city.⁷⁸ The Congregational Mosque, which was burned down no fewer than eight times and experienced two major earthquakes in 598/1202 and 702/1303, was on each occasion subsequently restored.⁷⁹ Physical barriers, such as walls, gates, arches, grates, inscriptions, and the shrines that graced holy sites, shielded sacred from profane space; all were outward manifestations of the holy which served to confirm in the minds of devotees the sanctity of the place and to eternalize its memory.⁸⁰ Sacred structures only continued to exist in the minds of devotees because they were favoured with the divine blessings of God and His saints. Structures which were destroyed and never again restored were disfavoured by God and his saints and no longer possessed *baraka*, while other sacred places were restored, rebuilt, reassembled, and reconsecrated. Such acts were tantamount to reassembling the sacred. These places were favoured by God and his saints once again. The core of sanctity which originated from shrines was rarely displaced by acts of man or nature. It lay beneath the earth or within caves, mountains, and springs. It was also embodied in dead saints and realized through the collective ritual acts of devotees. Sacred wells contained *baraka* within their depths issuing forth from the holy person or 'relic' associated with them. Muslims, Jews, and Christians were obsessed with rediscovering and preserving their sacred past after not only the destruction, neglect, or disregard of holy sites, which indeed spurred them to restore and rediscover the sanctity of sacred places, but whenever they desired to fulfil a spiritual or physical need.

⁷⁸ See al-Munajjid's introduction to Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 1.

⁷⁹ For a list of the major earthquakes that struck al-Shām from the 8th cent., see K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 1(1) (Oxford, 1969), 181-2.

⁸⁰ See below, pp. 251-3.

In the Jewish context, Biblical and post-Biblical traditions, including historical accounts from the second century CE, firmly establish the existence of a significant Jewish presence in Syria and Damascus. The Talmud mentions over ten villages surrounding Damascus where Jews resided, including Jawbar, Ḥovah, Kokheva, Kefar Avraham, Kefar Qarinos, Rom, Beit-Anat, Aratris, Ifarkoris, Sakhuta, etc.⁸¹ Of these, information exists in Jewish and Islamic sources for holy sites in Kefar Avraham (Arabic, *maqām Ibrāhīm*) and Jawbar. The former, referred to by Muslims and Jews as Barza in the Islamic period, is located to the east of the al-Ṣālihiya neighbourhood on Mt. Qāsiyūn and contained a shrine of the Prophet Abraham.⁸² As far back as the first century CE, Josephus in his *Antiquities* quotes one Nicolas of Damascus, who mentions that Abraham was king of the city where he, Nicolas, resided.

Nicolas of Damascus, again, in the fourth book of his *Histories* makes the following statement: ‘Abram(es) reigned (in Damascus), an invader who had come with an army from the country beyond Babylon called the land of the Chaldees.’⁸³

Located to the east of Damascus, Jawbar had the most important and longest lasting Jewish community outside of the city walls and contained in the eyes of Syrian Jewry the holiest pilgrimage site outside of Jerusalem, the shrine of Elijah in a synagogue named after him.⁸⁴ Elijah’s presence at other shrines throughout Syria and Egypt is widely attested to in medieval Jewish travel accounts.⁸⁵ Jews believed that the prophet took refuge from Ahab in these synagogues and that miracles were wrought there. They also believed that Elisha anointed Ḥazael king of Syria at the Jawbar synagogue

⁸¹ ‘Damascus’, *EJ* 5. 1239. There is no mention of villages in *Sanh.* 5b. I have not located references to any of these villages with the exception of Jawbar and Kokheva, in any Arabic historical, geographical, or travel writings.

⁸² See Ibn Ṭūlūn, ‘Ḍarb al-Ḥūṭa ‘alā Jamī’ al-Ghūṭa’, in *al-Khizāna al-Sharqīya*, 1 (1936), 44. Ibn Ṭūlūn states that he wrote a pamphlet about Barza; E. and Y. Rivlin, ‘Le-Qorot ha-Yehudim be-Demeseq ba-Me’ah ha-Revīit le-Elef ha-Sheshi’, *Reshumot: Me’assef le-Divrei Zikbronot le-Etnografiyah ve-le-Folklor be-Yisrael*, 4 (1926), 78. Rivlin refers to ‘Burjah?’ Barzah is more likely.

⁸³ Josephus, *Antiquities* (Loeb Classical Library), trans. H. St. John Thackeray (London, 1926), 1. 7. 2/1. 79.

⁸⁴ Ibn Ṭūlūn mentions that Jawbar is a Jewish village with a Muslim presence. ‘Ḍarb al-Ḥūṭa’, 45. This synagogue is also named after Eleazar b. Arakh.

⁸⁵ For a discussion of the cult of Elijah and his Islamic counterpart al-Khaḍir, see throughout Chs. 3 and 4.

(2 Kings 8: 13) in fulfilment of God's commandment to Elijah (1 Kings 19: 15).⁸⁶ From Antiquity Jews also propagated the legend of Cain murdering Abel in Syria which Jerome mentions.⁸⁷

Apart from Jerusalem and Hebron, most Jewish legal and exegetical sources incidentally mention pilgrimage sites in the context of disagreement, complaint, and crisis. In contrast with medieval exegetical sources, holy sites are accorded a central role in travel accounts and to a certain extent in the medieval responsa of theologians. The eventual relocation of the Jerusalem Academy in 1093 CE to Ḥadrakh, a suburb of Damascus, enhanced Damascus's sanctity.⁸⁸ Yet Damascus and Syria always remained at the periphery in terms of importance; for everything was measured relative to Jerusalem. However, theologians deemed its inhabitants a holy community (*qehilah qedoshah*).⁸⁹ Like their Muslim counterparts, Jewish exegetes interpreted verses from Scripture as referring to the sanctity of Damascus. For instance, they took Zachariah 9: 1: 'The word of the Lord is against the land of Ḥadrakh and will rest upon Damascus, For to the Lord belong the cities of Aram' to mean 'Jerusalem will reach unto Damascus and the exiled communities shall come and reside within it.'⁹⁰ Damascus is usually mentioned with other Syrian cities, such as Tādhiḥ,⁹¹ Aleppo, and Ḥamā, where often identical saints and veneration practices were found. The boundaries of the Land of Israel extended right to Damascus, according to Obadiah of Bertinoro, who from Hebron in 1489 CE, sent a letter home to his business partner in Italy.

And now as to the great city of Damascus, about which my Lord asks whether it is in the Holy Land. It is well known from the words of all the wise men, and particularly of those of Maimonides in *Hilkhot Terumot* (81–89), that it is reckoned as of Syria, and to this day all the inhabitants of the Galilee agree as to this, but they say that the borders

⁸⁶ The former episode is mentioned in a number of medieval and modern travel itineraries. See Ch. 4.

⁸⁷ See L. Ginzberg (trans.), *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia, 1909–46), 5: 19.

⁸⁸ Prawer, *History*, 9; Z. Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim be-Erez Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 1997), 128, fo. 10. I have not located any references to Ḥadrakh in Arabic sources. Ḥadrakh most likely refers to Damascus.

⁸⁹ See Rivlin, 'Le-Qorot ha-Yehudim be-Demeseq', 78. Rivlin places a certain importance on this term, which is applied to all Jewish communities wherever they resided, not just those of Damascus.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 78.

⁹¹ See above, n. 55.

of the Holy Land are very near it. Safat (Safed) and Banorsa (Banias?), the big city of Galilee, are near Damascus and their borders reach close to Damascus . . .⁹²

ESCHATOLOGY, ANCIENT TRADITION,
AND SACRED SPACE

Von Grunebaum argues that cities like Damascus and Aleppo were precluded from becoming holy cities because of their political and economic importance and because they assumed a central role in eschatological tradition. It may be argued that tombs of holy men accorded non-canonical holy cities a degree of sanctity, which was subordinate to their role in an eschaton.⁹³ From whose perspective did Damascus's political importance outweigh its holiness as a religious city? The association of eschatological traditions with localities was primarily an urban phenomenon. However, this does not explain the social dimensions of the city or the significance of ritual in defining its character. Von Grunebaum identifies three types of sanctity:

(1) Stemming from *baraka*, or blessing, of a prophetic tomb or the sanctuary of a saint, from the presence in town of an unusually high number of descendants of the Prophet Muhammad or of another personage of a high religious rank, or else, combined with this distinction, from the spiritual effect of accumulated religious learning, such sanctity may be overlaid, as it were; by (2) sanctity due to the part which the locality is called upon to play in soteriology; and (3), on an even higher level of religious meaning by sanctity due to the role assigned to the locality in cosmology.⁹⁴

In the first instance, von Grunebaum views the sanctity of the city as stemming from the *baraka* of dead saints and their tombs and the environment of religious learning which was responsible for propagating traditions. Was *baraka* propagated through learned activities? What of the collective of living saints who were endowed with *baraka* and their devotees? The cumulative effect of devotees invoking a legend, pronouncing that a particular place is

⁹² Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 249–50 (modified). Also see Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 43.

⁹³ Von Grunebaum, 'The Sacred Character of Islamic Cities', 26.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 26–7.

efficacious for its *baraka*, and the performance of pilgrimage transformed the locality into a repository of *baraka*. Von Grunebaum's model does not explain how *baraka* functioned, how the sacred was manifest, or what made urban and rural localities particularly sacred in the minds of residents and visitors. Furthermore, it erroneously suggests that a location as a corporate entity was the recipient of holiness while in fact, sacred spaces and their monumental manifestations which devotees created and sanctified, endowed it with holiness. The caves of Mt. Qāsiyūn overlooking Damascus were holy because they served a particular purpose or function, such as bestowing rain, fighting off oppression, inflation, and famine, or because they were simply efficacious as places of prayer and supplication.

The collective ritual behaviour of Syrians rather than religious learning primarily defined the manifestations of *baraka*. Ritual defined the sacred parameters of the city as it contributed to the formation of saints' cults. In spite of this, the role of eschatology in the development of the sacred character of the city should not be underestimated.

Eschatological traditions concerning Damascus speak of the Congregational Mosque of Damascus, Sunni Islam's fifth holiest mosque, as the stage where the final drama of the Day of Judgment would be enacted and where Muslims, Christians, and Jews would converge.⁹⁵ According to one such tradition

ʿĪsā b. Maryam . . . will make his appearance from the minaret of the Eastern Gate, then he will come to the Congregational Mosque of Damascus until such time when he sits upon the minbar. The Muslims will enter the mosque, then the Christians and the Jews and all of them will implore him so that if something is cast at them, only the head of a person would be hit because of their great number. The muezzin of the Muslims will come and rise. [Then] comes the player of the shofar of the Jews [followed] by the player of the horn of the Christians. Then the representative of the Jews says: Draw lots. Then the lots of the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews are written. Then ʿĪsā would draw and the lot of the Muslims would [be drawn (lit. appear)]. Then the representative of the Jews would

⁹⁵ Jews, Christians, and Muslims young and old came together during the plague of 1311 CE, when they journeyed in procession with scriptures in hand in prayer and supplication. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fi-al-Tārikh*, ed. A. M. Muʿawwad *et al.*, 14 vols. (Beirut, 1994), 14. 50 (711 H.).

say that the draw is three. [And on both occasions] the lot of the Muslims would [be drawn]. Then the Jews and Christians leave the mosque. Then [ʿĪsā] leaves seeking out the False Messiah (*dajjāl*) with those of the inhabitants of Damascus with him. Then he comes to Bayt al-Maqdis . . .⁹⁶

Though the above tradition has no basis in Judaism, a Messiah figure was also shared by Jews. In Jewish tradition, Damascus was the site where Elijah would descend and a Messiah from the House of David would do battle with the false Messiah. At the appointed hour, God would send Elijah to Damascus. Karaite theologians like Yefet b. ʿAli (second half of 10th cent. CE), drawing upon eschatological traditions which the community shared with the Qumran sectaries, interpreted Mal. 4: 5–6 (RSV), Mal. 3: 23–4 (Hebr.) as referring to Damascus.⁹⁷

I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.⁹⁸

Furthermore, the medieval Jewish apocalypses, which, as Wieder shows, rely upon earlier sources, such as the Prayer of Rabbi Shimʿon b. Yoḥai (1st cent. CE), state that “the king of fierce countenance (Dan. 8: 23)” will go on massacring until he reaches Damascus, but as soon as he reaches Damascus divine rescue and salvation will be granted to Israel.⁹⁹ With the notable exception of Jerusalem, from Antiquity Jews regarded Damascus rather than other cities of the Near East as the site for the Redemption of future generations.

The Congregational Mosque was the core of the Islamic city. It also came to be identified with the physical presence of Elijah’s Islamic counterpart al-Khaḍir, for whom a *muṣallā*, or place of prayer was consecrated between Bāb al-Sāʿāt and Bāb al-Khaḍrāʾ commemorating the spot where he prayed. The Mosque came to be connected with his role as a harbinger of the Messiah, as well as with other figures from Islamic history like Hūd, Ḥusayn, and ʿAlī. The eastern minaret (*al-manāra al-sharqīya*) was believed

⁹⁶ Al-Rabaʿī, *Fadāʾil al-Sham*, 72.

⁹⁷ N. Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism* (London, 1962), 8.

⁹⁸ RSV. ⁹⁹ Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism*, 13.

to be the place of Jesus's descent at the end of time.¹⁰⁰ Ibn Jubayr mentions a historical tradition in which this minaret, designated as *al-manāra al-bayḍā'*, the white minaret in the eastern part of Damascus (i.e. the Congregational Mosque), is the site of 'Īsā's descent.¹⁰¹ During the Hellenistic period to the first century BCE, the temple of the storm god Hadad stood on the site where the Romans erected the Temple of Jupiter which was later appropriated by the Byzantines as a church and subsequently by Muslims in the early seventh century CE as a congregational mosque. Islamic tradition regards the Arabian Prophet Hūd as the builder of the southern wall of Damascus, where he was also buried.¹⁰² Yet his tomb was also thought to be in Ḥadramawt.¹⁰³ According to Muslim and Christian traditions, Yaḥyā b. Zakariyā's head was buried in the Congregational Mosque. One tradition, which appears in several medieval sources, states that Yaḥyā was murdered while praying at the spot of the shrine (*mashhad*) near Bāb Jayrūn.¹⁰⁴ According to an ancient Jewish legend, Abraham and his slaves built Damascus or his servant Eleazar did and Abraham ruled over it.¹⁰⁵ Al-Muhallabī (d. 380/990) attributes to a king named Damascus the construction of the Temple of Jupiter which stood on the site.¹⁰⁶ The twelfth-century traveller 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī visited the site of Hūd's tomb in the Congregational Mosque as well as three others in al-Aḥqāf, in the Rub' al-Khālī, and Ḥadramawt. The historian and Ayyubid ruler of Ḥamā, al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad, mentions that the Sabians (*Ṣābi'ūn*) were the original founders of the wall and the cupola

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*, ed. W. Wright (Leiden, 1907), 282. Al-Raba'ī quotes a number of traditions, *Faḍā'il*, 70–4.

¹⁰¹ Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 282. His source is al-Raba'ī, *Faḍā'il al-Shām*, 70–4, especially the following traditions: 105, 106, 108, 110, and 111.

¹⁰² Al-Raba'ī, *Faḍā'il al-Shām*, 34–5. See J. Sourdél-Thomine, 'Les Anciens Lieux de pèlerinage damascains', *BEO* 14 (1952–4), 75 n. 7; A. J. Wensinck and C. Pellat, 'Hūd', *EI*(2), 3, 537–8.

¹⁰³ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 15; R. B. Serjeant, 'Hūd and Other Pre-Islamic Prophets of Hadramawt', *Le Muséon*, 47 (1954), 121–79.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. 'Imād al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī, *Tadhkirat al-Imād fī Faḍā'il al-Shām*, Cambridge University, MS Or. 742(7), p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Rivlin, 'Le-Qorot ha-Yehudim be-Demeseq', 78.

¹⁰⁶ Abū al-Fidā', Ismā'il b. 'Alī, *Kitāb Taqwīm al-Buldān*, ed. J.-T. Reinaud and M. G. de Slane (Paris, 1840), 230. Al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Muhallabī (d. 380/990), geographer and author of a no longer extant *Masālik wa-al-Mamālik*, which he dedicated to the Fatimid Caliph al-'Azīz bi-Allāh.

and that at some point Jews and idol worshippers took possession of it:

As for the wall and the cupola which are above the mihrab near the *maqṣūra*,¹⁰⁷ the Sabians built them; there was their place of prayer. Then the Jews and idol worshippers came to possess it. At that time, John the Baptist . . . was killed and his head erected over this mosque's gate which is called Bāb Jayrūn. Then the Christians took control over it and glorified it until Islam came and it became a place of prayer for Muslims.¹⁰⁸

Memories of the sacred distant past and its great monuments were pervasive in Muslim historical writings. Both in the Islamic and Jewish contexts, these were primarily places for prayer and supplication. Throughout its history, Damascus served as a major administrative capital, and during the Umayyad period, as a seat of the caliphate. Although the largest and most important of the Syrian cities administratively, to be sure, it was not the only sacred city and centre of saint veneration. Other cities, such as Aleppo, Ḥamā, Ḥimṣ, and Lādhiqiya, also possessed holy tombs and shrines. There was hardly a place in Syria with which saints were not associated and in which their physical presence was not marked by monuments. From its places of worship to its city walls and quarters, Damascus like other cities was protected by saints whose cults and shrines are discussed elsewhere. Shrines were also found in the outlying villages of Ṣaydanāyā,¹⁰⁹ Barza,¹¹⁰ Jawbar, Maniḥa,¹¹¹ Dārayyā,¹¹² etc. A city's sanctity was as much shaped by its antiquity as by its inhabitants. Unlike other cities, Damascus was continuously inhabited from the fourth millennium. Its Jewish and Muslim inhabitants regarded it as a sacred city. Syria and Damascus were a semi-holy land distinguished from other lands, though not of the order of the land of Israel.¹¹³ Yet, for resident and non-resident Jews, its status vis-à-vis the historic Land of Israel

¹⁰⁷ A *maqṣūra* is the prayer enclosure of a mosque which is usually reserved for the ruler. Here it is probably an enclosure associated with a tomb within a mosque. J. Pedersen and R. Hillenbrand, 'Masǧid', *El(2)*, 6. 661-2.

¹⁰⁸ Abū al-Fidā', *Taqwīm*, 230.

¹⁰⁹ Yāqūt, *Muǧam al-Buldān*, 3. 331.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 1. 563-4.

¹¹¹ M. Kurd 'Alī, *Ghūtat Dimashq* (Damascus, 1952), 22.

¹¹² Yāqūt, *Muǧam al-Buldān*, 2. 536.

¹¹³ 'Erez ha-beinayim bein qedushat Erez Yisra'el ve-ḥaluniyut arẓot ha-'amamin', Rivlin, 'Le-Qorot ha-Yehudim be-Demeseq', 78.

was ambiguous. Owning land there, according to medieval responsa, was like owning land in Jerusalem.¹¹⁴ Although the reverence for a place has little if anything to do with its holiness, it is none the less indicative of a special quality of sacredness which Damascus possessed. In the Mishnah (*B. Git.* 8a), Syria's earth was ritually unclean in the agricultural context like that of foreign parts.¹¹⁵ However, this did not preclude it from possessing holiness. The Jewish presence in Syria dates from the reign of King David, who after defeating the ruler of Aleppo (Zobah), Hadadezer, stationed garrisons in Damascus (2 Samuel 8: 3–12). King Ahab defeated the Syrian king Ben-Hadad, in whose cities he established markets (1 Kings 20: 34). King Jeroboam ruled over an area which included from the entrance to Ḥamat to the Sea of the Arabah (2 Kings 14: 25) and recovered for Israel Damascus and Ḥamat (2 Kings 14: 28). These verses establish that Damascus was administratively part of the Land of Israel.

Damascus's *baraka* is multiplied many times over that of other cities.

Abū Mushir told us from Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yazīd b. Jābir; he said: I inquired of Abū Salām al-Ḥabashī what made him relocate from Ḥimṣ to Damascus. He said, 'Not a single Arab asked me about [Damascus] before you. I heard that the *baraka* which it contains is multiplied manifold.'¹¹⁶

Al-Shām, and Damascus in particular, surpassed Jerusalem, not as the first of the *qiblas*, or as the third holiest site in Islam, but as a holy land whose holy sites remained accessible to Muslims, Jews, and indigenous Christians throughout the Middle Ages, even during the Crusader period in Palestine. As the above passages illustrate, Syria was a land of eternal and divine blessings. Devotees of different faiths regarded its sites as holy in the light of their own religious traditions, which rely upon a fundamental core of elements shared by Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

The sanctity of the Islamic city was also predicated on its being mentioned in the Qur'an, the best examples being Mecca, Medina,

¹¹⁴ It was subject to a tax of $\frac{1}{10}$. A. Even-Shoshan, *ha-Milon ha-Ḥadash: Ozar Shalem shel ha-Lashon ha-'Ivrit ha-Šifrutit, ha-Mada'it ve-ha-Meduberet, Nivim va-Amarot 'Ivriyim, Munalim Beinleumim* (Jerusalem, 1966), 4. 1454.

¹¹⁵ *The Babylonian Talmud, Šeder Gittin* (8a–8b) (London, 1936).

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Murajjā, Cambridge Univ. MS Qq. 91, fo. 119^v.

and Jerusalem. Damascus is not mentioned specifically by name, nor is there unanimity that it is being referred to. In spite of this, composers of *faḍā'il* works and historians associate Damascus with a number of verses from the Qur'an, including Sūrat al-Tīn (95: 1), whose symbols, the fig and the olive, exegetes took to refer to several locations, including the Congregational Mosque of Damascus, the City, Mt. Qāsiyūn, Masjid Aṣḥāb al-Kahf, etc.¹¹⁷ According to one tradition,

It is reported from Qatāda that he said, 'According to the words of the Exalted: "By the Fig, and by the Olive, by Mount Sinai," the Fig is Mt. Damascus (i.e. Jabal Qāsiyūn).'¹¹⁸

Damascus was also believed to be Iram Dhāt al-'Imād (Iram of the Pillars). Yāqūt connects it with 'Ād but provides several other possibilities, including the widespread opinion of scholars that it refers to Damascus, Iram being the Hebrew name for Damascus and Syria—Aram.¹¹⁹ Two traditions which al-Ṭabarī mentions identify Iram with Alexandria and Damascus. He concludes that it is a small town (*balada*) which 'Ād inhabited.¹²⁰ Scholars and theologians were never unanimous in making these identifications. Perhaps these seemingly conflicting traditions reflect a popular level of discourse.

A locality's sanctity was also determined by its beauty. Paradise was the ultimate source of beauty and holiness. Jewish and Muslim geographers and travellers were unanimous in viewing Damascus as God's Paradise on Earth by invariably commenting on its physical beauty, its gardens, orchards, streams, and wondrous sites. In the following Talmudic tradition, Damascus is regarded as the Gateway to the Garden of Eden:

¹¹⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, ed. H. Zahrān, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1988), 4. 834; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārikh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 6.

¹¹⁸ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 97; al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, ed. H. O. Fleischer, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1846–78), 2. 409; cf. Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārikh Madīnat Dimashq*, 1. 192–208, 2. 6; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'an*, 30 vols. (Cairo, 1954–68), 30. 131–3. The latter quotes a number of traditions which associate the mountains upon which Damascus and Jerusalem rest as 'al-tīn' and 'al-zaytūn' respectively, al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 30. 132.

¹¹⁹ Qur'an 89: 7; al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl*, 2. 409; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1. 212. See also W. M. Watt, 'Iram', *EI*(2), 3. 1270. Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārikh Madīnat Dimashq*, 1. 207–8.

¹²⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 30. 95–6.

[As to] paradise, Resh Laqish said, If it is in the Land of Israel its gate is Beit Shean; if it is in Arabia its gate is Beth Gerem,¹²¹ and if it is between the rivers¹²² its gate is Dumashqanin (i.e. Damascus).¹²³

Islamic and Jewish traditions identify cities of Paradise, that is, cities which were conceived of as resembling Paradise in their beauty and physical features. Conversely, Islamic tradition identifies cities of fire which were devoid of sanctity. The twelfth-century Damascene historian Ibn 'Asākir quotes two traditions about the cities of Paradise, the first of which includes Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and Damascus. Another tradition, attributed to Ka'b, includes Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis), Ḥimṣ, Damascus, Jibrīn, and Zafār al-Yaman.¹²⁴

During the thirteenth century the Andalusian traveller Ibn Jubayr (540/1145–614/1217) remarked that Damascus is the

Paradise of the East and the source of its aesthetic resplendent beauty . . . It is blessed by God the Exalted who enjoined the Messiah and his mother . . . to take refuge in a small hill possessing of rest and security, shade and water of the Salsabīl spring.¹²⁵

Similarly, Benjamin of Tudela (1169–71) observed:

From thence it is two days to Damascus the large city; it marks the beginning of the [emirate] of Nūr al-Dīn the ruler of the Tugharmin who are called Turcos. It is a beautiful city, large and surrounded by walls. It is a land of gardens and orchards extending to a distance of fifteen miles from every side. There is no comparable city [containing] fruits like it in all the land (var. anywhere). . . . There is a house of worship of the Muslims, which is called the Congregational Mosque of Damascus; there is no comparable building in all the land. Tradition has it that it was the [site of] Ben Hadad's palace.¹²⁶

The Jewish traveller attributed this tradition to the Muslims; though it is likely, it also circulated among Damascus's Jewish res-

¹²¹ Wadi Germ al-Moz, ed. note: A richly fertile valley facing Beth Shean on the other side of the Jordan and irrigated by an enormous fountain formed by the confluence of nineteen springs flowing south of Fahl and terminating in the Jordan. *The Babylonian Talmud, Šeder Erubin* (19a) (London, 1938), 132. For the complete passage, see pp. 131–2.

¹²² Ibid., Amanah and Pharpar (Arab. Amāna and Baradā) are meant.

¹²³ *The Babylonian Talmud, Šeder Erubin* (19a), pp. 131–2 (modified).

¹²⁴ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 1. 209–11; Al-Raba'i, *Faḍā'il al-Sham*, 28. These traditions can also be found in Yāqūt.

¹²⁵ Ibn Jubayr, *Rihla*, 260.

¹²⁶ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 45.

idents. As Benjamin wrote for a Jewish audience, he chose to emphasize sites which were sacred in Jewish history and which most Jews in Syria and in northern Iberia would through Scripture and exegesis regard as holy. The continuous sanctity of the site had been established since ancient times from the time of the Jewish kingdoms to the Romans, Byzantines, and Muslims. Jews and Muslims often identified sacred sites not purely as Jewish or Muslim to the extent that they perceived each other's sacred history in common ways.¹²⁷

Rabbi Petahiyah of Regensburg (1174–87 CE), who set out on pilgrimage for the purpose of 'prostrating himself (*lehishtateah*) on the tombs of the righteous saints (*ẓaddiqim*) and prophets',¹²⁸ remarks:

[Muslims] say: If Paradise be on earth, then it is Damascus, and if it be in Heaven, then Damascus is its counterpart in the Land of Malmata (var. Milmata).¹²⁹

Again, it is likely that this tradition, which is not specifically Islamic, circulated among the Jewish and Christian inhabitants of Syria.

REDISCOVERING AND CONTESTING SACRED SPACE

Devotees did not create or invent sacred space; they 'rediscovered it'.¹³⁰ An essential component of this process involved the rediscovery, reclamation, and creation of traditions which affirmed a place's sanctity. Structures that stood over sacred space, as shown earlier, were reconstructed, restored, and rebuilt. Shi'is rediscovered the shrines of the 'Alids, the descendants of 'Alī in Damascus, first under the Fatimids, and then later under the Ayyubids. Aleppo and Damascus experienced a boom in shrines of the descendants of the Prophet during the Ayyubid period.¹³¹ The shrine of Fāṭima, Muḥammad's daughter and 'Alī's wife and the martyrism of their son Ḥusayn's head were thought to exist within the confines of or

¹²⁷ See Chs. 3 and 4. ¹²⁸ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 46.

¹²⁹ Milmata refers to a lower land and is not a specific geographical designation.

¹³⁰ M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London, 1958), 371–2.

¹³¹ Cf. Ibn Shaddād, *al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīra fī Dhikr Umarā' al-Shām wa-al-Jazīra*, ed. S. al-Dahhān (Damascus, 1956).

immediately to the south of Damascus, and the remains of a number of their descendants, such as Ḥusayn's son Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn and ʿAlī's daughter Sukayna, were thought to have been buried in the Small Gate Cemetery.¹³² The city was the *Axis Mundi* around which shrines were centred.¹³³ Shrines reinforced the sanctity of cities. However, sacredness did not mean universality of sacred space. For Shi'is the sacred did not include the copy of the Qur'an in ʿUthmān's handwriting in the Congregational Mosque or the tombs of the Umayyads; the Congregational Mosque, however, did contain the tombs of Ḥusayn and the martyrs.¹³⁴ Similarly, Jews did not visit the tombs and shrines of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad. Muslims and Christians regarded as sacred the shrine of Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā' located within a former Byzantine church and temple of Jupiter in a sacred precinct where devotees prayed, sought blessings, and made vows. During the Islamic period, the reputed spot where Yaḥyā's head hung on Bāb Jayrūn was appropriated by tradition as the spot where Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya displayed Ḥusayn's head.¹³⁵ Muḥammad b. Ṭūlūn (880/1475–953/1546), a Hanafi scholar and preacher who lived at the close of the Mamluk and the beginning of the Ottoman periods, composed a treatise on Bāb Jayrūn entitled *Qurrat al-Uyūn fī Akhbār Bāb Jayrūn* (*Consolation for the Eyes in the History of Jayrūn Gate*) in which he comments on its importance during the First Islamic Period and the Middle Ages. The following passage from *Qurrat al-Uyūn* illustrates the conflict during the Mamluk period between Shi'is and Sunnis over Bāb Jayrūn, Damascus's most important gate, which Shi'is regarded as holy.

I read from our Master the Erudite Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Qāḍī ʿAjlūn al-Shāfiʿī (d. 928/1522): You said, may God be pleased with you: A companion has asked me to compile what the ulema, may God be pleased with them and restore their blessings, mentioned concerning the place which is a road in Bāb Jayrūn, the northern gate of Damascus the Protected. The Shi'is (*al-ṭāʾifa al-rāfiḍa*) and those who followed them in ignorance and

¹³² Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 86; al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 13.

¹³³ Eliade, *Patterns*, 375.

¹³⁴ Concerning the codex of ʿUthmān, see below, pp. 114–16.

¹³⁵ Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Taqwīm*, 230. For a detailed discussion of the pre-Islamic structures and the construction of the Congregational Mosque, see Creswell, *Early Islamic Architecture*, 1(1). 151–210. Ibn ʿAsākir provides a number of traditions concerning the pre-Islamic history of Damascus.

misguidance, may God multiply their punishment, [allege] that one of the Household of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) is buried in this place. That is one of the greatest falsehoods. [In fact,] it is a road for [all] Muslims. Nobody who possesses even the slightest intelligence and steadfastly abides by faith doubts it. I replied to the addresser's query so that the truth be known about that and so that the words of everybody who has gone astray and every damned person is not adhered to. . . .

I said: Worse than this is the matter of their audacity in cutting off the road leading through Bāb Jayrūn, one of the ancient and ordinary city gates which the jinn built during the time of Sulaymān b. Dāwūd . . . or [which] Dhū al-Qarnayn built . . .¹³⁶

The account continues with a condemnation of the Shi'i veneration of the site, condoning its destruction. The thirteenth-century historian Abū Shāma narrates:

Someone unreliable mentioned to me that in the months of the year 636/1238, he saw a night vision which confirms that in that place one of the Ahl al-Bayt was buried. A trustworthy source reported to me that the [aforementioned] concocted that. They [i.e. the Shi'is] blocked off the road to the passer-by and made the gate in its entirety a mosque by force. It was a road which used to be too narrow for its traveller. The narrowness and the tightness multiplied on comers and goers from it. May God multiply their [i.e. the Shi'is,] punishment and enumerate the recompense of those who assist in its destruction and removing its threat in accordance with the Sunna of the Prophet in destroying Masjīd al-Dirār,¹³⁷ which was erected for his enemies of the infidels. The Law does not take into account it being a mosque. He destroyed it because of the evil and harm which came from there. . . . End of Abū Shāma's words in his aforementioned book.¹³⁸

After providing the historical context of the conflict, Ibn Ṭūlūn mentions a *fatwā* issued by 'Alā' al-Dīn Abū al-Hasan 'Alī Ibn al-'Aṭṭār, the disciple of Abū Zakarīyā Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawāwī (631/1233–676/1277), concerning a presumed 'Alid tomb.

¹³⁶ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qurrat al-Uyūn fī Akhbār Bāb Jayrūn*, ed. Ş. al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1964), 11–12.

¹³⁷ Al-Ṭabarī mentions that in the year 9 H. a community an hour away from Medina had requested that he pray in Masjīd al-Dirār, which was consecrated to idols. The Prophet ordered its destruction. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I. 1704; Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Umarī, *Masālik al-Absār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, ed. A. Z. Bāshā (Cairo, 1924). I. 127–30.

¹³⁸ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qurrat al-Uyūn*, 11–12.



FIG. 1. Entrance to the Small Gate Cemetery, Iranian pilgrims in the foreground, Damascus

Legal query concerning this tomb (*ḍarīb*) in . . . Bāb Jayrūn, the northern gate about which it is said that it is the tomb of a Malika from the progeny of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. . . Is this sound or defective?

Response: As for the aforementioned tomb, it is false, an innovation without foundation, fabricated in the seventh (thirteenth) century for evil intentions. The Ḥāfiẓ . . . Ibn ‘Asākir . . . did not mention it among the tombs of Damascus, nor of any other [place]. [No . . .] Malika is known as a descendant of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. It is necessary to destroy it and to return it to the way it was; it is a path for the Muslims shared between their elite and common people. The ulema expounded that in *Kitāb al-Bida’ wa-al-Ḥawādith* (The Book of Heretical Innovations and Inventions).¹³⁹

The Small Gate Cemetery due south of the city wall and the Paradise Gate Cemetery to the north were hallowed ground; the rediscovery or the preservation of shrines there during the Middle Ages emphasized their holiness and that of Damascus for Sunnis and Shi’is alike. Traditions concerning Damascus’s sacred sites were not only narrated to glorify their sacred qualities, but also to urge

¹³⁹ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qurrat al-Uyūn*, 15–16.

devotees to visit them. These traditions implicitly acknowledge commonly shared sacred space between Muslims and Christians and Muslims and Jews. The following illustrates a possible shared space between Muslims and Christians, though there is no other evidence to suggest that Christians venerated the place. Ibn 'Abbās related a tradition from Makḥūl in which the latter urged visits to the tombs of Maryam and Jesus's Disciples:

Whoever wants to behold the Cemetery in which Maryam, daughter of 'Imrān, and the disciples are [buried], then let him come to the Paradise Gate Cemetery.¹⁴⁰

A locality's sanctity depended upon the value assigned to the performance of prayer there.¹⁴¹ In Mecca each prayer is worth 100,000 prayers; in Medina, 50,000; and in Jerusalem, 40,000.¹⁴² Similarly, compilers of traditions, such as al-Raba'ī and the historian Ibn 'Asākir, regarded cemeteries, particularly the large concentrations of tombs of the family of the Prophet and his Companions, as noteworthy because they distinguished Damascus from other cities.¹⁴³ Claiming possession of a large number of saints definitively established Damascus's sanctity, particularly in the eyes of visitors from distant lands. The value of such traditions for the medieval Muslim was that they encouraged pilgrimage to particular sites—'then let him come to . . .'. Damascus, like other cities, represented a locus in the land of Syria within which were contained many loci represented by shrines and tombs. Traditionists often quantified the burial places of saints and prophets and other important tombs. Al-Raba'ī enumerates a tradition concerning the burial places of prophets in al-Shām which can be represented as in Table 1.¹⁴⁴

MT. QĀSIYŪN

The mountain was one of the earliest habitats of mankind, a place secluded from the world around it, a retreat and refuge, a sacred

¹⁴⁰ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 111, 190.

¹⁴¹ Von Grunebaum, 'The Sacred Character of Islamic Cities', 31.

¹⁴² Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 11-12; von Grunebaum, 'The Sacred Character of Islamic Cities', 33.

¹⁴³ Al-Raba'ī mentions a tradition in which prayer in the Congregational Mosque of Damascus is worth 30,000 prayers, *Faḍā'il al-Shām*, 36-7, no. 64.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 49.

TABLE I. *Number of tombs of prophets in Greater Syria according to location*

Location	Number
Ṭarsūs	10
Miṣṣīṣa (var. Maṣṣīṣa)	5
Thughūr-sawāḥil	1,000
Antioch	1 (Ḥabīb al-Najjār)
Ḥimṣ	30
Damascus	500
Urdunn	500
Filasṭīn	500
Jerusalem	1,000
al-ʿArīsh	10
Damascus	1 (Moses)
TOTAL	3,557 tombs

Note: Moses' tomb is most probably listed separately because of its importance.

place surrounded by the profane where in pre-modern societies the dead were buried and where temples and shrines were built for the veneration of gods, saints, and dead ancestors. Sacred mountains, or more apropos, hills and plateaus,¹⁴⁵ played an important role in Scripture, and by extension in the local histories of Muslims and Jews. All mountains were associated with holy persons. Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, Noah's Ark settled on Mt. Jūdī (Qur'an 11: 44), Elijah spoke to God on Mt. Ḥorev. The Qur'an speaks of Jesus and Maryam fleeing to al-Rabwa to escape their persecutors (Qur'an 23: 50).¹⁴⁶ Exegetes interpreted this verse as referring to Mt. Qāsiyūn. God through the Angel Gabriel revealed the Qur'an to Muḥammad on Mt. Ḥirā' outside Mecca and the Prophet and Abū Bakr escaped from Quraysh and hid in a cave in Mt. Thawr (Thuwar).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ D. Behrens-Abouseif, 'al-Muḥattam', *EI*(2), 7. 509.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Qazwīnī refers to the Rabwa as Jabal al-Rabwa. *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharā'ib al-Mawjūdāt*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1848), 160.

¹⁴⁷ Ibn Tūlūn, *al-Qalā'id al-Jawhariya fi Tārikh al-Ṣāliḥiyya*, 2nd edn., ed. M. A. Duhmān (Damascus, 1980), introd., 1. 2. Al-Raba', *Faḍā'il al-Shām*, 61 gives a tra-

Jabal al-Muqaṭṭam¹⁴⁸ outside of Cairo, Mt. Qāsiyūn overlooking Damascus, and Mt. Lebanon are among the most important sacred mountains in Islamic tradition associated with saints. According to Ibn Shaddād,

Mt. Lebanon was a mountain populated with the Substitutes, the wandering worshippers (*suḡyāḥ*) and those who cut themselves off from the rest of creation and devote themselves exclusively to God the Exalted, betaking to the trees and rivers. It contains all varieties of herbs on which the righteous subsist.¹⁴⁹

Mt. Qāsiyūn is holy in the three monotheistic traditions and shrouded in stories, legends, anecdotes of strange and wondrous happenings, and historical accounts concerning saints and prophets.¹⁵⁰ Syrians compiled prophetic and other traditions concerning the sanctity of this place. Medieval Syrians regarded Mt. Qāsiyūn as holier than Bayt al-Maqdis because 'God spoke unto it'.¹⁵¹ The mountain proved itself worthy of God's favour by granting its shadow and its blessings (*baraka*) to Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis) which God would return to it at the End of time. Thus, like other sacred mountains and also like the Congregational Mosque, Mt. Qāsiyūn was destined to play a role in the eschatological drama at the end of time:

This [tradition] going back to a Companion was reported to us. The Qur'an memorizer Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Surūr al-Maqdisī says in *Faḍā'il al-Shām*: It was reported to us in a chain of transmission originating with al-Walīd b. Muslim who said, 'God the Exalted inspired

dition concerning four sacred mountains: Ṭūr Zaytā (Jerusalem), Bayt al-Maqdis, Ṭūr Sīnā (Mt. Sinai), and Ṭūr Tinā (Congregational Mosque of Damascus). Another tradition mentions Ṭūr Zaytā (Jerusalem), Ṭūr Sīnā (Mt. Sinai), Ṭūr Tinā (Congregational Mosque of Damascus), and Ṭūr Taymānā (Mecca), Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 5; Al-Raba'ī, *Faḍā'il*, 61.

¹⁴⁸ 'Al-Muqaṭṭam', *EI*(2), 7. 509–11.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Shaddād, *Al-lāq* (al-Dahhān, 1962), 35. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa mentions that, 'It is never without a number of recluses who have renounced the world for the service of God Most High, and of ascetics and devotees, for the place is noted for this, and I myself saw there several saintly men of obscure name who had become recluses in the service of God Most High.' *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325–1354*, trans. H. A. R. Gibb, *et al.*, 4 vols. (London, 1958–94), 1. 115–16.

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of the meaning of 'Qāsiyūn' see Duhmān's introd. to Ibn Tūlūn's *Qalā'id*, pp. 37–8; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 1, and 2(1), 6; Ibn Kinnān, *al-Murūj al-Sundusīya al-Fasiḥa fī Talkhīṣ Tārīkh al-Ṣāliḥīya*, 2nd edn., ed. M. A. Duhmān, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1947), 18–26.

¹⁵¹ N. Élısséeff, 'Qāsiyūn', *EI*(2), 4. 724.

Mt. Qāsiyūn: Grant your shadow and your *baraka* to Jerusalem and it did. God the Exalted commanded: Since you have done so, I will build a house [i.e. a place of worship] in your bosom—that is, at your centre—in which there will be worship for forty years after the destruction of the world. The days and nights will not go until I restore to you your shade and your *baraka*.' He said, 'Mt. Qāsiyūn is in the position of the weak, humble believer. The house is the congregational mosque of Damascus.'¹⁵²

Baraka was a divine and innate quality of mountains as of the shrines which graced them. In this and other such traditions, Qāsiyūn and the Congregational Mosque of Damascus were the focus because they represented sacred centres. Referring to the symbolism of the 'centre', Eliade suggests that it manifests itself in the following forms:

1) The 'sacred mountain' where heaven and earth meet, stands at the centre of the world; 2) Every temple or palace, and by extension, every sacred town and royal residence, is assimilated to a 'sacred mountain' and thus becomes a 'centre'; 3) The temple or sacred city, in turn, as the polis through which the Axis Mundi passes, is held to be a point of junction between heaven, earth and hell.¹⁵³

A Syrian poet of the twelfth century recited for the historian Ibn 'Asākir a poem of a *muwallad*¹⁵⁴ poet about the sanctity of Mt. Qāsiyūn, extolling its virtues:¹⁵⁵

Oh my companion, how many a shrine (*mashhad*) at Mt. Qāsiyūn and
its foot is there worthy of exaltation
The Upper Hill (al-Rabwa al-'Ulyā)—whoever masters the exegesis on the
Book extols its praises
The renowned Nayrab¹⁵⁶—whoever visits it or experiences there a blessing
[from God] knows its virtue
The Grotto of Blood—its virtue is widely reported. I still hear it [said]:
may you be given aid, a great miracle
The Cave of Jibrīl the Guardian—possesses a miraculous virtue which I
experienced long ago

¹⁵² Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 99–100. ¹⁵³ Eliade, *Patterns*, 375.

¹⁵⁴ 'Muwallad' refers to a poet of the post-classical age, sometimes rendered as 'modern'. P. Chalmers and W.F. Heinrichs, 'Muwallad', *EI*(2), 7. 807–8.

¹⁵⁵ Al-'Adawī, *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt bi-Dimashq*, ed. S. al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1956), 8. Also, see Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 112–13.

¹⁵⁶ Yāqūt reports that the Nayrab is, 'at a distance of half a parasang in the middle of the gardens in Anza, a place which I saw. It is said that the place of prayer of al-Khadīr . . . is there', *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 4. 855.

The noble Grotto of Hunger—how many a pious servant beneath it does
reside
The Oratory (*maqām*) at Barza—its merit is not to be denied; I mean the
maqām of your father Ibrāhīm
How many a place there not possessing a mosque became noble for the
devout
The Prophet was seen praying at its foot; Bless him and grant him eternal
peace and salvation
It contains the tombs of the prophets; whoever sets out to visit them,
desires a miracle
Tarry not in visiting it (i.e. Mt. Qāsiyūn) and do so regularly so that you
may attain great recompense in Paradise.

Mt. Qāsiyūn constituted part of a continuum of holy places which included neighbouring sites such as al-Rabwa, al-Nayrab, and Barza. The pilgrimage sites of Mt. Qāsiyūn and other localities, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, were essential elements in pilgrimage itineraries. Each of these sites was holy through its association with a saint or as a result of some miracle or blessing which devotees experienced there. The poet suggests that visiting these holy sites on a regular basis was a means of attaining miracles and ensuring 'great recompense in Paradise'. Thus, it is a pious Muslim's duty to visit these places. Prayer, supplication, and visions perpetuated the mountain's sanctity. Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Hādī (d. 919/1503), a descendant of the Maqdisī family and the author of the first history of the al-ṣālīḥīya neighbourhood of Damascus, comments that

travellers frequent it and visit there the ancient sites because of the presence of the prophets, the walis and the ulema and before that the presence of the burial places of the prophets. It is famous and well known [that] near al-Mayṭūr¹⁵⁷ is the tomb of the Prophet Ṭālūt . . .¹⁵⁸

Another site was connected with a legend which had its roots in a common Scriptural past: the rivalry between Cain and Abel.¹⁵⁹

Outside Bāb al-Sā'āt (the southern gate of the Congregational Mosque of Damascus from the west) there used to be a rock (*ṣakhra*) upon which votive offerings were placed. A fire would descend and burn whatever was accepted and whatever was not, remained as it was. Abel owned sheep (i.e.

¹⁵⁷ See below, Ch. 3, n. 180.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn Kinnān, *al-Murūj al-Sundusīya*, 22.

¹⁵⁹ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 1. 91-2.



FIG. 2. Grotto of Blood, Grotto of Forty, Mt. Qāsiyūn, Damascus (exterior)

he was a shepherd) and his house was in Muqrā.¹⁶⁰ Cain was in Qaynīya and was a farmer. Adam was in Bayt Abyāt and Ḥawwā' in Bayt Lihyā. He said, 'Abel brought a fat sheep from his flock and placed it on the rock and the fire did consume it.' He said, 'Then Cain came along with an offering of grain and placed them upon the rock [where] they remained.'¹⁶¹

The site of the rivalry was commemorated in Jewish tradition from Antiquity and also in Islamic tradition. For the Muslims and Christians of Damascus, Maghārat al-Dam (the Grotto of Blood) was a place of pilgrimage, and in Jewish tradition the family of Seth settled on Mt. Qāsiyūn, while the family of Cain resided in Damascus, where Cain slew Abel.¹⁶²

Jerome cites a Jewish legend in which Cain killed his brother in Damascus which derived from a Greek legend concerning the founding of Damascus recorded by Stephanus Byzantinus in which Hermes killed the giant Askos on the site where Abel was killed.¹⁶³ The fourteenth-century traveller Giorgio Gucci mentions that

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, I, 59. A village on a path leading to Mt. Qāsiyūn.

¹⁶¹ This rock is mentioned in Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 19.

¹⁶² Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, I, 152. ¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 5, 19.

Christians and Muslims visited the monument which stood on the spot.¹⁶⁴

Writing in the fifteenth century Ibn al-Wardī in his geographical work *Kharīdat al-ʿAjāʾib* mentions that the murder took place on a level plain (*barrīyat qāʿ*), which conflicts with the commonly held belief that the murder took place on Mt. Qāsiyūn where the Grotto of Blood was located.

The Grotto of Blood (Maghārat al-Dam). They say that Cain killed Abel there. It is said that he murdered him in the level plain (*barrīyat qāʿ*) and that was in Damascus.¹⁶⁵ Al-Masūʿdī says this in *Murūj al-Dhahab*. [He killed him] with a rock with which he crushed [his skull]. It is said that the beast became wild from man.¹⁶⁶

Ibn al-Ḥawrānī quotes several traditions which confirm that the site of Abel’s murder was a place for fulfilling supplication, especially for rain. He quotes Abū Mushir, a *muḥaddith* of the early Abbasid age, as saying, ‘The Grotto of Blood (Maghārat al-Dam)¹⁶⁷ is the place of the red (*ḥamra*) [i.e. Abel’s blood]—the place for fulfilling one’s needs (*mawḍiʿ al-ḥawāʾij*), that is, supplication (*duʿāʾ*) and prayer there.’¹⁶⁸ The trace of Abel’s blood was thought to have been preserved in the rock.

The holy manifested itself in the sanctuary in various forms ranging from the appearance of Muḥammad and Abel or other holy persons in dreams and visions, as well as through the pilgrimages of prominent Muslims, usually leaders or elders of the community, such as the Umayyad caliphs Muʿāwiya, Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik, and ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, to supplicate for rain. During the Crusader advance on Damascus in 1148 CE, Shaykh Abū ʿUmar Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, along with his companions

ascended to the Grotto of Blood (Maghārat al-Dam). They recited twelve thousand times: ‘Behold We sent it down on the Night of Power’ and ‘Say, He God is One.’ Then God the Exalted brought forth a heavy downpour

¹⁶⁴ Leonardo Frescobaldi, Giorgio Gucci, and Simone Sigoli, *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine, and Syria in 1384* (Jerusalem, 1948), 142.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Barrīyat qāʿ’ does not appear to be a proper name. ‘Qāʿ’ is a level plain that does not contain sand.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 97.

¹⁶⁷ Maghārat al-Dam is located on the slope of Jabal Qāsiyūn. It is also referred to as ‘Jabal Dayr Murrān’, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 104–5.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 2(1). 106.

upon the infidels; their horses were drowning in it. [Consequently,] they were unable to reach Damascus . . .¹⁶⁹

Although devoid of pagan rituals, none the less it is possible to draw a rough parallel with the Temple of Jupiter in Damascus, in which access to the inner sanctum was normally restricted to the high priests. However, it was not exclusively the leaders of the Muslim community who partook in the rain ritual, but also saints and common people.

According to the traditions of Ka'ab al-Aḥbār, al-Walīd b. Muslim, and Abū Mushir, the people of Damascus made pilgrimage to the cave. A tradition of Ibn 'Abbās mentions that the inhabitants of Damascus visited the site especially at times of drought and inflation, because of an oppressive ruler, and in order to fulfil personal supplications.¹⁷⁰ Other traditions confirm that prayer and supplication were the most common reasons for which devotees sought the cave sanctuaries of Mt. Qāsiyūn.¹⁷¹

Muḥammad b. Kinnān (d. 1093/1682) in his *Murūj al-Sundusīya fī Talkhīṣ Tārīkh al-Ṣāliḥīya* (*Silken Meadows in a Summary of the History of al-Ṣāliḥīya*) mentions that Christian monasteries stood on Mt. Qāsiyūn during the Byzantine period and prior to Hanbali settlement there. According to Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (569/1174–643/1245), Dayr al-Ḥanābila was originally a monastery whose original occupants were removed for expanding it.¹⁷² Aḥmad al-Maqdisī (d. 558/1162), who settled on Mt. Qāsiyūn, built a *dayr* there since he regarded it as a blessed place (*mubārak*).¹⁷³

Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Hādī (d. 909/1503) enumerates the most important holy sites on Mt. Qāsiyūn prior to his ancestors' settling there:

The Grotto of Blood, the Kahf [i.e. Cave of Gabriel], the Rabwa, the Mahd (cradle) [of Jesus], the tombs of the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*), the minaret of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq, a mosque, the tombs of the martyrs (*shuhadā'*), the prayer room (*muṣallā*), the old mosque [i.e. masjid 'Abd al-'Azīz], Dayr al-Ḥawrānī, Dayr al-Ruhbān . . .¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 103–4.

¹⁷⁰ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1), 106–7.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 2(1), 110–12.

¹⁷² Ibn Kinnān, *Al-Murūj al-Sundusīya*, 9.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 6–7. Although *dayr* normally refers to a Christian monastery, here it clearly refers to a place of residence.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 12.

This list includes not only tombs, sanctuaries, and shrines, but also prayer rooms and mosques, all of which were associated with saints, prophets, and miraculous acts and were known for fulfilment of prayer, supplication, and important needs.

The greatest of them is the Grotto of Blood (*maghārat al-dam*) which is well known today. It is blessed (*mubāraka*). The ulema have composed treatises about this topic, including the Hadith scholar Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Ḥanafī's, *Kitāb Tafriḡ al-Hamm fī Ziyārat Maghārat al-Dam* (*Dispelling Sorrow in Visiting the Grotto of Blood*). It is mentioned under the merits of Qāsiyūn.¹⁷⁵

AL-RABWA (THE HILL)

Sparsely populated, al-Rabwa was a strange and wondrous place for wayfarers and residents, enshrouded in legends and stories. It was holy for several reasons, the most important of which is Jesus's alleged birth there and his sojourn from his persecutors. Although most traditions identify the Rabwa as the hill outside of Damascus mentioned in the Qur'an,¹⁷⁶ the Muslim geographer al-Qazwīnī in his *Kharīdat al-'Ajā'ib* labels it as a mountain.

Jabal al-Rabwa. At a parasang distance from Damascus. One of the exegetes mentioned that it is intended by the words of the Exalted: We have repaired them to take refuge in a hill possessing of rest and security.¹⁷⁷ It is a high mountain upon which is a fine mosque amidst orchards, entirely surrounded by vegetation, trees and aromatic plants. . . . In this mountain is a small cave in which it is alleged Jesus was born. I saw in the mosque (*masjid*) in the small house (*bayt*) an odd large multi-coloured rock the size of a chest split in two and between its divisions is an arm's length. Nobody has [succeeded] in separating the two parts. Rather, they are connected to it like a split pomegranate. The people of Damascus have sayings about that rock. God knows best about their veracity . . .¹⁷⁸

The Ayyubid historian Abū al-Fidā' mentions that *al-rabwa* is a 'cave (*kahf*) at the mouth of [Damascus's] western wadi at which

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 76.

¹⁷⁶ Concerning the legends surrounding the Rabwa in the Qur'an, cf. Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, I. 192; Ibn Kinnān, *al-Murūj al-Sundusīya*, 76–80.

¹⁷⁷ Qur'an 23: 50.

¹⁷⁸ Al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajā'ib*, 160.

its waters part. It is said that it contains Jesus's cradle.¹⁷⁹ Some like al-Harawī did not consider this the *rabwa* mentioned in the Qur'an,¹⁸⁰ while others like Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 765/1363) mention a tradition in which al-Rabwa in the Qur'an is al-Ramla.¹⁸¹

ALEPPO

Aleppo was the second largest city in al-Shām after Damascus. But it was also a holy land (*arḍ muqaddasa*). Ibn al-Shihna mentions that traditions concerning the holy land demonstrate that 'the holy land is al-Shām which is Aleppo and its environs'.¹⁸² The evidence for Aleppo and for other regions of Syria is not as prolific as for Damascus. Aleppo was unique in that it contained a Shi'i community throughout the Fatimid, Hamdanid, and Ayyubid periods. The rule of the Hamdanid Sayf al-Dawla (303/916–356/967), who was himself a Shi'i, marked the first time in Aleppo's history that Shi'is constituted a majority of its inhabitants and in which the sacred topography of the city, especially Shi'i pilgrimage sites, enjoyed the patronage of an important ruler.¹⁸³ The Hamdanid ruler undertook a massive public works initiative to restore shrines and mausoleums of the Ahl al-Bayt throughout Aleppo and the outlying villages.¹⁸⁴

Aleppo's sacred topography centres on popular legends concerning Ibrāhīm through whose transmission its inhabitants sought to maintain a sense of their sacred past. As the preceding discussion has shown, identifying a location with a prophet or other holy person imbued it with holiness. Like Damascus, Aleppo had its founding legends.

¹⁷⁹ Abū al-Fidā', *Taqwīm*, 253. ¹⁸⁰ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 11.

¹⁸¹ Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Muthīr al-Gharām ilā Ziyārat al-Quds wa-al-Shām*, ed. A. Khutaymī (Beirut, 1994), 122. Al-Ramla: a town in Palestine west-north-west of Jerusalem, see E. Honigmann, 'al-ramla', *EI*(2), 8. 423–4.

¹⁸² Ibn al-Shihna, *al-Durr al-Muntakhab fi Tā'rikh Mamlakat Ḥalab*, ed. 'A. M. Darwīsh (Damascus, 1984), 15.

¹⁸³ T. Bianquis, 'Sayf al-Dawla', *EI*(2), 9. 103–10; J. Sauvaget, 'Ḥalab', *EI*(2), 3. 85–90.

¹⁸⁴ Ibn Shaddād, *al-A'lāq al-Khaṭira fi Dhikr Umarā' al-Shām wa-al-Jazīra*, ed. D. Sourdel (Damascus, 1953), 48.

For Jews and Muslims, Aleppo was a city of Abraham and David, in fact, one of several. Apart from Jerusalem, other locations were honoured as Cities of David, including Baʿlabakk, which Muslims and Jews identified in their writings. In Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traditions Abraham migrated to Aleppo from Babylonia with his flocks of sheep after which legend has it that the city was named. According to Ibn Shaddād,

It was called ‘Ḥalab’ because Ibrāhīm used to graze his sheep around a hill upon which the citadel currently stands. He used to milk his sheep at an appointed time and the people would come to him at that time. Then the people would say, ‘Ibrāhīm milked; Ibrāhīm milked.’ [That is how] it came to be called Ḥalab.¹⁸⁵

An Oriental Jew mentions a house (*bayt*) of Abraham in Aleppo, a reference to the oratory (*maqām*) in the citadel.¹⁸⁶ Petaḥiyah of Regensburg recounts a similar story concerning Abraham, adding that ‘Steps led down from the mountain, whence he was accustomed to hand milk to the poor.’¹⁸⁷

Ibn al-ʿAdīm mentions that

It is said that when Ibrāhīm . . . traversed the Euphrates from Ḥarrān, he waited for his cousin Lūṭ in a year of great drought with a group of many of his followers. The Canaanites used to come with their children to Ibrāhīm . . . and they would give them over to him and he would give them for their provisions food and sheep in charity. He arrived in the land of Aleppo and took possession of wells and dug springs, including the spring of Ibrāhīm . . . upon which the city of Aleppo was built.¹⁸⁸

Along with Damascus, the Syrian village of Faddān from among Ḥarrān’s districts claimed the birthplace of Ibrāhīm.¹⁸⁹ Ibn Shaddād mentions that Ibrāhīm was born in the village of al-Muhayd in al-Sawād.¹⁹⁰ Ibn al-ʿAdīm mentions that the canal of Aleppo was

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 15.

¹⁸⁶ *Eleh ha-Massaʿot* (Jerusalem, 1903), 158 (appended to *Benjamin of Tudela*). It is a redaction of a late 13th-cent. work entitled, *Tozot Erez Yisraʿel*. See Prawer, *History*, 233–50.

¹⁸⁷ Translation is Adler’s: *Jewish Travellers*, 85.

¹⁸⁸ Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Tārīkh Ḥalab*, ed. S. al-Dahhān, 3 vols. (Damascus, 1951–68), I. 11.

¹⁸⁹ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 3. 855.

¹⁹⁰ Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Dahhān 1962), 275; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 3. 174.

Ibrāhīm's spring.¹⁹¹ The citadel of Aleppo was also renowned for its lower and upper shrines of Ibrāhīm. From its very name to its inscriptions, the place was holy.¹⁹²

This discussion has considered sacred topography from the perspective of devotees, writers, and theologians with the goal of understanding what made sacred places sacred, and how this quality of sacredness was manifest, identified by believers, and reinforced through ritual acts. The sanctity of holy places was reinforced through the production and transmission of traditions concerning the ancient past. Eschatological traditions further enhanced the role that cities and their sacred places would play in the eschatological drama at the end of time. In Judaism and Islam, al-Shām and other regions of the Near East possessed *baraka*, but were never holy in the same sense as Jerusalem, Mecca, or Medina. *Baraka* was an intrinsic part of urban and rural landscapes. Holiness was not merely a secondary attribute of cities, towns, villages, caves, rivers, and mountains, but was for devotees a potent force which shaped their relationship to the sanctity of the land. While the role of localities, especially cities, was political, administrative, and economic, their most important and most significant role was in religious life, particularly in pilgrimage culture. Sacred topography in the Jewish and Islamic contexts was ultimately connected with the prophets and patriarchs and other holy persons. In bringing the physical and symbolic vestiges of Jerusalem and the Temple to their holy places in exile and creating and preserving an oral history concerning them, Jews endowed their holy places with sanctity.

¹⁹¹ Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, I. 57.

¹⁹² See below, pp. 198–9.

The Friends of God

The true saint goes in and out amongst the people and eats and sleeps with them and buys and sells in the market and marries and takes part in social intercourse, and never forgets God for a single moment.

Abū Saʿīd b. Abī al-Khayr (d. 1049 CE)¹

SINCE Antiquity Syria had been the abode of holy men, from its Christian and Muslim ascetics who dwelt in its mountains, to unkempt and seemingly impious individuals rambling incoherent phrases and roaming its cities, to those who lay interred beneath its sacred ground. To the medieval devotee, saints and miracles were an essential part of life. The saint was often a charismatic individual, a spiritual mentor renowned for learning, wisdom, and exemplary piety. In saints devotees found the strength to cope with war, disease, and pestilence. Saints had the power to address injustice and exact punishment. People negotiated their relationships with their fellows and expressed public repentance for their sins and misdeeds before them and their tombs. Saints brought good fortune and plenitude, imparted knowledge, blessings, hope, comfort, solace, and protection from evil. They were God's agents on earth. The devout commonly experienced visions of living and dead saints and prophets. Venerating saints was endemic. Word of a saint's *baraka* and miracles or of his death attracted crowds and prompted rulers, theologians, and common people to seek him and obtain his possessions. This discussion has several objectives. First, it will define the saint through exploring the theological bases for the evolution of doctrines of sainthood and the agency of miracles in the Islamic context, and discuss, in the Jewish context, the presence of saints, but the absence of a doctrine of sainthood. Second, it will explore the attributes of medieval Muslim saints, such as

¹ G. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals* (London, 1988), 71–2.

asceticism and fasting. Third, it will suggest a typology of Muslim saints. Fourth, it will examine medieval saints' lives and their miracles as depicted in biographical dictionaries, universal and local histories, and pilgrimage guides.² Fifth, it will consider the social and religious context of *baraka*. Sixth, it will look at devotional objects, particularly those associated with saints. In conclusion, it will briefly address the historicity of hagiographical accounts based upon the accounts presented.

DEFINING THE SAINT

Saints can be grouped into two primary categories, 'traditional saints', such as the prophets, patriarchs, and other figures from monotheistic traditions, on the one hand, and 'historical saints', such as mystics, rulers, and others who generally lived in the Islamic period, on the other. While there were no living saints in the Jewish context, there were traditional saints, such as Elijah and Moses and the Talmudic sages who are represented in literary works containing hagiographic elements and attesting to their miracles and pious deeds, such as the eleventh-century Qayrawānī Jewish sage Ibn Shāhīn's *Kitāb al-Faraj Bāda al-Shidda* (*A Book of Relief After Adversity*).³ These stories, called *māsiyyot* (lit. legends, stories, deeds), which are set in the distant past and lack specific temporal and geographical frames of reference, largely have their origins in midrashic literature and the Talmud and were meant to inculcate ideals of exemplary behaviour possessed by the sages and serve as an inspiration for the suffering and afflicted.⁴ The same can be said of the lives of the Companions and Followers of Muḥammad, whose biographies extol their piety and heroic deeds.⁵ Unlike prophets and saints, they rarely performed miracles. In contrast

² For a discussion of these varieties of histories, cf. F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1968) and S. al-Dahhān, 'The Origin and Development of the Local Histories of Syria', in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), 108–17.

³ Ibn Shāhīn, *A Composition Concerning Relief After Adversity*, trans. W. M. Brinner (New Haven, 1979). For a discussion of the 'faraj ba'da al-shidda genre', see especially pp. xxiv–xxvi.

⁴ *Ibid.*, introd.

⁵ Ibn Taymiya acknowledges that God produced miracles and extraordinary occurrences through the Companions, *Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiya*, ed. A. al-ʿĀsimī, 37 vols. (Riyadh, 1991), II. 275–82.

with the stories of the prophets and the Talmudic sages, those of historical saints constitute a corpus of historical biography mainly depicting people interacting with them in real situations and commenting on their personal experiences.

The word 'saint' (L. *sanctus*) evokes a charismatic individual who attains the Christian ideal of perfection in his or her lifetime and who is posthumously recognized through a process of beatification and canonization as being worthy of veneration by the Catholic Church. None the less, it encompasses the very essence of an individual who attained a measure of holiness in his or her lifetime or posthumously as variously exemplified by the display of piety, the fulfilment of supplication, and the ability to perform miracles, effect cures, detect danger, or reveal hidden truths. It will be employed throughout to refer to holy personages who were venerated in their lifetime and posthumously, including prophets, sages, mystics, holy men and women, rulers, recluses, and certain 'marginal' holy men like the *muwallah* (one madly enamoured of God)⁶ and the *majdhūb* (lit. possessed).

Saints are distinguished by two universal characteristics—their shared humanity and otherness.⁷ In the medieval Islamic context, tension between humanity and otherness at times led to social ostracism of saints, even posthumously.⁸ Yet the saint was very much a member of society who lived among devotees and interacted with them. Even those ascetic saints (*zuhhād*) who retreated into the mountains or other remote places in order to engage in mystical and ascetic practices seldom remained detached from society.⁹ Leading figures from the religious establishment often clashed with the common people and even with each other over a saint's claim to 'sainthood'. This tension will

⁶ L. Pouzet, *Damas au VIIIe/XIIIe siècle: Vie et structures religieuses d'une métropole islamique* (Beirut, 1988), 23.

⁷ G. Bond, 'The Arahant: Sainthood in Theravāda Buddhism', in R. Kieckhefer and G. D. Bond (eds.), *Sainthood: Its Manifestations in World Religions* (Berkeley, 1988), 141.

⁸ For the Christian context, see P. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), 95–115. In the Islamic context, social ostracization of a saint did not involve direct contact with a saint's remains. Rather, it was neglect and abandonment of a saint's tomb or repudiation of his religious beliefs which at times represented forms of social and religious ostracization. See for instance the discussion of Ibn al-'Arabī below, pp. 174–7.

⁹ In the Jewish context, the *ḥasidim* or pietists sought to attain an ideal of piety and exemplary learning as embodied in the precepts of the faith. 'Ḥasidut' was both

be explored later and in Chapter 3 with the cult of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, which polarized Damascene society along racial and class lines.

Defining the saint in Judaism

Despite Judaism's emphasis on the community over the individual, the absence of a religious hierarchy, and a distinct notion of sainthood in the Biblical and post-Biblical contexts, saints were not a peripheral phenomenon.¹⁰ The veneration of traditional saints—Biblical and post-Biblical figures who are sometimes referred to as *ẓaddiq* (righteous) and *ḥaṣīd* (pious)—was widespread at tombs and shrines throughout Palestine and other parts of the medieval Islamic world.¹¹ R. Ḥanina ben Doṣa, who was allegedly buried in Safed in Galilee, was regarded as a *ḥaṣīd* because he brought rain and effected cures.¹² In the early sixteenth century Moshe Baṣṣola mentions visiting the tomb of R. Judah b. Il'ai, whom he labelled as a *ḥaṣīd*.¹³ The rabbis were holy men who possessed magical powers in their lifetime.¹⁴ Although the Rabbinic sages did not emulate a unique founder in their learning and devotion, they aspired to certain spiritual ideals and values which the prophets and patriarchs exemplified. Saints were regarded as miracle

a way of life and a branch of knowledge. For a discussion of the genesis of the early pietists, see 'Hasidim', *EJ* 7. 1383–8. For the pietist movement in medieval Egypt, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 5. 479, and 'Abraham Maimonides and his Pietist Circle', in A. Altmann (ed.), *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 145–64; P. B. Fenton, 'Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments by Rabbi Abraham ha-Hasid, the Jewish Sufi', *JSS* 26 (1981), 47–72, and 'Judaeo-Arabic Mystical Writings of the XIIIth–XIVth Centuries', in N. Golb (ed.), *Judaeo-Arabic Studies: Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies* (Amsterdam, 1997), 87–101.

¹⁰ Cf. Robert Cohn's contrast of Judaism and Christianity in this respect. Cohn, 'Sainthood on the Periphery', 44–8.

¹¹ 'Zaddik', *EJ* 16. 910–11. Joseph is referred to as 'Zaddiq'. For a discussion of the evolution of the 'ḥaṣīd' in Rabbinic literature, see 'Ḥasidim', *EJ* 7. 383–8.

¹² In a Talmudic account, God answers his plea to stop the rain. *The Babylonian Talmud, Šeḏer Tāanit* (24b) (London, 1935–52); 'Ḥanina Ben Doṣa', *EJ* 7. 1265–6. Concerning his burial place, cf. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 124.

¹³ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣ'ot Erez Yisra'el*, 45.

¹⁴ 'The rabbi was a holy man, who carried out numerous social, political, and cultural functions. . . . He was believed to possess exceptional magical powers.' J. Neusner, 'Rabbi and Magus in Third-Century Sasanian Babylonia', *History of Religions*, 6 (1966–7), 169–78.

workers. However, from time to time elders also perfected these ideals which made them spiritual role models.

The measure of sanctity that devotees ascribed to saints' tombs by performing pilgrimage to them and worshipping there attests to the continuous belief in the status attained by these holy men in their lifetime. Devotees venerated the Prophet Elijah at special grottoes ordinarily affixed to synagogues throughout Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, Moses at synagogues dedicated to him in Egypt, and Ezekiel and Ezra at shrines in Iraq which were regional pilgrimage centres.¹⁵ Biblical figures displayed saint-like qualities.¹⁶ Elijah quickened the dead (1 Kings 17: 21-3) and multiplied grain and oil (1 Kings 17: 16). The Patriarchs who were buried in Hebron also assume a central role in medieval accounts, as does the Prophet Samuel, whose reputed burial place outside Jerusalem also attracted Christian, Jewish, and Muslim pilgrims.¹⁷ The prophets and patriarchs were in life and posthumously intercessors for Israel.¹⁸ In midrashic accounts, Abraham is depicted as a healer who possessed blessings and precluded the occurrence of disasters.

R. Levi said: No man ever priced a cow belonging to Abraham [in order to buy it] without becoming blessed, nor did a man ever price a cow [to sell] to him without his becoming blessed. Abraham used to pray for barren women, and they were remembered [i.e. they conceived]; and on behalf of the sick, and they were healed. R. Huna said: it was not necessary for Abraham to go to the sick person, for when the sick person merely saw him he was relieved. R. Hanina said: Even ships travelling the sea were saved for Abraham's sake.¹⁹

The doctrine of *zekhut avot*, or the 'merits of the Ancestors', exemplified in this midrash holds that the people of Israel were favoured not because of their own merits, but because of those of their ancestors, particularly the Biblical heroes, the Patriarchs and other righteous ancestors.²⁰ Ancestral merits and good deeds are

¹⁵ These cults are discussed in Ch. 3.

¹⁶ Cohn, 'Sainthood on the Periphery', 49.

¹⁷ Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 12.

¹⁸ Cohn, 'Sainthood on the Periphery', 49; J. W. Bowker, 'Intercession in the Qur'an and the Jewish Tradition', *JSS* (1966), 75-6.

¹⁹ *Midrash Rabbah*, Genesis (39: 11), trans. H. Freedman (London, 1939), 1. 321-2.

²⁰ Concerning the Shekhinah attaching itself to prophets, see above, pp. 20-2.

required for the salvation of the soul.²¹ Jews held the *zaddiqim* above the ministering angels (Sanh. 93a) and believed that they possessed divine powers which they employed of their own volition (Sanh. 65b).²²

Another distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish saint, especially the *ḥasid*, is his ability to produce rain.²³ Elijah withheld the rain from Israel (1 Kings 17: 1). In the time of the Talmudic sages, Ḥoni the Circle Drawer, who was socially ostracized and threatened with a ban, and his grandsons Aba Hilqiah and Ḥanan ha-Niḥba were rainmakers who interceded on behalf of Israel.²⁴ Ḥoni was not an especially learned man, sage or elder, yet his tomb in Dalaton in Galilee was a place of pilgrimage throughout the Middle Ages.²⁵ The ability of the living to intercede effectively ceased after the Talmudic period with the death of the great sages. Yet, this did not preclude Jews from seeking the intercession of dead saints.²⁶ Upon visiting the Galilean tombs of ʿAqabia ben Mehalelel, Reuven b. Yaʿaqov, Shimʿon, Levi, Judah, Dinah, Benjamin, and R. Ḥanina b. Doša and his wife, R. Yiẓḥaq Elfarra of Málaga (1441 CE) remarked, ‘Down to this day, our masters produce more miracles than when they were alive.’²⁷ Medieval Jewish travellers like Petaḥiyah of Regensburg visited the cave of Hillel and Shammai in Meron, which contained a stone possessing an endless supply of water for the upright who entered there to pray.²⁸ Rabbi Jacob of Paris, who also visited their tombs in the thirteenth century, commented that Jews prayed there and sang hymns and said that their prayers for rain were answered.²⁹ During the fifteenth century an anonymous Jewish pilgrim from Crete commented that Jews visited the tomb of Shimʿon bar Yoḥai in Meron, where they prayed for rainfall and their supplications would be fulfilled.³⁰

²¹ Concerning the doctrine of merits, see ‘Zekhut Avot’, *EJ* 16. 976–8; A. Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature* (London, 1920).

²² ‘Zaddik’, *EJ* 16. 911; *The Babylonian Talmud*, *Ṣeder Ṣanḥadrin* (65b, 93a).

²³ ‘Ḥasidim’, *EJ* 7. 1387–8.

²⁴ Concerning Ḥoni and his descendants, see *The Babylonian Talmud*, *Ṣeder Tʿanit*, pp. 167–76.

²⁵ Concerning his tomb, cf. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 107.

²⁶ Cohn, ‘Sainthood on the Periphery’, 45. Cohn incorrectly argues that Jews did not have any need for individual intercession. Examples to the contrary are provided in Ch. 3.

²⁷ Yaʿari, *Maṣṣʿot*, 110.

²⁸ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 87.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 122.

³⁰ Yaʿari, *Maṣṣʿot*, 113.

The medieval cult of Jewish saints centred on holy places as it did around the saints themselves. The Patriarchs were effectively transformed into saints upon their death. Rabbi Pinḥas ben Ḥama mentions in a midrash on Psalm 16: 2:

If the fathers of the world (the patriarchs) had wished that their resting place should be in the Above, they would have been able to have it there: but it is when they died and the rock closed on their tombs here below that they deserved to be called 'saints'.³¹

While Jews did not venerate living saints, they worshipped at the tombs and shrines of Biblical and post-Biblical figures. Geniza texts and travel accounts of European Jews attest to the centrality of saints' tombs in devotees' lives. Not only did the scriptural ideal of redemption prompt Jews to seek the *baraka* of dead saints, but so too did the tangible fulfilment of human needs.³² The Jews of Babylonia, one of the oldest communities in the Near East, composed hymns which they sang during pilgrimage to the shrine of Ezekiel.³³ The Jews of North Africa continue to venerate living and dead saints (*ḡaddiqim*) down to this day.³⁴ Iraqi Jews and Egyptian Jewish merchants engaged in the India trade, and also those from elsewhere, recognized the sanctity of the Iraqi shrines of Ezekiel, Ezra, and the Amoraim.³⁵ Pilgrimage to the tombs of Maimonides and his descendants in Tiberias and of the twelfth-century Iberian poet Judah ha-Levi is attested to from the twelfth century.³⁶ An anonymous pupil of Naḥmanides (14th cent.) who mentions the tomb of Maimonides, adds the expression 'Zikhron ḡaddiq qadosh

³¹ Brown, *Cult*, 3.

³² Cohn's sceptical stance discounts miracles and intercession, which for the medieval Jew were a part of reality.

³³ For the modern era, see Y. Avishur, 'Shirei ha-'Aliyah le-Regel (ha-Ziyāra) le-Qevurot ha-Qedoshim be-'Aravit-Yehudit be-Qerev Yehudei Bavel', in S. Moreh (ed.), *Mehqarim be-Toledot Yehudei Iraq u-ve-Tarbutam*, 2 vols. (Or-Yehudah, 1981-2), 2. 157-85.

³⁴ For the modern context, cf. I. Ben-Ami, *Culte des saints et pèlerinages judeo-musulmans au Maroc* (Paris, 1990), and *Saint Veneration Among the Jews in Morocco* (Detroit, 1998).

³⁵ The Amoraim were Rabbinic authorities in Palestine and Babylonia (3rd-6th cent. CE). Petahiyah of Regensburg visited the tombs of the Babylonian Amoraim. Petahiyah (ed. Benisch), p. 36. Concerning pilgrimage and the India trade, see Ch. 3.

³⁶ Concerning the tomb of Judah ha-Levi, see Benjamin of Tudela, Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 44. It is also mentioned by later travellers such as R. Yizḡaq of Málaga (1441 CE), *Maṣṣā'ot*, 110, and an anonymous pupil of Naḥmanides at the beginning of the 14th cent., *Maṣṣā'ot*, 92.

li-vrakhah' (Blessed be the memory of the holy *zaddiq*) after his name.³⁷ Maimonides' and Nahmanides' (R. Moshe ben Nahman) (1194–1270 CE) tombs are mentioned in Tiberias in a late fifteenth-century account.³⁸ None were objects of 'saintly compositions', that is, until the modern era.³⁹

Defining the saint in Islam

Unlike in Christianity, the process of recognizing a saint in Islam was both personal and informal as it was often based on the popular consensus of common people and disciples and their interaction with saints. Muslims commonly encountered saints in their quest for knowledge and spiritual fulfilment.

A natural tendency exists to associate sainthood (*walāya*) with Sufism and asceticism (*zuhd*).⁴⁰ Each contributed to the formation of devotional acts and rituals in which saints engaged. Sufi doctrines of sainthood and the hierarchical conception of sainthood in the later Middle Ages with its various spiritual stations has little to do with those attributes by which saints were recognized. Many, though not all medieval saints, were ascetics or Sufis and vice versa. However, many engaged in ascetic practices. Many living and dead saints, including Sufis, were venerated by a broad spectrum of the population from common people to theologians and rulers. Not all Muslims accepted saints. Many would have disputed the sainthood of those who purported to walk on water, fly in the air, or transport themselves to far-flung locations at the wink of an eye.⁴¹ Others denied miracles of saints on principle. Others branded some saints as mad.

The most prevalent, though not the only word for 'saint' is *walī*.⁴² The Sufi 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), the author

³⁷ Benjamin of Tudela, Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 92.

³⁸ Ibid. 113. For a brief discussion of his tomb see Y. Avishur (ed. and trans.), *Shivḥei ha-Rambam: Šipurim 'Amamiyim be-'Aravit Yehudit u-ve-'Ivrit me-ha-Mizrah u-mi-Zefon Afriqah* (Jerusalem, 1997), 48–9.

³⁹ A recent work concerning early modern and modern North African and Eastern Judaeo-Arabic oral and written traditions about Maimonides is one illustration—*Shivḥei ha-Rambam*.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of asceticism and mysticism in the early Islamic context, cf. C. Melchert, 'The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.', *SI* 83 (1996), 51–70.

⁴¹ Such feats are commonly attested to in the works of Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, al-'Attār, and the 16th-cent. Egyptian Sufi al-Sha'rānī.

⁴² B. Carra de Vaux, 'Walī', *EI*(1), 4. 1110.

of *Kitāb al-Lumāʿ*, did not regard the Companions and the Household of the Prophet as *awliyāʾ*.⁴³ In the Qurʾanic context the word *walī* simply refers to the believer as a friend of God. The word was later employed by theologians in the ninth century in creeds, which they formulated in order to counter the threat posed by the Muʿtazilis and others to Islamic orthodoxy. Later writers and mystics like al-Qushayrī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn al-ʿArabī employ it specifically in the context of Sufi saints.

The Qurʾan warns believers from taking non-believers as friends and protectors.

O Ye who believe! Take not for friends and protectors (*awliyāʾ*) those who take your religion for a mockery or sport—whether among those who received the Scripture before you, or among those who reject Faith: but fear ye God, if ye have faith.⁴⁴

God chastises the Jews for believing that they are the Friends of God to the exclusion of others: ‘Say: “O ye that stand on Judaism! If ye think that ye are friends to God, to the exclusion of (other) men, then express your desire for death, if ye are truthful!”’⁴⁵ God also chastises the Christians for venerating their priests and monks (i.e. regarding them as *awliyāʾ*):

They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords (*awliyāʾ*) in derogation of God, and [they take as their Lord] Christ the son of Maryam; yet they were commanded to worship but One God: there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: [Far is He] from having the partners they associate (with Him).⁴⁶

God also refers to himself as *walī*, or protector of the faithful.

God is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light. Of those who reject faith the patrons are the evil ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness. They will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein (Forever).⁴⁷

⁴³ Al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Lumāʿ fi-al-Ṭaṣawwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (Leiden, 1914), 320.

⁴⁴ Qurʾan 5: 57. ⁴⁵ Ibid. 62: 6. ⁴⁶ Ibid. 9: 31.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 2: 257. Also see Qurʾan 18: 102. ‘Do the Unbelievers think that they can take My servants as protectors besides Me? Verily We have prepared Hell for the Unbelievers for (their) entertainment.’ One also finds in the Qurʾan verses which are believed to refer to the veneration of the jinn, Jesus, and ʿUzayr such as 17: 57. This verse does not refer to the Christian cult of saints as Margaret Smith maintains, *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East* (London, 1931), 147.

The status of saints in Islamic theology remained ambiguous until the beginning of the ninth century when theologians formulated the first creeds in response to challenges made against certain fundamental issues in Islam.⁴⁸ Theologians perceived a threat from those who regarded saints as superior to prophets.⁴⁹ In formulating creeds, theologians attempted to counter the veneration of saints. The Egyptian Hanafi theologian Abu Ja'far al-Ṭahāwī (239/853–321/933) affirms that prophets were superior to *awliyā'*:

We do not prefer any of the righteous men among the community of believers over any of the prophets but rather we say that any one of the prophets is better than all *awliyā'* put together.⁵⁰

He also regarded the miracles and stories of saints as genuine:

We believe in what we know of *karāmāt* (miracles and charismata), the marvels of the *awliyā'* and in genuine stories about them from trustworthy sources.⁵¹

Many medieval Muslims believed that the *vitae* of saints and their miracles were incontestable. Even Ibn Taymīya (661/1263–728/1328) admitted the existence of saints and their miracles in a creed, his *ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭīya*.

Among the fundamentals of the people of the Sunna is belief in the miracles of the saints (*karāmāt al-awliyā'*) and the supernatural acts which God achieves through them in all varieties of knowledge, illuminations (*mukāshafāt*), power, and impressions as it is handed down about the ancient nations in Sūrat al-Kahf and in other Qur'anic chapters and is known of the early men of this Community of Believers among the Companions and Followers and the rest of the generations of this Community of Believers. It will be with them to the Day of Resurrection.⁵²

She incorrectly cites Qur'an 18: 59. Regarding verse 17: 57, see Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 20 vols. (Cairo, 1939), 9. 279–80.

⁴⁸ W. M. Brinner, 'Prophet and Saint; the Two Exemplars of Islam', in J. S. Hawley (ed.), *Saints and Virtues* (Berkeley, 1987), 45.

⁴⁹ A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (London, 1932), 255.

⁵⁰ Al-Ṭahāwī, *Uṣūl al-ʿAqīda al-Islāmīya Allatī Qarrarahā al-Imām Abū Ja'far Ahmad b. Šalāma al-Azdī al-Ṭahāwī*, ed. ʿA. al-ʿIzzī (Beirut, 1987), 198.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibn Taymīya, *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭīya*, ed. J. Sourdel-Thomine (Paris, 1986), 25 (Arabic).

Although ready to admit that the Companions and the Followers were endowed with miracles (*karāmāt*) and that other saints could potentially display them, Ibn Taymīya criticizes those who blindly accept miracles without determining whether the person in question was seen to follow the Prophet and acted in accordance with the Sunna.⁵³

One finds many of these people relying on their belief that someone is a Friend of God (*walī*), that he had a premonition or inspiration about something, or supernatural deeds issued from him, such as forecasting somebody's death or flying in the air to Mecca or other places or sometimes walking on water, or filling a vessel from air or spending sometime in a state of unconsciousness (*yunfiq ba'd al-awqāt min al-ghayb*) or sometimes disappearing from sight in people's presence. [One also finds that] somebody sought aid through him while he was absent (*ghāib*) or dead and then sees him come to him and fulfil his need or he would inform the people about what was stolen from them or about the state of one of their missing or infirm, or the like. There is nothing of these matters to indicate that their initiator is a Friend of God. But rather, the Friends of God are in agreement that if a man flew in the air or walked on water, one would not be misled by him unless he were seen to follow the Messenger of God . . . and to act in accordance with his order and prohibition.⁵⁴

In the same legal ruling, he argues that supernatural phenomena occur in spite of people, whether or not they are 'Friends of God'.

The miracles of the Friends of God the Exalted are greater than these affairs. Even if the one possessing them may be a Friend of God (*walī lil-lāh*) he also may be an enemy of God. These supernatural incidents allegedly occur to many infidels, unbelievers, heretical innovators and may be acts of devils. It is not possible to regard anybody who experiences any of these occurrences as a Friend of God. Those who are truly Friends of God are regarded as such by their qualities, their deeds and their circumstances which the Book and the Sunna indicate. They are also to be known by the light of faith and the Qur'an and the inward true states of belief and the manifest precepts of Islam.⁵⁵

Goldziher argues that devotees sought to bridge the gap between themselves and God through the creation of mediators and that in

⁵³ Cf. Ibn Taymīya's enumeration of the *karāmāt* of the Companions and Followers, *al-Furqān Bayna Awliyā al-Rahmān wa Awliyā al-Shayṭān*, ed. A. Ḥ. Imām (Cairo, 1981), 115–21.

⁵⁴ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'*, II. 213–14.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* II. 214.

doing so they were satisfying polytheistic needs.⁵⁶ While devotees may have perceived it necessary to turn to saints, the exact relationship between pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions is far from certain. Moreover, Goldziher further argues that for the pre-Islamic practice of saint veneration to be accepted in Islam it had to be associated with a word which broadly could be interpreted as referring to saints.⁵⁷ Such a speculative interpretation of the origins of the word *walī* diminishes from understanding the importance of Muslim interpretations of the word and the devotional contexts in which it was employed.

The word *walī* referred to Sufis, devout worshippers (*ʿubbād*), ascetics (*zuhhād*), recluses (*nussāk*), and other classes of pious men and women who were renowned for particular virtues and working miracles. Some saints were merely referred to as *zābid* (ascetic) or *ʿābid* (devout worshipper), or sometimes both, while others were known as *nāsik* (recluse). This suggests that asceticism and exemplary pious devotion contributed to the formation of a saint's identity.

Did the veneration of saints necessitate the existence of a formal role model, namely the Prophet? For official recognition and legitimization, this may have been the case, but not so for the practice of the cult. Goldziher suggests that the acceptance of the Prophet as a miracle worker paved the way for the acceptance of saints and their miracles.⁵⁸ While it was generally acknowledged that prophets worked miracles, not all saints did. In fact, the Prophet denied ever working miracles (*muʿjizāt*), possessing knowledge of the unseen, foretelling future events (Qur'an 7: 185–8, 6: 50), or being infallible (Qur'an 34: 49, 47: 21).⁵⁹ However, Muslims regard God's final revelation of the Qur'an to Muḥammad through Gabriel as the greatest miracle. In spite of this, his biographers depicted Muḥammad as a miracle worker and a healer.⁶⁰ One such miracle is recounted by al-A'mash:

Al-A'mash and others related from Ibrāhīm from 'Alqama from 'Abd Allāh who said: 'While we were travelling with the Prophet . . . , the time of prayer came and we had a little water. The Prophet supplicated for water

⁵⁶ Goldziher, 'Veneration', 259.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 262–3.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 262.

⁵⁹ For a further discussion, see *ibid.* 275–351.

⁶⁰ F. M. Denny, '“God's Friends”: The Sanctity of Persons in Islam', in *Sainthood*, 75; Goldziher, 'Veneration', 262.

(*dā'ā bi*) and poured it out all at once and put his palm into it. Then the water started to gush out from between his fingers. The people then came forward, performed ablutions and drank.' Al-A'mash said: 'I narrated this to Sālim b. Abī al-Ja'd who said: "Jābir narrated it to me, and I asked him how many were you on that day—1500. . . ."'⁶¹

While accompanying the Prophet on a journey, Jābir reported that a woman with her son accosted the Prophet saying,

'O Messenger of God, this son of mine is possessed by the devil (*ya'khubdh-uhū al-shayṭān*) three times daily.' He took hold of him and placed him between himself and the front part of the saddle. Then he said three times, '[God] apprehend the enemy of God, I am the Messenger of God.' Then he gave him over to his mother.⁶²

The Prophet performed miracles, but whether he served as a model for saint veneration is doubtful. Moreover, through their association with the Prophet, his Household and the Companions came to be venerated at shrines. However, not all who claimed descent from or were associated with Muḥammad were acknowledged as saints. The immediate reasons for the formation of saint cults were social and spiritual and in practical terms had little to do with the formulation of doctrines of sainthood, creeds, or the circulation of traditions concerning the Prophet's miracles.

The Hanbali theologian Ibn Qudāma (541/1146–620/1223), who studied with the famous mystic 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī (470/1077/8–561/1166) and the renowned Hanbali theologian and historian Ibn al-Jawzī (510/1116–597/1200) before settling in Damascus, composed a highly polemical work in refutation of *kalām*⁶³ in which he observed not only the doctrinal importance of living saints as found in the Qur'an, but also the social and spiritual aspects of rulers and others undertaking *ziyāra* to living saints for the purpose of improving their lives and seeking intercession with God through them.

As for the people of the Sunna who follow the traditions and pursue the path of the righteous Ancestors, no imperfection taints them, nor does any

⁶¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā*, ed. S. al-Arnā'ūt and Ḥ. al-Asad, 25 vols. (Beirut, 1981–8), 2. 208.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Often translated as 'theology' or 'speculative theology'. One of the religious sciences of Islam aimed at defending through rational proofs matters of faith. Cf. L. Gardet, 'Ilm al-Kalām', *EI*(2), 3. 1141–9.

disgrace occur to them. Among them are the active learned men (*al-ʿulamā al-āmilūn*), the friends of God (*awliyā*) and the righteous men (*ṣāliḥūn*), the God-fearing and pious (*al-atqiyā al-abrār*), the pure (*aṣfiyā*) and the good (*akhyār*), those who have attained the state of sainthood and the performance of miracles, and those who worship in humility and exert themselves in the study of religious law. It is with their praise that books and registers are adorned. Their annals embellish the congregations and assemblies. Hearts become alive at following in their footsteps. They are supported by religion; and religion is by them enforced. Of them the Koran speaks; and through the Koran they express themselves. And they are a refuge to men when events afflict them: for kings, and others of lesser rank, seek their visits (*yaqṣidūna ziyārātihim*), regarding their supplications to God as a means of obtaining blessings (*wa yatabarrakūna bi-duʿāihim*), and asking them to intercede for them with God (*wa yastashfīʿūna ilā Allāh*).⁶⁴

He goes on to refute the Hanbali theologian Ibn ʿAqīl (431/1040–513/1119)⁶⁵ and his partisans.

As for Ibn ʿAqīl, his faction consists of the partisans of speculative theology. To speak of them is but to censure them, to caution against them, to inspire with aversion to associating with them, to order abandoning and shunning them, and to abstain from studying their works. Not a single one among them can gain a firm foothold in sainthood; nor will any among them be able to claim a miracle; nor will they see, in the life to come, either their Lord or His mighty highly esteemed saints. They declare the miracles of the pious to be false, and they deny the favours bestowed by God upon His believing servants. They are therefore intensely hated in this world, and they will be tortured in the next. None of them will prosper, nor will he succeed in following the right direction.⁶⁶

Ibn Qudāma interprets the Qurʾan as referring to various categories of living saints. Any believers who express themselves through the Qurʾan are capable of attaining the status of these individuals. Keenly aware of the importance of the role such saints played in Damascene society, he stresses the social and spiritual aspects of rulers and others undertaking *ziyāra* to them for the purpose of

⁶⁴ Ibn Qudāma, *Censure of Speculative Theology*, ed. and trans. G. Makdisi (London, 1962), 10–11 nos. 23–4. Translation is Makdisi's (modified). Transliterated text is added.

⁶⁵ G. Makdisi, 'Ibn ʿAqīl', *EI*(2), 3, 699–700.

⁶⁶ Ibn Qudāma, *Censure of Speculative Theology*, 10–11.

improving their lives and seeking intercession with God through them.

MIRACLES

In the Islamic context, a miracle commonly referred to as *karāma* (pl. *karāmāt*) is an act of God that breaks the habitual course of nature and is displayed through the agency of a saint in his lifetime or posthumously.⁶⁷ The fourteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldūn defines it as

a divine power that arouses in the soul (the ability) to exercise influence. The (worker of miracles) is supported in his activity by the spirit of God. . . . That is, miracles are found (to be wrought) by good persons for good purposes and by souls that are entirely devoted to good deeds.⁶⁸

The saintly miracle or *karāma* differed fundamentally from the prophetic miracle or *muʿjiza* (pl. *muʿjizāt*) in its initiator and the purpose for which it was performed. Whereas God normally produced prophetic miracles, on behalf of a nation in the scriptural context, or at least such acts performed for individuals were of significance for the nation, *karāmāt* were often performed on behalf of individuals. Miracles often occurred in spite of the saint and not necessarily on behalf of individuals.⁶⁹

Muslims commonly believed that true saints did not publicly display miracles. Yet, throughout the biographical collections as shown later, the public display of miracles, especially those involving healing, averting danger, and the appearance of food, were commonplace. Saints were possibly aware of the importance of concealing their miracles as in al-Dhahabī's account of an ascetic saint who lived in the fourth/tenth century:

He was one of the greatest Sufi shaykhs and their divine masters (*arbāb*). It was transmitted from him, 'Just as God imposed upon the prophets to publicly display their miracles, [so too] he imposed upon the *awliyāʾ* to

⁶⁷ J. Gardet, 'Karāma', *EI*(2), 4. 615–16; Goldziher, 'Veneration', 336.

⁶⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal, 3 vols. (New York, 1958), 3. 167.

⁶⁹ An important collection of essays concerning saintly miracles is *Miracle et Karāma: Hagiographies médiévales comparées*, ed. D. Aigle (Turnhout, 2000).

conceal their miracles (*karāmāt*) so that they would not be falsely tempted by them.⁷⁰

Al-Sarrāj explains that ‘God commanded prophets to display miracles to the people and to produce them for those for whom they call unto God the Exalted.’⁷¹ For saints to display miracles was to defy and disobey God.⁷² Similarly, in the Jewish case, prophetic miracles and those of the Talmudic sages were performed for groups or individuals on behalf of Israel. Likewise, miracles performed on behalf of individuals were interpreted as being performed on behalf of Israel.

Medieval writers apply *karāma* to miracles, premonitions, and inspirations and illuminations of saints which are referred to in the historiography as *kashf*, *mukāshafa*, etc. While experiencing a spiritual state, some saints spoke of illuminations and divine secrets.⁷³ It was said of Shaykh Aḥmad b. Butrus al-Ṣafadī (d. 926/1520) who lived in Ṣafad in Galilee that

his spiritual states were manifest in Ṣafad and his words carried weight with its rulers. People used to frequent him and he would intercede [with God] on their behalf (*yashfaʿ lahum*), fulfil their needs (*yaqḍī ḥawāʾijahum*), become close to them (*yaqrubuhum*) and accord them hospitality. . . . Whenever he wanted to reveal something (*yatakallam bi-kashf*), he would bow his head to the ground and then would raise it and his eyes would be like two burning coals and he would breathe heavily like one bearing a heavy load. Then he would speak about divine secrets (*mughayyabāt*).⁷⁴

The expression *yaqḍī ḥawāʾijahum* does not necessarily imply that a saint possessed supernatural abilities. ‘Fulfilment of needs’ is also related to acts of charity on behalf of the poor and facilitating cures.⁷⁵

A number of examples of *karāma* provided here, as well as in the later discussion of *baraka*, reveal how it manifested itself in real situations.⁷⁶ Al-Yūnīnī reports that the Ayyubid Amir Aybak

⁷⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar*, ed. M. Zaghlūl, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1988), 2. 10.

⁷¹ Al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Lumāʾ fī al-Ṭaṣawwuf*, 318. ⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ For Ibn Taymiyya’s criticism of *mukāshafāt*, see *Majmūʿ*, 11. 192.

⁷⁴ Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab*, ed. M. and A. al-Arnāʾūt, 10 vols. (Damascus, 1986–93), 10. 94.

⁷⁵ These ideas are further discussed in the next chapter.

⁷⁶ Addressed later in this chapter.

(d. 674/1276) ‘believed in (*kāna labu ‘aqīda fī*) the fakirs and the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*) and in their *karāmāt*, not denying anything supernatural (*khāriq lil-‘āda*).’⁷⁷ The Ayyubids were renowned for patronizing saints and believing in their miracles.

Karāmāt were not accepted by all Muslims. Muʿtazilis were not alone in rejecting saintly miracles. A number of examples contextualize the rejection of saintly miracles. A Damascene saint Abū Bakr Ibn Qiwām (d. 658/1260) confronts the governor of Damascus and the qadi for their disbelief in miracles and performs for them a *karāma*.

The Shaykh [i.e. Ibn Qiwām] one day attended a funeral, which the notables of the state were [also] attending. When they sat down to bury the deceased, the qadi, the preacher, and the governor sat in one corner and the Shaykh and the fakirs in another. The qadi and the governor were discussing the *karāmāt* of the saints (*awliyā*), commenting that there was no truth in them. The preacher was a righteous man. When they arose to pay their respects to the family of the deceased, the group came to greet the Shaykh. The Shaykh said, ‘Oh preacher, we will not greet you.’ He replied, ‘Why, oh master?’ He said, ‘Because you did not oppose the false and evil speech concerning the saints (*awliyā*) and because you did not come to their aid. The Shaykh . . . then turned to the qadi and the governor. He said, ‘You deny the Friends of God the Exalted. What is beneath your feet?’ Both replied that they did not know. Then the Shaykh said, ‘Beneath your feet is a grotto (*maghāra*) to which one descends five steps. It contains a person buried along with his wife. He is addressing me from there saying, “I used to be the king of this country nearly 1,000 years ago. He is upon a bed and his wife opposite him.”’⁷⁸

Ibn Qiwām also had the ability to detect food that was forbidden. One of his companions presented him with food containing carrots. Sensing that the carrots were forbidden, he instructed his companion to visit the market, only to discover that they were meant for the poor.⁷⁹

A passenger aboard a sinking ship supplicated God through Ibn Qiwām.

We were at sea. It became agitated until we were on the verge of drowning. I supplicated God (*sāʾaltu*) through the *baraka* (*bi-barakat . . .*) of the Shaykh. . . . While supplicating God the Exalted, I suddenly beheld the

⁷⁷ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad, 1954–61), 3. 131–3.

⁷⁸ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalāʾid*, 2. 556–7. ⁷⁹ Ibid. 2. 557.

Shaykh passing by in the air. He calmed the sea with God the Exalted's permission. We were saved. Praise be to God.⁸⁰

Al-Yūnīnī mentions several of his posthumous *karāmāt* which were realized through his appearance in dreams. After their deaths, saints possessed the ability to aid the righteous. Al-Yūnīnī states:

Among the charismata (*karāmāt*) which God the Exalted manifested through him after his death is that a merchant companion of his set out travelling to Egypt for trade at the first of the year [672/1273]. Brigands killed him and word of that reached me in Damascus. We did not know who killed him. That greatly worried us. While we were in that state, one of his fakir companions saw the Shaykh in a night vision. He said to him, 'Oh so and so, we have brought those who killed [him] together in such-and-such place in Damascus. Go forth and take them; they are four persons.' We went to that place and found two of them. They were seized and taken before the deputy of the Sultan who was at the time 'Alam al-Dīn al-Shujā'ī. He said to them, 'Where are your companions?' They said, 'The four of us entered this town. Two of us went to al-Ṣālihiya⁸¹ and are in such-and-such place.' We went to that place and found one. Then we took him. This took place on Saturday, 8 Ṣafar of the aforementioned year. When it was Sunday night of the second week [another] one of the fakirs also saw the Shaykh who told him, 'So and so, we have produced the fourth criminal and have entrapped him in a well in Jabal al-Ṣālihiya in such-and-such well-known place in al-Ṣālihiya.' Along with the Sultan's assistants, we went out to that place and seized him from the well [which] the Shaykh mentioned. . . . The four strangers were crucified on Monday. It was a day witnessed, memorable and famous in Damascus.⁸²

Saints sometimes threatened those who told of their miracles. The daughter of a Damascene shaykh acknowledges telling the people of Damascus about the miracles of Shaykh al-Tawba, whose name means repentance. 'I saw him in a night vision saying, "How you have disgraced me" and brandishing a sword. I remained shuddering. I never again dared to say anything.'⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*. Similar occurrences can be found in various collections of Sufi biographies.

⁸¹ Ṣālihiya quarter, which lies to the north of Damascus, was founded in the middle of the 12th cent. by the Banū Qudāma. Concerning its urban development, see T. Miura, 'The Ṣālihiyya Quarter in the Suburbs of Damascus: Its Formation, Structure, and Transformation in the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Periods', *BEO* 47 (1995), 129–69.

⁸² Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, I. 408.

⁸³ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 617.

ASCETICISM

Zuhd (asceticism) is an attribute of Muslim saints, as well as non-saints. Its presence among saints did not necessarily engender the production of miracles. In a recent study of possible influences of Christian monasticism on Muslim ascetics in the early Islamic context, Ofer Livne-Kafri has made a number of fundamental comparisons concerning dress, diet, and pietistic behaviour.⁸⁴ The present analysis is not concerned with whether particular forms of behaviour are pagan or derive from Christianity or other religions. Many forms of ritual behaviour and practices in which saints engaged were known to Muslims as they were to Christians and pagans. Sainthood biographies are replete with descriptions of ascetic devotional practices. A Muslim ascetic or saint's predilection for wearing wool, fasting, or inflicting self-punishment transformed his physical and spiritual state. Fasting was a means of achieving physical and spiritual catharsis. Abstaining from food and water, inflicting self-punishment, wearing wool or tattered garments, and engaging in night vigils and spiritual and mystical exercises represent collective attributes of the medieval saint. Inflicting self-punishment prevented laxity and distracted mind, body, and soul from the pleasures of the world. Such behaviour was taken to the extreme by such groups as the Malāmatiyya, primarily in the eastern Islamic lands but also in Syria.⁸⁵ Inflicting self-punishment was common among less extreme saints, such as the Iraqi Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī,

the ascetic, the pious worshipper, the divine, well known for his religious devotion (*taʿalluh*) and famous for his Sufism. The elite and the common people unanimously accepted him. He used to hang up his whip in the place where he kept night vigil in prayer.⁸⁶ If he found himself lazy he would inflict punishment with it saying that he was more deserving of a whip than a mount. Among his miracles (*karāmāt*) was that he used to walk on the Tigris with people watching him and his feet would not get wet.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ O. Livne-Kafri, 'Early Muslim Ascetics and the World of Christian Monasticism', *JSAI* 20 (1996), 105–29.

⁸⁵ F. de Jong and H. Algar, 'Malāmatiyya', *EI*(2), 6, 223–5.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of *tabajjud* among Christian ascetics, see for instance, M. Smith, *Studies in Early Mysticism*, 139. Also see Qur'an 17: 79.

⁸⁷ Al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-Durrīya fī Tarājim al-Sāda al-Šūfiyya* (Cairo, 1938), I, 82.

An Egyptian saint was also popular in Aleppo.

Abū al-Qāsim b. Maṣṣūr b. Yaḥyā al-Mālikī al-Iskandarānī the righteous shaykh the ascetic who is known as ‘al-Qabārī’ [d. 662/1264]. He was one of the devout worshippers renowned for their piety, extreme frugality in food (*taḥarrī fi-al-mā’kal*), drink and dress, well known for their withdrawal from and abstaining from meeting with the sons of the worldly life and devotion to his personal affairs and his spiritual path which he cultivated. Hardly could any of his contemporaries rival him, his coarse way of living, his . . . predilection for isolation and not meeting with people . . .⁸⁸

Not all ascetics were blessed. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī mentions an incident in which many Iraqīs were deceived by a charlatan ascetic who devised a trick to cheat people of money.

In the year 535/1141, a man from the Sawād region came to Baghdad living in a village at Bāb Baghdad displaying asceticism (*zuhd*).⁸⁹ The people sought him from all over. It came to pass that a boy of one of the people of the Sawād had died and that this man had buried him near al-Sayī’s tomb. That so-called ascetic went and unearthed the grave of the boy and buried him in another location. The next day, people paid this man a visit whereupon he replied, ‘Yesterday I saw ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib who said to me that one of his sons was buried in such-and-such place.’ Chaos reigned in Baghdad. People hurried to him and asked that he show them the place. Then he took them to the spot where the boy was buried. He said: in this place. They dug [until] the beardless youth appeared. Whoever was fortunate in obtaining a piece from his burial shroud, it was as if he ruled the world. They brought along incense, candles and rosewater and took the earth of the tomb in order to obtain blessings (*lil-tabarruk*). The people began to kiss the ascetic, weep and humble themselves. They remained in this state for a number of days whilst the corpse remained uncovered for everybody to see. Its odour [suddenly] changed. The evil people of Baghdad came saying, ‘He has been this way for 400 years, how is it possible that his odour has changed?’ Then the man from the Sawād came to visit the ascetic. He looked at him recognizing him. ‘My son, by God I buried him next to al-Sayī’s tomb. Everybody come with me.’ They went with him, came to the site and dug it. They did not find anybody buried there. Then the ascetic fled and they pursued him, seized and bound

⁸⁸ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2. 315.

⁸⁹ Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 3. 174. Sawād refers to the cultivated rural districts and hamlets of Iraq.

him whereupon he confessed. The ascetic said, 'I did that as a trick.' They publicly displayed him on a camel and punished him.⁹⁰

This incident, which is the only known reference of devotees seeking *baraka* from the shroud of a purported saint whose body lay on display, illustrates the ease with which saints' cults could be established.⁹¹ Identifying saints is ultimately connected with their devotional and ritual behaviour, asceticism, *taṣawwuf*,⁹² miracles, *baraka*, spiritual states and stations, charisma, uniqueness, and otherness.

TOWARD A TYPOLOGY OF MUSLIM SAINTS

On what basis might a typology of Muslim saints be ordered? A functional approach might take into account the saint's role in society, whether he was a mystic, ascetic, or healer. The miracles and charismata of a saint constitute another basis.⁹³ Although useful for understanding the emergence of certain patterns in the historiography concerning saints and miracles, none of these approaches is alone sufficient to provide a complete picture of medieval saints as Muslims regarded them. One possible approach was suggested by Khalil Kochassarly, who groups saints according to four primary classes, including prophets, sincere and truthful individuals who devote themselves and their possessions entirely to the service of God, martyrs, and those who do good and enjoin others to do so.⁹⁴ With the exception of the prophets, such categories are far too general and fail to take into account that saints belonged to more than one category. Ultimately, these designations were not essential for a devotee to recognize a saint. On the other hand, possessing *baraka*, the power of intercession, and the ability to work miracles were clear signs of sainthood. Intercession in the context of living saints did not mean intercession with God on the

⁹⁰ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān fī Tārīkh al-A'yan*, 2 pts. (Hyderabad, 1951-2), 8(1): 176.

⁹¹ Al-Harawī saw the shrouded bodies of Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, and Ya'qūb in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, *Ishārāt*, 30-1.

⁹² Sufism, Islamic mysticism.

⁹³ Aigle, 'Charismes', 15-36.

⁹⁴ Cited in R. Ancaux, 'Le Concept de martyre et de sainte en Islam Sunnite', in J. Marx (ed.), *Sainteté et martyre dans les religions du livre* (Brussels, 1989), 150-8.

Day of Judgement, which was commonly associated with prophets. A far simpler approach is to typify saints according to their proper designations in the historiography—prophet, Companion, Follower, ascetic, or ruler, etc. A survey of biographical dictionaries and collections of obituaries, descriptive and topographical works, and pilgrimage guides reveals three primary groupings.

The least controversial and universal in their appeal are prophets and other figures from monotheistic traditions, whether or not mentioned in Scripture, such as Ibrāhīm, Ilyās, Hizqīl, ʿĪsā, and al-Khaḍir. Jews, Christians, and Muslims universally venerated these saints.

A second category includes the Family of the Prophet and his descendants through his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī and daughter Fāṭima, the Companions and Followers, and the martyrs of the early battles and conquests. Also included are the Shiʿi imams and the four caliphs Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī, who were among the Companions of the Prophet and were his successors as head of the Muslim Community. Shiʿis did not venerate all the Companions or the first three caliphs, who they believed usurped the caliphate from ʿAlī. Similarly, Sunnis did not ordinarily venerate Shiʿi imams. Women were also regarded as saints, including Umm al-Dardāʾ, Fiḍḍa—Fāṭima’s slave girl, Zaynab, the daughter of the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī, and Sukayna, the daughter of the Prophet’s grandson and son of ʿAlī—Ḥusayn. None of these persons are necessarily credited with working miracles during their lifetime, but were venerated for their association with the Prophet as well as their exemplary heroic and praiseworthy attributes.⁹⁵

After their death miracles were attributed to them, though more often to their tombs and shrines, a distinction which may not have existed in devotees’ minds. Tombs and shrines dedicated to prophets and descendants of ʿAlī, even of ʿAlī himself, were widespread in twelfth-century Aleppo and other Syrian cities. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Fatimids institutionalized the veneration of Ḥusayn and his descendants.⁹⁶ The appearance of

⁹⁵ Cf. Al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Lumʿa fi-al-Taṣawwuf*, 320–1. Al-Sarrāj mentions that Maryam, Jesus’s mother, and the Followers of the Prophet, etc., worked *karāmāt*. Shiʿis also attributed miracles to the imams during their lifetime.

⁹⁶ Concerning the cult of Ḥusayn in Fatimid Egypt, see Ch. 3 for further references.

saints in dreams at their tombs and shrines further legitimized their veneration.

Finally, the largest category is composed of medieval saints, such as Sufis, Substitutes (*abdāl*),⁹⁷ rulers, scholars, theologians, and judges. Their lives provide the richest accounts of their miracles, charismata, and heroic deeds. Nūr al-Dīn (r. 541/1147–569/1174) and his successor Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (r. 564/1169–589/1193) posthumously became objects of veneration.⁹⁸ Some rulers were posthumously numbered among saints, not because they ever worked miracles, but rather because of their great piety and heroic deeds. Such men, and occasionally women, were learned individuals who were venerated by their associates and disciples as well as rulers and common people, as is the case with the Hanbali theologian Ibn Taymīya. Women saints include the Damascene Rābī'a al-Shāmiya who was purportedly a contemporary of the Basran Rābī'a al-'Adawīya (d. 185/801), with whom she is often identified.⁹⁹

Medieval pilgrimage guides for Cairo and Damascus enumerate various categories of saints, usually in order of importance or according to burial place. In contrast to Syrian pilgrimage guides, Egyptian guides do not refer to the prophets as a distinct category. The fifteenth-century theologian and scholar Ibn al-Zayyāt in *al-Kawākib al-Sayyāra fī Tartīb al-Ziyāra* (*The Planets in the Organization of the Ziyāra*) enumerates seventeen classes of saints to which devotees made *ziyāra*: the Companions, the Household of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), the Followers and their followers, martyrs (*shuhadā*), jurists, ulema, Hadith scholars (*muḥaddithūn*), judges, Qur'an reciters, Sufi shaykhs (*mashāyikh al-risāla*), professors (*mutaṣaddirūn*),¹⁰⁰ exhorters (*wu'āz*), preachers (*khuṭabā*),

⁹⁷ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 1. 278 reports a tradition of 'Alī concerning the *abdāl*. 'I heard the Messenger of God . . . say, 'The substitutes are in al-Shām. They are forty men. Whenever a man dies, God substitutes another in his stead. Through them rain is delivered and the enemy is vanquished and the suffering of the inhabitants of al-Shām is dispelled.'" It was also believed that forty men were chosen from a constant 500. Ibn 'Asākir mentions other variations, 1. 278–91.

⁹⁸ Al-Harawī says that Nūr al-Dīn is among the *awliyā*, *Ishārāt*, 16.

⁹⁹ M. Smith and C. Pellat, 'Rābī'a al-'Adawīya al-Ḳaysīya', *EI*(2), 8. 354–6. For a brief entry concerning Rābī'a al-Shāmiya, see al-Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā al-musammāt fī Lawāqih al-Anwār fī Ṭabaqāt al-Akhyār* (Cairo, 1925), 1. 56–7.

¹⁰⁰ R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1881), 1. 822.

muezzins, Sufis, and the *arbāb al-asbāb* (men who preoccupy themselves with the means of existence/influence?).¹⁰¹ Guides employed during the *ziyāra* or pilgrimage perhaps influenced such detailed divisions. Al-Sakhāwī mentions that the reason for such variety among scholars depends on circumspection (*ittilāʿ*) and the author's objectives (*maqāṣid*).¹⁰² Earlier writers combined various types of saints without formal distinction.

By contrast, late medieval guides for Syria do not adhere to as elaborate a structure, but often include the prophets followed by the Companions and overwhelmingly scholars, theologians, mystics, and occasionally rulers. Ibn al-Ḥawrānī's *al-Ishārāt ilā Amākin al-Ziyārāt* groups saints according to their burial places. The author mentions a variety of saints, including members of the Prophet's Family, Companions and Followers, rulers, mystics, and ascetics. Although the aforementioned types of saints existed in al-Shām as elsewhere, writers of pilgrimage guides never conceived of them as formal classes, but rather acknowledged the centrality of prophets, the Family of the Prophet, and the Companions over others in the history of the *umma*.

SAINTS' LIVES

Four genres constitute the basis for a further discussion of Muslim saints' lives: collections of biographies and obituaries, such as al-Kutubī's *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, Ibn Rajab's *Kitāb al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, and al-Ṣafadī's *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*; universal and regional histories, including Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī's *Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, and Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya*; local histories like Ibn Ṭūlūn's history of the al-Ṣālihiya neighbourhood of Damascus, *al-Qalāʿid al-Jawhariya*, and Ibn ʿAsākir's history of Damascus, *Tārikh Madīnat Dimashq*; saintly biographies (*tarājim*) like Ibn Ṭūlūn's *Ghāyat al-Bayān fī Tarjamat al-Shaykh Arslān*; and pilgrimage guides, such as Ibn al-

¹⁰¹ This is a translation of Rāghib's rendering of this word. Y. Rāghib, 'Essai d'inventaire chronologique des guides à l'usage de pèlerins du Caire', *REI* 41 (1973), 259–80. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-Sayyāra fī Tartīb al-Ziyāra* (Cairo, 1907), 4.

¹⁰² Al-Sakhāwī, *Tuhfat al-Ahbāb wa Bughyat al-Ṭullāb fī-al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Mazārāt wa-al-Tarājim wa-al-Biqāʿ al-Mubārakāt* (Cairo, 1937), 2–3.

Ḥawrānī's *al-Ishārāt ilā Amākin al-Ziyārāt*.¹⁰³ Other works like Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣḥāhānī's (336/948–430/1038) *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā* contain apophthegms of saintly individuals, including members of the Prophet's Household, Companions, Followers, and ascetics, as well as descriptions of their exemplary moral behaviour, piety, and erudition which are often of a literary and devotional nature.¹⁰⁴ Such hagiographical compendiums recast the lives of revered individuals in terms of ascetic and mystical ideals, including asceticism (*zuhd*, *tazabbud*), pious devotion (*ta'abbud*), renunciation of the worldly life (*mu'riḍūn 'an al-dunyā*), and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*). Some accounts include descriptions of miracles (*karāmāt*).¹⁰⁵ They can only to a limited extent be employed as historical sources. This is in contrast to individual compositions, biographies, and local and universal histories which are time and place specific and preserve the events of a saint's life in a matter-of-fact fashion.

Whether literary, devotional, historical, or biographical, saints' biographies contain stories, incidents, and miracles which were akin to those found in the *vitae* of Christian saints and were for many articles of faith. However, the hagiographic biographies of Muslim saints did not acquire the liturgical significance they did in Christianity.

Since they travelled to various parts of the Islamic world, saints were not defined only by their place of origin, but also by their place of residence. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qabbānī (d. 734/1334) migrated from Egypt and eventually took up residence in Ḥamā, where he enjoyed the patronage of al-Malik al-Afḍal (r. 732/1332). *Ziyāra* was made to him in his lifetime (*quṣīda bi-al-ziyāra*) and his tomb was also visited.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it can be said that such individuals traversed geographical boundaries and were not merely locally recognized saints.

Mt. Lebanon, which extends south to Damascus, was the abode of ascetics and saints, particularly the *abdāl* or saint-

¹⁰³ Pilgrimage guides are discussed in Ch. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Both *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā* and Farīd al-Dīn al-'Aṭṭār's (d. c.627/1230) *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā* are primarily concerned with the eastern Islamic lands. A comprehensive study of both works is required.

¹⁰⁵ For a definition of miracles, see above, p. 73.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Ṣafādī, *Kitāb al-Waḥī bi-al-Wafayāt*, ed. H. Ritter *et al.* (Bibliotheca Islamica; Leipzig, 1931–), 18: 133. For other examples of *ziyāra* made to saints in their lifetime, cf. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, 8(2). 548; Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2. 42, 616, 688.

Substitutes.¹⁰⁷ Saints and ascetics also inhabited Mt. Qāsiyūn overlooking Damascus and Jabal al-Lukkām near Antioch as they did other parts of the Near East and North Africa. Christian monasteries also existed on Mt. Qāsiyūn, yet this does not suggest a particularly Christian setting for the Muslim cult of saints. A Syrian tradition regards Mt. Qāsiyūn as Abraham's birthplace.¹⁰⁸ Yāqūt mentions that at al-Maṣṣīṣa, Mt. Lebanon is known as 'Jabal al-Lukkām' and is the abode of the righteous (*ṣālihūn*).¹⁰⁹ Al-Iṣfahānī's *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'* is replete with such examples of ascetic saints who lived on Mt. Lebanon and elsewhere. For instance, the ninth-century Egyptian ascetic Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/861) remarked that while travelling in the mountains of Antioch he 'suddenly came upon a slave girl with [the appearance of] being possessed and wearing a garment (*jubba*) of wool'.¹¹⁰ Such individuals led holy lives. Medieval Muslims understood these sacred mountains to be the abode of saints who were recognized as emerging from the people. These and other examples establish a strong connection between asceticism (*zuhd*) and saintliness and suggest that saintliness was deeply rooted in an environment in which ascetics thrived.

Another inhabitant of Jabal al-Lukkām was Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Khuttalī. The eleventh-century Sufi al-Hujwārī in his *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, a Persian treatise on Sufism, mentions that this saint was his master, who had cut himself off from the world for sixty years in retreat on Jabal al-Lukkām.

He is the teacher whom I follow in Sufism. He was versed in the science of Koranic exegesis and in traditions (*riwāyāt*). He held the doctrine of Junayd in Sufism. He was a pupil of Ḥuṣrī and a companion of Sīrawānī, and was contemporary with Abū 'Amr Qazwīnī and Abū al-Ḥasan b. Sāliba. He spent sixty years in sincere retirement from the world, for the most part on Mount Lukkām. He displayed many signs and proofs (of saintship), but he did not wear the garb or adopt the external fashions of

¹⁰⁷ Concerning Mt. Lebanon, see S. D. Goitein, 'The Sanctity of Jerusalem and Palestine in Early Islam', in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, 1966), 135-48. Also see I. Goldziher, 'Abdāl', *EI*(2), 1, 94-5.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. above, p. 57.

¹⁰⁹ Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 4, 347-8. Also see al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajāib*, 172. Jabal al-Lukkām overlooks Antioch.

¹¹⁰ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā' wa Ṭabaqāt al-Aṣfiyā'*, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1932-8), 9, 340.

the Sufis, and he used to treat formalists with severity. I never saw any man who inspired me with greater awe than he. . . .¹¹¹

Abū 'Umar: Ascetic, mystic, and healer

The biographical accounts¹¹² of Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Qudāma, better known as Abū 'Umar (d. 607/1210),¹¹³ one of the notables of the Maqdisī family which established the al-Ṣāliḥiyya neighbourhood of Damascus after fleeing from the Crusades, glorify his miraculous acts, his humanity, and his role as a healer.¹¹⁴ Such saints were known for renouncing the worldly life and devoting themselves to the service of the poor and indigent. The saint was described as 'medium height, with blue eyes, on the fair side, with a full head of hair (*'ālī al-jamma*), possessing a fine gap between the two front teeth, of bright countenance, densely bearded, and thin'.¹¹⁵ He was also a prolific poet.¹¹⁶ In his biography of the saint, his nephew Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (567/1172–643/1245) mentions that he married four wives.¹¹⁷ Unlike Christian ascetics and saints, it was common for Muslim saints to marry. The sources speak of Abū 'Umar as a popular Sufi beloved by the inhabitants of Damascus, a mystical pole (*qutb*),¹¹⁸ a healer and a miracle worker whose reputation preceded him. He is also referred to as a scholar learned in the law of inheritance and

¹¹¹ Al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjūb of al-Hujwiri: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (London, 1936), 166.

¹¹² The most significant biographical account of the Shaykh and his exploits was compiled by Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar al-Maqdisī*, ed. 'A.-A. al-Kundarī and H. al-Murrī (Beirut, 1997).

¹¹³ *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar*, 17. Abū Shāma gives his death as 607 H. and his birth as 528 H.: *Tarājim Rijāl al-Qarnayn al-Sādis wa-al-Sābi'*, ed. M. Z. al-Kawtharī and 'I. al-Attār al-Husaynī (Cairo, 1947), 71; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 1. 249.

¹¹⁴ Concerning the migration of the Maqdisīs to Jabal Qāsiyūn, cf. Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, chs. 1 and 2. For a study of the migration, cf. D. Talmon-Heller, 'The Shaykh and the Community—Popular Ḥanbalite Islam in 12th–13th Century Jabal Nābulus and Jabal Qasyūn', *SI* 79 (1994), 103–20. For a description of the *madrasa* he founded as well as its shaykhs, see al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris*, ed. 'I. Shams al-Dīn, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1990), 2. 77–87.

¹¹⁵ Al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar*, 74. Al-Dhahabī gives a slightly different description, *Siyar*, 22. 9.

¹¹⁶ Concerning his poetry, see al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar*, 76–8; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 565–6.

¹¹⁷ Concerning his wives and offspring see al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar*, 74–5; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 565–6.

¹¹⁸ F. de Jong, 'Āl-Ḳuṭb', *EI*(2), 5. 543–6.

jurisprudence and a preacher who moved people to tears.¹¹⁹ ‘People came to him for arbitration of disputes and legal matters, and apart from that and in their absence he would seek out things beneficial to the elite and the common people, such as the river, cisterns, fountains, and spots to dig.’¹²⁰

Al-Dhahabī reports that

he used to fulfil people’s needs. Whenever somebody from among the people of the neighbourhood set off on a journey, he would visit their family. The people used to come to him with disputes and he would make peace between them. He possessed much quality inspiring awe and made a great impression on people.¹²¹

There was no question that Abū ‘Umar was one of the people. He was so well known in Damascus that ‘whenever he entered a market to purchase something, it would be given to him for free because of people’s love for him’.¹²² Although he inhabited Mt. Qāsiyūn, the above examples illustrate that he did not live in seclusion.

Saints like Abū ‘Umar were rainmakers. Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn gives the following account of Abū ‘Umar:

On one occasion, people were in need of rain. So Shaykh Abū ‘Umar went out in a group to the Grotto of Blood (Maghārat al-Dam). It was a hot day such that the group had to request water for making ablutions. So the people quarrelled among themselves because of the paucity of water they had. So the Shaykh supplicated (*da‘ā*) and said ‘Amen’. A heavy downpour came such that the wadis filled.¹²³

In other instances, *baraka* did not derive directly from the Shaykh’s person, but emanated through a miracle (*karāma*), which he performed by healing with the application of herbs.

The preacher Abū Ishāq al-Shabrāwī said: ‘When I once lived on Mt. Qāsiyūn, I became afflicted with colic (*qawlanj*)¹²⁴ during Ramaḍān. People

¹¹⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22. 7–8.

¹²⁰ Al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū ‘Umar*, 39.

¹²¹ Ibid.; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22. 7.

¹²² Al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū ‘Umar*, 73; Ibn Tūlūn, *Qalāid*, 2. 423–4.

¹²³ Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 104. Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn does not mention this, but gives a similar account in which Abū ‘Umar accompanied by a number of his wives prayed together and the rain filled the wadis. *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū ‘Umar*, 53.

¹²⁴ Often interpreted as abdominal obstruction.

[lit. they] watched over me until [such time] I might recover; I did not. The intensity of this malady prompted me to set out to the location of the Congregational Mosque [on] a scorching day. When I was sitting, all of the sudden Shaykh Abū 'Umar descended from the mountain. When he beheld me, he quickened to fill his hands with herbs (*ḥaṣḥiṣha*) and offered them to me saying, "Smell these, they will be of benefit to you." I took them and inhaled them and the illness went away. When it was the time of the night prayer, I prayed with him. He said, "What afflicted you, I believe to be a wind (*rīḥ*)."¹²⁵ Al-Shabrāwī said: 'I know this miracle (*karāma*) to be of Shaykh Abū 'Umar. I did not inform anybody of my illness.'¹²⁵

This encounter illustrates the power of healing that medieval saints were believed to possess through their affinity with nature. In two further accounts, the Shaykh comes to the rescue of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī and al-Jamāl al-Buṣrawī who are stricken with colic.

[Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī said:] 'I was afflicted with a severe case of colic. Abū 'Umar came before me carrying Syrian carob (*kharrūb shāmī*). He said to me: "Consume this." A group of people was with me. They said: "This will increase the colic and harm him." He did not acknowledge their remarks.' [Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī said]: 'I took it from his hand, ate it, and was cured.'

Abū al-Muẓaffar [Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī] said: 'al-Jamāl (Jamāl al-Dīn) al-Buṣrāwī¹²⁶ the preacher said: "I was afflicted with colic during Ramaḍān. They were insistent that I break my fast, yet I did not. I ascended Qāsiyūn and sat in the spot where the congregational mosque is today. Suddenly, I encountered Shaykh Abū 'Umar coming from the mountain with herbs in his hand. He said: "Smell this, it will benefit you. I took it, smelled it and was cured."¹²⁷ [Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī] said: 'A Maghribi man came and recited the Qur'an over al-Jamāl. Then he disappeared from him for a while, returned and stayed with him. The Maghribi man was asked about that and replied: "I entered Diyār Bakr and came to reside with a Shaykh who had a *zāwiya*¹²⁷ and his disciples." While the Maghribi man was sitting down that day, he was crying profusely and lost consciousness. Then he awoke and said that the Quṭb [i.e. mystical pole in the Sufi hierarchy] had died at this moment and that Abū 'Umar shaykh of al-Ṣāliḥiyya had taken his place.' [Al-Jamāl al-Buṣrawī] said: 'I told him that he is my Shaykh.

¹²⁵ Ibn Ṭulūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 564. Also see al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar*, 59, where the edition has 'Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Ḥāmid b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm . . . al-Buṣrāwī'. 'Al-Buṣrāwī' should be read as 'al-Shabrāwī'.

¹²⁶ See above account, pp. 86–7 and n. 125.

¹²⁷ A Sufi lodge, a small mosque, or a complex containing a tomb, accommodation, or other facilities for members of a Sufi order.

He said, "Then why are you sitting right here? Arise and go to him. Greet him for me and tell him that if it were possible for me to travel to him, I would have done so." Then he provisioned me and I set out.¹²⁸ Abū al-Muẓaffar said: 'He never refused his intercession to anybody whoever they were. When I first arrived in al-Shām, he wrote a charm (*waraqa*) for al-Malik al-Mu'azzam 'Īsā b. al-'Ādil in which he said: To the son al-Mu'azzam. I inquired: "How is it that you write this [while] in actuality the Great King is God?" He smiled and tossed the charm to me saying: "Ponder it." I noticed that whenever he wrote "al-Mu'azzam" he vocalized it "Mu'azzim". Then he said: "It is inevitable that there will be a day when he glorifies God the Exalted!"¹²⁹

The life of Abū 'Umar illustrates three aspects of sainthood. First, through their charisma saints attracted rulers, who sought their supplication and blessings. According to Ḍiyā', not only rulers, but also scholars, ascetics, amirs, and judges used to visit him and seek blessings (*yatabarrakūna bihi*) through him from as far away as Sinjār and the Maghrib.¹³⁰ Second, some saints like Abū 'Umar were recognized as a mystical pole, or *qutb*. Third, some challenged authority without losing their lives in the process, as in the above example. Though he never dabbled in politics, Abū 'Umar was openly critical about the corruption and moral laxity of the Ayyubid ruler of Damascus al-Mu'azzam 'Īsā¹³¹ (r. 615/1218–624/1227) and his predecessor al-Malik al-'Ādil (r. 592/1196–615/1218) to the extent that he addressed them directly. Al-Dhahabī reports:

It was said that al-'Ādil came to the Shaykh who was performing ablutions and placed dinars beneath his prayer mat. The Shaykh refused them saying: 'O Abū Bakr, how can I supplicate for you whilst wine is prevalent in Damascus and a pouch of money is taken from a woman [who] sells a *wuqīya*.¹³² He abolished that.

¹²⁸ Concerning Abū 'Umar's status as a *qutb*, see al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar*, 64–7.

¹²⁹ Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 72–3. Abū 'Umar frequently wrote supplications (*riqā'*) possessing *baraka* which cured the infirm or were given to government officials or other individuals to secure intercession on behalf of others. Al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar*, 51–2. Other shaykhs like al-Silafī, who was not a saint, wrote supplications for barrenness (*usr al-wilāda*), al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21. 28.

¹³⁰ Al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'Umar*, 70.

¹³¹ For a discussion of his popularity among his subjects, cf. R. S. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (Albany, NY, 1977), 185–92.

¹³² A measurement of nearly a quarter of a kilogram.

It was said that al-Muʿazzam sat before him and requested supplication from him. He said: ‘O ʿĪsā, do not be ominous like your father who put counterfeit money into circulation and destroyed people’s dealings.’¹³³

Abū ʿUmar was a prolific scribe, writer, and healer. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī reports that he made many copies of the Qurʾan as well as books for his family and friends. He was also in the habit of giving up his clothes to the needy and often going without an undergarment (*sarāwīl*) during winter.¹³⁴ Al-Dhahabī reports that

He never used to get up for anybody because of his glorification of God. He never accumulated [any wealth]. He possessed a coarse garment (*thawb khām*) and used to wear a coarse fur (*farwa*) in winter which he preferred in cold weather. Sometimes when he was hungry, he would eat tree leaves.¹³⁵

Saints were also in the habit of visiting tombs and other holy places. Abū ʿUmar was in the habit of visiting the tombs (*maqābir*) after the afternoon prayer on Fridays.

On Mondays and Thursdays, he would ascend to the Grotto of Blood on foot in his wooden sandals and pray from the noon prayer to the afternoon. When he descended, he would gather wood from the mountain, tie it with a rope and carry it to the homes of widows and orphans. At night, he would anonymously take dirhams and flour to them. His prayers were fulfilled (*mujāb al-dāʿwa*). He did not write a charm (*waraqa*) for fever for anybody but that God the Exalted cured him. His miracles (*karāmāt*) are many, as are his glorious traits.¹³⁶

The saint was also a regional hero because people believed that through his supplication an imminent Crusader attack on Damascus in 1148 CE was averted.¹³⁷

Upon his death, traditions concerning the efficaciousness of visiting his tomb on Friday night or Thursday circulated among Damascus’s inhabitants.¹³⁸ According to a tradition related by Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, his sainthood was vouchsafed by the *ziyāra* based upon a righteous person seeing the Prophet in his sleep.

¹³³ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22. 102.

¹³⁴ Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 71; Also see al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū Umar*,

42.

¹³⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22. 102.

¹³⁶ Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 71.

¹³⁷ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 103–4. Quoted in Ch. 1, pp. 53–4.

¹³⁸ Al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib al-Shaykh Abū Umar*, 83–4.

The night before his death, somebody saw as if [Mt.] Qāsiyūn had fallen or was removed from its place. This they interpreted as a [sign of his impending death]. After he was buried, one of the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*), saw that night in his sleep the Prophet . . . saying, ‘Whoever visits Abū ‘Umar on Friday night, it is as if he saw the Kaaba. Remove your sandals before you approach it.’¹³⁹

FASTING

The Syrian Sufi saint Shaykh Abū Ṣāliḥ (d. 530/1136) who frequented Mt. Lebanon, where he saw devout worshippers, allegedly went without water for long periods at a time. Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Ḥamdawayḥ came upon Shaykh Abū Ṣāliḥ and took him to his house, where he gave him water to drink and in turn gave his wife the vessel to drink in the saint’s presence in order to obtain *baraka*.

Abū Ṣāliḥ the devout worshipper Muflīḥ b. ‘Abd Allāh, the shaykh, the devout worshipper Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥanbalī, the founder of the famous mosque located at Bāb Sharqī. . . .

He was among the gnostic Sufis (*al-ṣūfiyya al-‘arīfīn*). Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Asadī who is better known as Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba mentions him in his *History* in the year 530/1136.

The endower of Masjid Abū Ṣāliḥ outside of Bāb Sharqī. . . . He possessed miracles (*karāmāt*), spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) and mystical stations (*maqāmāt*). Ibn ‘Asākir related by way of Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī al-Raqqī from Shaykh Abū Ṣāliḥ who said, ‘I used to travel around Mt. Lebanon seeking devout worshippers (*‘ubbād*). I saw on Jabal al-Lukkām a man wearing a *muraqqā’a*,¹⁴⁰ sitting on a rock. I said to him, “O shaykh, what are you doing here?” “I am contemplating and guarding.” “I only see rocks before you. What are you watching over and shepherding?” Then he changed and said, “I penetrate the inner depths of my heart and guard the commandments of my Lord. By [the truth of] the one who made you appear before me, will you not go away from me?” I said to him, “Tell me something beneficial so that I may depart. . . .”

¹³⁹ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mīrāt al-Zamān*, 8(2). 551–2. Wearing sandals in the cemetery while visiting tombs is discussed in Ch. 3. In another account related to him, Diyā mentions light representing angels over the tomb of Abū ‘Umar on the day of his funeral (al-Maqdisī, *Manāqib*, 70–1). He also mentions a woman member of the Maqdisī household experiencing a night vision in which a dead woman experiencing torment for her impiety is relieved through Abū ‘Umar’s intercession, 82.

¹⁴⁰ A tattered garment, especially worn by Sufis and ascetics.

Shaykh Abū Ṣāliḥ said, 'I spent six or seven days neither eating nor drinking. I became very thirsty and went to the river behind the mosque. [There] I sat looking at the water and remembered the words of the Exalted: And His throne was upon the waters (Qur'an 11: 7). My thirst abated. I spent the entire ten days not drinking.' He also said, 'Once I had gone for forty days without drinking anything. Shaykh Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ḥamdawayh came upon me and took me to his house and brought me water. He said to me, "Drink." And I did. He took the remaining water, took it to his wife and said to her, "Drink the rest from a man who spent forty days without drinking water."' ¹⁴¹

The latter episode with Ibn Ḥamdawayh and his wife illustrates the transference of *baraka* from an object which the saint had touched to a recipient, as is discussed later.

THE MUWALLAH: DEFYING ORTHODOXY

Saints are pious individuals who attained an exemplary level of learning and piety in outward behaviour and spiritual devotion. Like other Muslims, saints strove to uphold the Sunna of the Prophet in everyday life. However, this was not always the case.¹⁴² Certain men outwardly defied the ideals of Muslim piety by living in a state of ritual impurity, wearing filthy garments, and not praying.¹⁴³ Yet, the 'marginal holy man' did not represent a distinct class of saints as such. This category includes 'illuminati, half-deranged persons, majdhūb, whose peculiar or incoherent utterances are often regarded as inspired, or even the simple-minded'.¹⁴⁴ The *muwallah* may be regarded as variously a cross between a borderline mystic, saint, vagabond, charlatan, and healer. Ibn Taymiya

¹⁴¹ Al-Nu'aymī, *Dāris*, 2. 79–80.

¹⁴² Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī describes the Sufi Qaḍīb al-Bān as a *muwallah*, *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, 8(2): 259. For a succinct discussion of the words *muwallah* and *majdhūb*, see É. Geoffroy, 'Hagiographie et typologie spirituelle', in D. Aigle and A. Vauchez (eds.), *Saints orientaux* (Paris, 1995), 90–1.

¹⁴³ In addition to those cases cited herein, the hagiographical collection of al-Khazrajī contains a number of further examples, including the brief description of an Egyptian woman *muwallaha* who was always on her feet for over three years and resided in the open unprotected from the elements: al-Ḥusayn b. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Khazrajī, *Siyar al-Awliyā' fi-al-Qarn al-Sābi' al-Hijrī* (Beirut, 198?), 128–34. For the account of the woman see p. 134.

¹⁴⁴ B. Carra de Vaux, 'Walī', *El(I)*, 4. 1110.

criticizes those who regard crazy individuals as *awliyāʾ*. Concerning the *muwallah*, he says:

It is not possible for anybody to say that this is a friend of God. If this [person] is not insane (*majnūn*), then he is a *mutawallib* without possessing insanity, or sometimes he would lose his sense of reasoning while at others regain it, and he does not undertake the religious obligations (*farāʾid*).¹⁴⁵

Biographical works seldom mention the *muwallah*. Moreover, they seem to be a distinctly Damascene phenomenon, which created great tension between the learned religious establishment and the common people. They were influenced by mysticism and were driven to individuality which outwardly defied the Sunna of the Prophet.¹⁴⁶ Some Damascenes regarded the thirteenth-century Andalusian mystic Ibn al-ʿArabī as a *muwallah*.¹⁴⁷

The fourteenth-century Maliki theologian Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336) attacks the *muwallah* for deviating from the Sunna.

And let him beware lest he visit an innovator or one whose sole concern with religion is [to use it for] imposture (*tamwīh*) . . . On occasion you will find one who lays claim to poverty and closeness to God; yet [this latter person] keeps his private parts uncovered and allows the time for prayer to pass without praying himself; and [his adherents] will excuse him by [alleging] that he is [so deeply] distressed about himself [that he is unable to attend to the formal obligations of the faithful]. I have seen one of the pious poor travel for three or four days to visit a personage of this kind. Then when we met up with him [that personage] was naked with no cover upon him. In front of him, there were some of the judges and leaders of the place. And this is a shameful matter with regard to religion bespeaking little modesty in terms of the perpetuation of sins and of counteracting the *Sunna* and neglecting the obligatory duties, *farāʾid*; since the uncovering of the private parts is forbidden as it is to look upon them; so is also by general consent the displacement of prayer from its appointed time.¹⁴⁸

One of the best-known *muwallahs* in Damascus was Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qamīnī (d. 657/1259). Writing at the beginning of the six-

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿ*, II. 193.

¹⁴⁶ Pouzet, *Damas*, 222–32.

¹⁴⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Hawādith al-Zamān*, ed. M. Muṣṭafā, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1962–4), I. 328–9.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in von Grunebaum, 'Sacred Character', 28 (modified); Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Madkhal*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1929), 3. 139–40.

teenth century, the Hanafi preacher Ibn Ṭūlūn provides an account of his peculiar habits.

The attribution of sainthood rested in part on immortalizing extraordinary deeds, miracles, and inspirations (*mukāshafāt*). Indeed, Yūsuf's deeds were extraordinary. Yet, conflicting views surfaced about his behaviour and sainthood. Ibn Ṭūlūn is dismissive about both his efficacy in his lifetime and after his death.

The people say Qamīmī [instead of] Qamīnī. Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Hādī followed them in that. He said, 'He has a shrine (*mazār*).' The people disagreed over him (*qad ikhtalafū fihi*). Some number him among the believing saints (*ṣāliḥūn mu'taqadūn*), [while others] say that that is from the tales (*khurāfāt*) of the people and that he (Yūsuf) lit the furnaces (*kāna yūqid al-qamāmīn*) and did not pay attention to purity (*lā yataḥarraz min al-naǧāsāt*). He did not at all belong to this station [of the Sufis] (*wa laysa huwa min hādhā al-maqām bi-shay*).¹⁴⁹

The accounts of later writers like Ibn al-Ḥawrānī and al-'Adawī indicate that the veneration of Yūsuf at his tomb continued into the early modern era.¹⁵⁰

Yūsuf al-Qamīnī, the *muwallah* whom the common people regard as a *walī*. Their proof is that he possessed illuminations (*kashf*) and spoke words based on intuitions (*al-kalām 'alā al-khawātīr*). This is what happens with the soothsayer, the monk, and the madman¹⁵¹ who has a companion of the *jinn*. This sort of occurrence has increased in our time. God is asked for support. Yūsuf used to wallow in his urine, walk barefoot and repair to the furnace of Nūr al-Dīn's bath. He did not pray.

The *muwallah* (lit. the insane, crazy) is somebody who utters incoherent and rambling sayings and has lost touch with reality to the extent that this leads to outlandish behaviour and a lack of attention to the Sunna. Abū Shāma (599/1203–665/1267), who was a contemporary of al-Qamīnī, gives a similar report of the saint, but adds that his mind was believed to be sound.

On the 16th of Sha'bān a person called Yūsuf al-Qamīnī died. He used always to frequent the furnace and the refuse heaps. He mostly hung out at the trash heap of Nūr al-Dīn's bath in the old Sūq al-Qamḥ in Damascus. He used to wear overly large garments which would sweep the

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 396.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 107–8.

¹⁵¹ Another tradition gives 'maṣrū' (epileptic) instead of 'majnūn'. Pouzet, *Damas*, 222–3 n. 82.

ground, walked barefoot and bareheaded. He also experienced periods of long silence and seldom used water. People believed in his righteousness. They speak of his wonders (*ʿajāʾib*) of which nothing appears to me except his clinging to this arduous way for many years and that he is perfectly rational (*ʿaqluhu thābit*). The common people (*ʿawāmm al-nās*) seek to gain his favour with food and drink. After some effort, he would eat just enough to fulfil his need. He would exaggerate in his walking, dragging his sleeves because of their length. Overall, his affair was strange. O God, make us benefit from your righteous servants and make us die as Muslims. He was buried in the mountain in the mausoleum of the *muwallahūn* (*maqbarat al-muwallahīn*).¹⁵²

The fourteenth-century Damascene scholar and historian Ibn Kathīr's account provides further details about the *muwallah*, including the fact that he was regarded by many, not just the common people, as a saint. Ibn Kathīr, who is critical of him and his devotees, regarded him as crazy. He also tells of a rivalry that existed between him and another younger Syrian saint Ibrāhīm al-Shāghūrī, who also enjoyed a popular following.

He was known as al-Iqmīnī because he used to reside in the furnace of Nūr al-Dīn al-Shahīd's bath. He used to wear long garments which dragged on the ground and urinate in his robes [with] his head bare. It is alleged that he possessed spiritual states and many illuminations (*kushūf*). Many common people and others believed in his righteousness (*ṣalāh*) and sainthood (*walāya*).

At this point, he is highly critical of the popular saint and his sainthood.

That is because they do not know the conditions (*sharāʾiṭ*) of sainthood and righteousness. Nor do they know that illuminations may emanate from the pious (*barr*) and the profligate (*fājir*), the believer and the infidel like the monks and others, like the Antichrist (*dajjāl*) and trickster (*ibn ṣayyād*) and others. The jinn intercept the hearing and send it to the human ear, especially the crazy person or the one wearing ritually impure garments. It is necessary to identify the possessor of a spiritual state according to Scripture and the Sunna. Anyone whose spiritual state is in agreement with Scripture and the Sunna of His Messenger is a righteous man whether or not he experienced illuminations (*kāshif*). Anyone whose spiritual state is not, is not a righteous man whether or not he experiences illuminations. Al-Shāfīʿī said, 'Should you see a man walking on water and flying in the

¹⁵² Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 202–3.

air, do not be deceived by him until you subject his situation to Scripture and the Sunna.’

When this man died, he was buried in a mausoleum (*turba*) at the foot of Qāsiyūn. It is made famous by him, east of al-Rawāḥiyya. It is ornamented. One of the common people who believed in him attended to it. He ornamented it and made over his tomb an engraved headstone. All of this is heretical innovation. He died on the 6th of Shaʿbān of this year.

It is alleged that Shaykh Ibrāhīm b. Saʿīd Jayʿāna never dared enter the city while al-Qamīnī was alive. The day al-Iqmīnī died, he entered it. The common people were with him. They entered Damascus screaming and shouting, ‘Permit us to enter the city.’ They are the followers of every agitator who was never illuminated by the light of knowledge. Al-Jayʿāna was asked what prevented him from entering it before this day? He said, ‘Every time I came to one of its gates, I would find a lion lying in it. I would be unable to enter.’ He resided in al-Shāghūr. This is falsehood, deception, trickery, and chicanery. Jayʿāna was buried with him in his mausoleum (*turba*) at the foot of the mountain. God knows best about the [true] spiritual states of [his] servants.¹⁵³

Others undoubtedly shared Ibn Kathīr’s scepticism. Theologians were not merely dismissive of such would-be saints, but rather believed that their true nature was to be discerned on the basis of the Sunna and the Qurʾan as Ibn Kathīr explicitly states.

While they were social outcasts, perhaps would-be scholars who never became true saints for a lack of learning, the *muwallahūn*, although few in number relative to other saints, were far from being marginal elements in Syrian society. Even the very fact that they were included in biographical works substantiates this.

The Hanbali Damascene historian al-Yūnīnī (640/1242–726/1329) gives a similar account and confirms that many had a high opinion of him to the extent that his funeral was packed with mourners. However, he did not express a personal view.

Yūsuf al-Qamīnī’s place of refuge was the furnace and the garbage heaps in Damascus. He used to spend most of his time at the furnace of Nūr al-Dīn’s bath . . . in Sūq al-Qamḥ and wear overly large garments which would sweep the ground [while] walking barefoot and bareheaded. He also experienced periods of long silence and used little water. Many people believed in him. They relate about him that he would at many times reveal the unseen. One of his devotees used to bring him some food and drink

¹⁵³ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 13. 247.

and took great pains with him [until] he ate a bit. He adhered to this arduous way until he died on 6 Sha'bān in Damascus. He was buried at the foot of Qāsiyūn in *Turbat al-Muwallahīn*.¹⁵⁴ His funeral was packed; only very few did not attend. He was one of the world's oddities staggering in his step, not paying attention to anybody and not showing any concern.¹⁵⁵

Another such character was 'Alī al-Kurdī al-Muwallah (d. 724/1324) who inhabited the Bāb al-Jābiya region of Damascus; he worked miracles and experienced premonitions.¹⁵⁶ Ibn Kathīr, who is highly critical of his popular renown, commented that 'he used to wallow in impure substances and filth and walk barefooted. Perhaps he spoke something nonsensical which resembled esoteric knowledge of divine secrets . . .'.¹⁵⁷ Abū Shāma gives his date of death as 622/1225. Abū Shāma said:

There was disagreement over him. Some Damascenes alleged that he possessed miracles (*karāmāt*), while others repudiated that. They said that nobody ever saw him praying, fasting or wearing *madās*.¹⁵⁸ But rather, he used to step in impurities and enter a mosque in that state. Others said that he had a follower from the jinn who spoke through him. Al-Sibṭ spoke of a woman who said that she got word of her mother's death in Lādhiqīya, while somebody said to me that she did not die. She said, 'I passed by him while he was sitting among the tombs (*inda al-maqābir*).' She stood beside him. 'He lifted his head and said to me, "She died, she died, what can you do?" It happened as he said.' My companion 'Abd Allāh told me: 'I arose one morning without anything [to eat around]. [When] I passed by him, he thrust at me half a dirham. He said, "This should be enough for the bread and the *fatt* [soaked in] date syrup (*dibs*)."'¹⁵⁹

[Abū Shāma] said: 'The preacher Shams al-Dīn al-Dawlaī passed by him one day and said to him: "O Shaykh 'Alī, today I ate scraps (*kisrāt*) of stale bread and drank water after them. They satiated me." Shaykh 'Alī al-Kurdī said to him: "Did you not desire anything else but this?" He said: "No." Shaykh 'Alī said: "Whoever is content with a stale scrap of bread

¹⁵⁴ The text has *mūlām*, which is a likely corruption or misprint. Other accounts refer to it as *turbat al-muwallahīn*. Ibid. 13. 247.

¹⁵⁵ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1. 348. Also see Ibn Zāfir, *Risālat Ṣaḥī al-Dīn b. Abī al-Mansūr*, ed. and trans. D. Gril (Cairo, 1986), 88 (Arabic).

¹⁵⁶ Concerning Bāb al-Jābiya, see Ibn 'Asākir, *Tā'rikh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 187.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 14. 93.

¹⁵⁸ *Madās* is a type of footwear.

¹⁵⁹ 'Fatt' is pieces of bread soaked in yogurt, meat broth, or in this instance, date syrup.

will devote himself to God in this *maqṣūra*¹⁶⁰ and not carry out the commandment of Pilgrimage which God prescribed unto him.”¹⁶¹

Ibn Ṭūlūn reports another *muwallah*, who was so out of touch with reality that he went around with his private parts uncovered. Yet, this did not prevent the people from venerating him both during his life and posthumously.

The tomb of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Muwallah adjoining Masjid al-‘Imādī from the south-east. He has a shrine (*mazār*). I saw him many times with his private parts uncovered. He did not pay the slightest attention to impurities always while present at the place where his shrine exists today. The common people believe in him especially (*wa lil-amma fihi i’tiqād zā’id*). When he died in Dhū al-Ḥijja in the year 920/1514, they built this shrine (*mazār*) over it. During this year, I was making pilgrimage and did not attend it.¹⁶²

Yet another, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ṣamad b. al-Khaṭīb ‘Imād al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Karīm b. al-Qāḍī Jamāl al-Dīn (d. 694/1295), was from the prominent Shafi’i family of Banū al-Ḥarastānī; he ‘was a righteous person, an ascetic, possessor of illuminations (*ṣāhib kashf*). He was self-abasing (*tawāḍi‘*) and a bit mad (*kāna lahu walah yasīr*).¹⁶³ Some *muwallahs* even consumed narcotics.¹⁶⁴

Qaḍīb al-Bān (471/1078–573/1177), who resided in Mosul, was also heedless of cleanliness, but people visited his tomb.

He is Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. Abī al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusayn, who is only known as Qaḍīb al-Bān. He was from the inhabitants of Mosul. His grave is outside of it, well known and the people visit it (*yazūrūnahū*). He was among the long-lived. Famous miracles are related about him which people circulate and which contradict reason and the religious law.

The one who is needy unto God Abū Sa’īd Kōkbūri b. ‘Alī b. Bekteḡin told me: ‘Qaḍīb al-Bān called on my parents while reading the Qur’an. “What are you reading?” He said, “Sūrat al-Zukhruf.”’ [The narrator]

¹⁶⁰ See above, Ch. 1, n. 109.

¹⁶¹ Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 146; Pouzet, *Damas*, 224. For another encounter with him, see al-Khazrajī, *Siyar*, 65–7. Also see Ibn Zāfir, *Risālat*, 87–8 (Arabic).

¹⁶² Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā’id*, 2. 402.

¹⁶³ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar*, ed. S. al-Munajjid, 5 vols. (Kuwait, 1960–6), 5. 383; Pouzet, *Damas*, 224. ‘Walah’ is the state of being madly enamoured of something, a mix of holiness and craziness.

¹⁶⁴ M. Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994), 32–3, esp. n. 158.

said, 'He was raving mad (*thā'ir al-ra's*) wearing a wollen *jubba* and was immersed in mud up to his thighs.'

[Kökbürī] said: 'His funeral bier was set down to the ground to receive blessings from it (*lil-tabarruk bihi*) more than once. . . . He was cross-eyed and of a yellow pallor and spoke with a nasal twang.'

My paternal uncle Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. al-Mubārak told me, 'Qaḍīb al-Bān was heedless of urine on his garments and legs and used to be immersed in mud and other substances. He used to recite the Qur'an. If he were asked about the Caliph 'Umar, the Caliphs or something of his disposition he would tell about it.'¹⁶⁵

Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Fātūla (d. 700/1301), for whom ritual prayers were said in the Umayyad Mosque after his death, was buried in Turbat al-Muwallahīn and described as being among the insane possessing reason (*'uqalā' al-majānīn*). He was also known for miracles (*karāmāt*) and illuminations (*mukāshafāt*) and led 'an arduous existence from his coarse way of life'.¹⁶⁶

There were other saints who exhibited behaviour which resembled that of the *muwallahs* in certain aspects: they include Jandal b. Muḥammad (d. 675/1277) from Manīn,¹⁶⁷ who lived for over 100 years.¹⁶⁸

He was given to devout worship, asceticism and righteous acts. People frequently used to visit him in Manīn [where] he used to utter a lot of strange words and expressions which none of those calling on him understood. Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn related about him that nobody came nearer to God with humility and self-abasement before Him. He also heard Jandal say: 'The *muwallah* is denied [recourse to] the path of God. [He is under the delusion that] he has reached it. If he knew that he was denied, he would reconsider his state of affairs.'¹⁶⁹

Jandal was critical of the *muwallah* who prevented himself from attaining the path of God. Although the *muwallahūn* as a group outwardly defied orthodoxy and learning, as Chamberlain demon-

¹⁶⁵ Ibn al-Mustawfī, *Ta'rikh Irbil*, ed. S. al-Ṣaqqār, 2 vols. (Baghdad, 1980), 1. 371.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 617.

¹⁶⁷ Yāqūt, *Muḥam al-Buldān*, 4. 674. A Damascene village.

¹⁶⁸ Pouzet, *Damas*, 225. Ibn Ṭūlūn composed a work about Jandal and his disciple Abū al-Rijāl (d. 694/1294), entitled *Malja' al-Khā'ifīn fī Tarjamat Sayyidi Abi al-Rijāl wa Sayyidi Jandal bi-Manīn*, which only exists in manuscript form.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 13. 226–7.

strates, they were revered as holy men.¹⁷⁰ Theologians and other learned individuals did not regard them as such. Men and women did not flock to them because they challenged established norms of learning, but rather for their conventional wisdom and because they regarded them as sacred persons who dispensed miracles and possessed a charismatic personality.

The common people treated the *muwallahūn* as powerful patrons treated great shaykhs.¹⁷¹ Whereas the latter relationship was often of a formal nature, the former was one of respect combined with popular reverence and informality. Moreover, the ruler sought legitimization for his rule realizing that a saint's blessings and supplications would ensure long life for him and his progeny. They were a social anomaly which occupied an ambiguous state between madness and holiness and existed at the margins of society through popular support and because they did not represent a serious threat to the establishment.¹⁷²

The *muwallah* resembled in certain aspects another type of saint—the *majdhūb* (lit. the one possessed or enamoured of God). The *majdhūb* experienced involuntary rapture or spontaneous illumination, normally through study and speculation.¹⁷³ Common people and important individuals believed that such men possessed extraordinary abilities, such as bringing down those who harmed them. However, this was not always the case. The following examples illustrate the variety of traits these saints possessed.

‘Abd al-‘Āl al-Majdhūb al-Miṣrī (d. c.931 H.)¹⁷⁴

went around bare-headed and not wearing a two-sleeved garment but would instead go around wearing a loincloth in summer and winter with his tooth-stick tied to it. He was attentive to ritual purity, humble and possessed repose (*muṭma‘innan*) in prayer, and completely devoted himself to God (*muta‘allihan*).

He used to carry around a giant vessel from which he would give the people on the streets of Cairo to drink.

¹⁷⁰ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 132–3.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. ¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Goldziher, ‘Veneration’, 264; R. Gramlich, ‘Majdhūb’, *EI*(2), 5. 1029. For a fuller treatment of the *majdhūb* and his role in Sufism in Mamluk Egypt and Syria, see É. Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans: Orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels* (Damascus, 1995), 309–33.

¹⁷⁴ Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 10. 250–1.

He used to travel around to the towns and villages and then return to Cairo.

He used to eulogize the Prophet . . . and the people would be moved to tears from his poem and weep.

Al-Shaʿrāwī said: ‘When his death was at hand, he entered the *zāwiya* before us saying: “Where [do you think] the fakirs will bury me?” I said: “God only knows.” He said: “In Qalyūb.”’ Al-Shaʿrāwī said: ‘It happened as he had said, after three days.’

He was buried near the canal at the shore of Qalyūb. They built a domed mausoleum (*qubba*) over him.

Muḥammad b. ʿIzz al-Shaykh, the righteous (*ṣāliḥ*), the *majdhūb* (d. 930 H.):

The author of *al-Kawākib*¹⁷⁵ said that he used to live in the *Zāwiya al-Ḥamrāʾ* outside of Egypt. He used to wear army fatigues (*thiyāb al-jund*) and walk around with armour and a sword. The important people of Egypt used to respect him and the people believed in him greatly.

He never used to sleep at night and would continue from late night to the dawn at times laughing while at others weeping such that those who beheld him had compassion for him.

His supplication was efficacious. [Once when,] a person beset him in Bayna al-Qaṣrayn, he threw him on his back and invoked God against him that he be divided in two halves. The Pasha had him divided in half at the day’s end.¹⁷⁶

Ibn ʿIzz died drowning in al-Khalīj near the *Zāwiya al-Ḥamrāʾ*.¹⁷⁷

CHARISMA

Some saints like the *muwallah* possessed charisma such that they attracted common people and made rulers fear them. By contrast, others enjoyed the popularity of the entire population. Rulers flocked to one Baʿlabakkan saint who migrated to Mosul. Through Shaykh ʿAdī b. Musāfir’s (d. 557/1162) blessings (*barakāt*) God populated one of the mountains of Mosul where the Baʿlabakkan eventually came to reside after travelling around for many years. A neighbourhood formed through the shaykh’s *baraka* and the

¹⁷⁵ Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī.

¹⁷⁶ Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 10. 243–4.

¹⁷⁷ Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 2. 365–7. A canal dug in the year 23 H. and permanently blocked during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Manṣūr.

shaykh brought peace to the region. He owned a plot of land where he grew his food and never bought and sold anything or relied upon others. He also made his clothes from cotton which he grew. The Qur'an memorizer 'Abd al-Qādir al-Gilānī comments that

I saw that whenever he came to a village its inhabitants would receive him before hearing his words, their men and women repenting except for those among them whom God has willed. We came upon a monastery (*dayr rubbān*) with him. Two monks received us, bared their heads and kissed his feet saying: 'Supplicate for us, we are ready to receive your blessings (*fa-mā nahnu illā fī barakātika*).' They brought out a tray containing bread and honey and everybody ate.¹⁷⁸

Some believed that the Shaykh did not eat anything, which prompted him to eat in public to disprove the rumour.

He also became renowned for his mystical exercises (*riyāḍāt*), his spiritual journeys (*siyar*) and his miracles (*karāmāt*) and the benefit that was obtained from him such that if he lived long ago, he would truly have been a topic of conversation. I saw him when he came to Mosul the year he died.¹⁷⁹ He stopped at a *mashhad* outside Mosul. The Sultan, the governors of the provinces, the shaykhs and the common people came out to see him, going so far as to harm him from all the times they kissed his hand. He was seated in a spot with a grill between him and the people preventing anybody from approaching him except for seeing him. They came to greet him and left. Then he returned to his *zāwiya*.¹⁸⁰

So sacrosanct was the person of the saint that the Seljuk Sultan, presumably Arslān (Shāh) b. Toghriq II, governors, notables and the common people converged upon him at the shrine where he was barricaded. This led to his being seated behind a grill so that people could kiss his hand and receive his blessings. According to al-Dhahabī, the saint had become so popular that some misguided individuals even performed their prayer in his direction.¹⁸¹

BARAKA AND SAINTS

Chapter 1 focused on the relationship between *baraka*, 'blessings', and sacred topography by identifying special qualities which Jews

¹⁷⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 20. 343.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 20. 343.

¹⁷⁹ The narrator is al-Dhahabī.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

and Muslims attributed to sacred places. The present discussion explores the nature and function of *baraka* and the manner in which it was believed to manifest itself in, and to emanate from, living and dead saints in the Islamic context. The *baraka* of tombs and shrines and that obtained through ritual performance at such sacred places is addressed in the next chapter. Defining *baraka* is a difficult task because it is not solely grounded in Scripture and because it has many fine shades of meaning and manifestations. It may be argued that *baraka* had its origins in other religions, possibly even in Christianity. However, it was not a distinctly Christian phenomenon. *Baraka* can be understood as a divinely inspired quality that makes saints holy and sets them apart from their fellows. It may be rendered as 'holiness', but has several levels of meaning. Its supreme manifestations are the Qur'an and the tenets of Islam. The word *baraka* appears only three times in the Qur'an, but only in the plural (*barakāt*), referring specifically to God. Other forms, such as *būrika*, *mubāarak*, and *tabārika* appear twenty-nine times. Yet, none refer to saints or prophets. God invests saints with *baraka*, who in turn transmit it to devotees by various means.¹⁸²

Baraka manifested itself in saints and inanimate objects, including tombs and shrines, and in the natural landscape. There is no evidence, at least in the medieval context, to suggest that *baraka* was ever regarded as a doctrine, even in Sufism, or a 'moral, emotional, or intellectual construct'.¹⁸³ *Baraka* required both an agent (such as a person, devotional object, monument) and a recipient (devotees). Biographical dictionaries and local histories suggest that the heart and soul perceived *baraka*, as did the mind. More precisely, it can be regarded as a spiritual affinity or strong moral and spiritual force or charisma, such as embodied in the relationship between a shaykh and his disciple, or a ruler and a holy person. The presence of *baraka* in the context of living and dead saints, as

¹⁸² G. S. Colin, 'Baraka', *EI*(2), 1. 1032. Also see C. Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven, 1968), 32-3, 44; E. Westermarck, *Pagan Survivals in Mohammedan Civilization*, 87-8. For a fuller discussion of holiness, see above, Ch. 1, pp. 13-16, 17-35; *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (London, 1926), 1. 35-147. In present-day North Africa, *baraka* is a hereditary force passed from the Prophet to his descendants or sharifs through the Prophet's daughter Fātima.

¹⁸³ Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 44.

well as in natural landscapes and tombs, shrines and other monuments, often results in the production of miracles. However, it should not be taken to refer to the product of its emanation from a saint or its realization in charismata, miracles, and heroic acts.

Abū al-Baqā', a seventeenth-century lexicographer, mentions that it is 'a continuance of divinely bestowed good, such as is perceived by the intellect, in, or upon, a thing'.¹⁸⁴ This is in contrast with Buṭrus al-Bustānī, who defines it as 'the manifestation and perpetuity of divine favour (*al-khayr al-ilāhī*) in something'.¹⁸⁵

Baraka was spiritual, perceptual, and emotive, rather than conceptual. More precisely, *baraka* is the emanation and perpetuity of holiness in the person of a saint, which manifests itself in objects, or persons with whom he has come into contact posthumously or during his life. In addition to people, its most common receptacles include earth, water, rocks and trees, not to mention architectural forms, such as tombs, shrines, and mosques. *Baraka* was transmitted in four primary ways. First, through physical contact with a saint, such as touching, hugging, and kissing. Its recipient ordinarily does not receive enough of it to transfer it to a third party. Second, it was transmitted through the acquisition of knowledge and learning from a saint or non-saint. Knowledge can be passed on, but not the *baraka* associated with it. This depended on time, place, and circumstance. Third, it can be transmitted through possessing or either directly or indirectly acquiring relics or objects associated with a saint, most commonly a garment, such as a *thawb*,¹⁸⁶ *'abā'a*,¹⁸⁷ or *khirqā*.¹⁸⁸ Such objects maintained their *baraka* as they were passed from one generation to the next, as in the case of the relics of the Prophet Muḥammad—his hair, sandals, mantle, and footprints.¹⁸⁹ The Sufi *khirqā* was conferred on a disciple by his master in a line of succession. Finally, it can be acquired through encountering and touching a saint in a dream and receiving his *baraka*. The latter category is often connected with Sufi

¹⁸⁴ E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863-93), 194.

¹⁸⁵ Al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut, 1987), 37.

¹⁸⁶ *Thawb*—a long garment.

¹⁸⁷ *'Abā'a* (also *'abā*)—a cloak, mantle.

¹⁸⁸ *Khirqā*—in Sufism, a worn or patched cloak given by a master to a disciple, thus conferring *baraka* inherited from the Prophet.

¹⁸⁹ Concerning the Prophet's relics, see A. Schimmel, *And Muḥammad is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985); I. Goldziher, 'The Cult of Saints in Islam', *MW*(1) (1911), 302-12; Margoliouth, 'Relics', 20-7; Goldziher, 'Veneration', 322-32.

initiation rites. Since a dream or vision is a unique occurrence, its *baraka* is time and place specific.

Scholars and theologians rarely had occasion to define *baraka* in the context of saint veneration because it was universally understood. Or was it? *Baraka* was not the object of scholarly discussion as were sainthood (*walāya*), saints, and miracles. However, theologians addressed *baraka* in their writings when it became a source of contention. Some conceived of it not as an extraordinary force, but rather as a quality of the exemplary learning and piety which some shaykhs possessed. An advocate of this view was Ibn Taymīya, one of the leading opponents of pilgrimage to saints' tombs, whose observations shed light on the social context in which it arose.

As for the one who says: 'We are amidst the *baraka* of so-and-so', or: 'From the time he visits us, *baraka* manifests itself', these words are correct in one respect and false in another. As for what is correct, if it is intended that He guided and taught us and ordered us to do what is commendable and forbade us to do what is reprehensible and by the blessing (*bi-barakat*) of following and obeying him, we receive bounty in abundance, these words are true.¹⁹⁰

The ultimate source of *baraka* is God. In practical terms, any Muslim who adhered to the tenets of the faith could attain *baraka*. Ibn Taymīya takes issue with those who allege that *awliyā'* possessed a special sort of *baraka*. Even those who did not share Ibn Taymīya's view of the cult of saints, agreed that learned individuals possessed *baraka*. Strength and intensity of faith displayed by theologians engendered *baraka*. But this manifestation of *baraka* derived from an environment of Islamic mysticism, since many of the saints who possessed it were themselves Sufis. Chamberlain argues that knowledge was a source of *baraka*.¹⁹¹ "Ilm, the sources repeat again and again, was a form of *baraka*, and as with other sources of *baraka*, Damascenes of all types laboured to acquire it."¹⁹² What did it mean to acquire *baraka*? Medieval writers and biographers did not necessarily regard all forms of knowledge as *baraka*. Nor did all shaykhs, ascetics, theologians, and Sufis possess it. The sources are nearly unanimous in that *baraka* was not simply

¹⁹⁰ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'*, II. 113.

¹⁹¹ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 122.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

a by-product of learning, but was identified with the charisma of Sufi shaykhs and theologians.

Despite his opposition to the veneration of saints, by an ironic twist Ibn Taymīya became the object of popular veneration after his death as people vied with each other to collect his *baraka*.¹⁹³ In the biography of his master Ibn Taymīya, the Damascene Hadith scholar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Qudāma (705/1306–744/1344) remarks that while he was still alive, Damascenes converged upon the Hanbali scholar to drink the water in which he performed his ablutions and after his death collected the water with which his corpse was washed.¹⁹⁴ In another account of his death and burial, Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī (686?/1287–764/1363) mentions that

A group of people drank the excess water with which his corpse was washed and [another] group divided amongst themselves the rest of the lotus fruit with which he was washed. It is said that nearly five hundred dirhams were paid for the hat upon his head.¹⁹⁵

He adds that many devout individuals often saw Ibn Taymīya in night visions. *Baraka* was associated with the appearance of saints in dreams as with their personal possessions. Did such visitations produce *baraka*? This issue is taken up later. People were after not only water and lotus fruit, but also his personal effects.

It is said that 500 dirhams were paid for the hat on his head. It is also said that one hundred and fifty dirhams were paid for the string which contained the mercury which was around his neck because of the lice . . . He appeared in many night visions.¹⁹⁶

Similar is the case of Shaykh Abū ‘Umar b. Qudāma, about whom the Hanafi scholar and preacher and Sufi Muḥammad b. Ṭūlūn (880/1475–953/1546) reports that people vied with each other to collect his *baraka*.

Abū Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār said: ‘At the time of his death, I saw in [my] sleep a person at the door asking permission to enter. I went out to him and saw a person finer than the likes of whom I ever saw wearing

¹⁹³ For a detailed account of his death, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, *al-Uqūd al-Durriya*, ed. M. H. al-Fiqī (Cairo, 1970), 385–7.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, ed. M. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1951), 1. 76.

¹⁹⁶ Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, *al-Uqūd al-Durriya*, 387; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 14. 109.

fine garments. He said: "Allow me to enter before the Shaykh." I said: "Who are you?" He replied: "The Angel of Death." I was greatly alarmed by him. One of the group asked who this [was]. The Shaykh said: "This here is the Angel of Death; enter." He entered bearing a scarf (*mandīl*) as if it were of light because of its beauty and wiped the Shaykh's mouth with it. When he was ritually washed, the people blotted up the juices of the lotus fruit and other [stuff] with their rags and head-veils (*maqānī*). When they set out with his bier, it was a hot day. God sent forth a cloud which shaded the people. A sound and a noise were heard emerging from it more than from on the land . . .¹⁹⁷

Abū Shāma mentions that women used their head veils (*maqānī*) and men their turbans (*amā'im*) to blot up the water.¹⁹⁸ Had not a number of prominent swordsmen stood in the way of the masses, Abū al-Muzaffar reports that 'nothing of Abū 'Umar's burial shroud would have ever made it to his grave'.¹⁹⁹

In the eyes of devotees, both Abū 'Umar and Ibn Taymīya were saints. *Baraka* was also a spiritual force transmitted from living and dead saints to devotees through physical contact with the saint's person and his shrine. Devotees believed that certain individuals were renowned for their *baraka* as in the present context.

Yet, *baraka* was not always synonymous with exemplary orthodox behaviour and learning or with the personal charisma from achieving an exemplary level of piety. It was even possible for those like Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qamīnī, who defied orthodoxy and who was far from being a respected scholar, to possess *baraka*. He never worked miracles, nor was his intercession sought. However, he possessed personal charisma which drew devotees to him. One woman did not hesitate to obtain his *baraka* through touching him.

One day Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qamīnī was passing near the Congregational Mosque of Damascus when a woman put her hand on his shoulder for blessings (*tabarrukan*). Then a man said to her, 'You have polluted your hand.' When the man went to sleep that night, he saw Shaykh Yūsuf in the middle of the sea, his face like the full moon. When the man awoke the next day, the shaykh passed by him and said, 'O impure one, you saw our station yesterday.' The man revealed his head and asked God the Exalted for forgiveness.²⁰⁰

The Aleppo historian al-Yūnīnī's grandfather Muḥammad, who

¹⁹⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 425.

¹⁹⁸ Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 73.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 74.

²⁰⁰ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 396.

was also a Sufi, was renowned for his *baraka*. Shaykh Muḥammad's servant 'Alī witnessed him in the year 658/1260 as he transferred his *baraka* to his companion Shaykh 'Uthmān in a male bonding ritual of sorts.

Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Dā'im narrated to me [i.e. al-Yūnīnī]: 'I used to serve the shaykh, the jurisprudent. One day Shaykh 'Uthmān came [to visit] from Dayr Nā'is.²⁰¹ He was with his children or in another place.' ['Alī] said, 'Shaykh 'Uthmān said, "I used to long for the Shaykh, the jurisprudent to bare his chest and to embrace him with mine and to give me the garment that he was wearing."' 'Alī said: 'Shaykh 'Uthmān and the fakirs accompanying him came and brought out the food. When they had finished eating,²⁰² he said to Shaykh 'Uthmān's companions: "Get up, Shaykh 'Uthmān does not leave at the moment." When they left, he said: "Arise, O Shaykh 'Uthmān." When he stood up, Shaykh Muḥammad bared his chest, embraced him and gave him the garment he was wearing. [Shaykh Muḥammad] said: "When it becomes worn, I shall give you another . . .".²⁰³

In this as in previous examples, *baraka* required physical contact with the person of a saint. Not only was it attained through physical contact, but also through the acquisition from the living saint of devotional objects or relics, such as garments. Jews occasionally visited Muslim saints for their *baraka*. Ibn 'Uthmān mentions in *Murshid al-Zuwwār ilā Qubūr al-Abrār* that Shaykh Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Raslān (d. 571/1175–6) caused the grain merchants' wheat to multiply. 'One day a Jewish man came to him and he placed his hand in the wheat and then left. The grain was sold instantly.'²⁰⁴

Nūr al-Dīn was known to seek the *baraka* of saints. At Nūr al-Dīn's (r. 541/1147–569/1174) conquest of the citadel of Ḥārim²⁰⁵ in 559/1164, its Crusader loyalist overlord Fakhr al-Dīn exclaimed about his adversary:

He wrote to all of Ḥārim's ascetics (*zubbād*), devout worshippers (*'ubbād*), and those abstaining from the worldly life (*munqaṭ'ūn 'an al-dunyā*) . . .

²⁰¹ An Aleppan village.

²⁰² Literally, 'When Shaykh 'Uthmān and the fakirs accompanying him came and brought out the food, and finished eating . . .'.

²⁰³ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2. 61.

²⁰⁴ Ibn 'Uthmān, *Murshid al-Zuwwār ilā Qubūr al-Abrār*, ed. M. F. Abū Bakr (Cairo, 1995), 635.

²⁰⁵ Yāqūt, *Muġam al-Buldān*, 2. 184. A village near Antioch.

asking supplication from them and requesting that they incite the Muslims to engage in a military assault. Everyone of those sat down along with his companions and followers reading the letters of Nūr al-Dīn, weeping, cursing and invoking [God] against me; there is no alternative but to set out to him.²⁰⁶

On another occasion, Nūr al-Dīn summoned Sufis to the citadel for their supplication and blessing.²⁰⁷ When taken ill in 597/1201, the ruler of Aleppo al-Malik al-Zāhir Ghāzī summoned a group of Sufis to his bedside in order to receive *baraka*.²⁰⁸

DEVOTIONAL OBJECTS

Rulers sought to obtain the relics of the Prophet to legitimize their rule, derive *baraka* from them, and be buried with them. The Abbasid caliphs claimed to possess several specimens, including the Prophet's cloak, seal, and his nail parings.²⁰⁹ The Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya (r. 41/661–60/680) desired to be buried with Muḥammad's relics.

The Prophet once clothed me with a shirt, which I put away, and one day when he pared his nails I took the parings and placed them in a bottle. When I die, clothe me in that shirt and chop up and pulverize the parings; sprinkle them over my eyes and into my mouth, on the chance that God may have mercy on me through their *baraka*.²¹⁰

It was said of Khālīd b. al-Walīd (d. 21/642), who was buried in Ḥimṣ, that 'He conquered Damascus [wearing] a *qalansuwa* containing hair of the Messenger of God . . . seeking victory through it (*yastanṣir bihi*) and its blessing (*baraka*).'²¹¹

Legend has it that Shaykh Arslān gave Nūr al-Dīn a piece of an

²⁰⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi-al-Tārikh*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, 12 vols. (Leiden, 1867), 11. 199.

²⁰⁷ Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubda*, 3. 147–8. Further details of Nūr al-Dīn's pious acts and various accounts concerning his associations with righteous individuals can be found in vol. 1 of Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij al-Kurūb fi Akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, ed. J. al-Shayyāl *et al.*, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1953–77).

²⁰⁸ Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubda*, 3. 143, 147–8; D. Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World* (Leiden, 1994), 141.

²⁰⁹ Margoliouth, 'Relics', 20–7.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* 20 from al-Tabarī, *Tārikh*, 2. 201.

²¹¹ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 148–9. Also see al-Maqdisī, *Muthīr al-Gharām*, 310; al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 8–9. A *qalansuwa* is a tall hat.

enchanted saw which the saint used for woodworking. According to the account, ‘when Nūr al-Dīn died, he stipulated in his will to his family and companions that it be placed in his shroud’.²¹²

The Prophet’s sandal: A Damascene cult?

The Prophet’s sandal was a source of *baraka* for medieval Muslims. According to al-Jawbarī, it was reportedly housed in Hebron in the fourth (tenth) century.²¹³ Goldziher suggests that the Ayyubid ruler of Egypt al-Malik al-Ashraf (r. 626/1229–635/1237) confiscated it from its owner Niẓām al-Dīn b. Abī al-Ḥadīd,²¹⁴ while according to a Vatican manuscript of Ibn Shākir, al-Ashraf purchased the relic and sought to wear it around his neck.²¹⁵ The following accounts suggest that al-Ashraf never confiscated it or purchased it.

Al-Yūnīnī tells of al-Ashraf’s acquiring and circulating the sandal so that Yūnīnī’s father and grandmother could receive *baraka* from it.

When the noble sandal of the Prophet . . . came into the possession of its present owner al-Malik al-Ashraf and came to him whilst in Damascus, he desired to send it to my father so that he might make *ziyāra* to it and obtain *baraka* from it. Then he said, ‘We have missed the Shaykh. It is befitting that we travel to him. We shall inform him to visit (*yazūr*) this noble relic (*athar sharīf*) and behold it.’ He sent him [word of that]. My grandmother who was then still alive said to my father, ‘I have longed to visit this holy relic, visit it in my stead.’ When he travelled to Damascus and visited the holy relic, he informed al-Malik al-Ashraf what his mother had said. Al-Ashraf prepared [to send] the holy relic to Ba’labakk [especially for her]. She made a visit to it and fulfilled her desire from that. A story [centred around] this holy relic (*al-athar al-sharīf*) that necessitated transferring it to al-Malik al-Ashraf. That is, its previous owner Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd used to travel around with it taking it to rulers and they would give him great sums in return. One year, he sought the patronage of al-Malik al-Ashraf. . . . He used to give him generous gifts. Al-Malik al-Ashraf said to him, ‘I desire that you give me [a bit] of this holy relic the size of a chick-pea so that I could place it in my burial shroud when I die.’ He complied with his request and al-Ashraf gave him 30,000 dirhams.²¹⁶

²¹² Ibn Tūlūn, *Ghāyat al-Bayān*, 49; Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 90–1.

²¹³ Goldziher, ‘Veneration’, 327.

²¹⁴ Concerning this alleged incident, see al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wafī*, 7. 176–8; Mouton, ‘Reliques’, 247.

²¹⁵ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 49. The Vatican MS was inaccessible to me.

²¹⁶ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2. 45–6.

Al-Yūnīnī mentions that al-Malik al-Ashraf did not receive a piece of the relic. Instead, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd bequeathed it to al-Ashraf.

It was decided that on the morning of that day, he would summon the ulema and *mashāyikh* and excise what he requested from it. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd was delighted with that. When it was night, al-Malik al-Ashraf changed his mind and that reached Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd. He was bewildered because of losing the sum which al-Ashraf had granted him.

The next morning, he appeared before al-Ashraf and asked him about the reason prompting that. Al-Ashraf said, 'I thought that if I should be the reason for this noble relic's destruction, I left it for the sake of God the Exalted. As for the sum I granted you, take it. I will not change my mind.' Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd became ecstatic. He took all that and travelled to the eastern lands. He passed away, I believe, in Ḥarrān. Before he died, he willed the noble relic to al-Malik al-Ashraf and it ended up with him because of his good intention. He built a Dār Ḥadīth to house it next to the citadel and deposited it there. It is visited in the late afternoon on Monday and Thursday.²¹⁷

Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (581/1185 or 582/1186–654/1256) was the trustee of the sandal after the death of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd. Al-Ashraf sought *baraka* from kissing it and placing it over his eyes.

I was with [al-Malik al-Ashraf] in Khilāt²¹⁸ [when] al-Niẓām approached him with the sandal of the Prophet . . . He stood up, descended to the hall (*iwān*), took the sandal and kissed it (*qabbalahu*) and then placed it over his eyes and cried. Then he bestowed a robe of honour on al-Niẓām and gave him a stipend and a salary. Al-Malik al-Ashraf said: 'You shall be a companion so that we may receive blessings from you.' I departed from Khilāt and he (Niẓām al-Dīn b. Abī al-Ḥadīd) stayed with him. It reached me that al-Malik al-Ashraf said, 'This Niẓām travels throughout the lands and does not reside with us. I wish to possess a piece of it.' Then al-Niẓām spent the night in contemplation. When al-Ashraf took Damascus, I was told that he said, 'I am determined to take a piece of it. Then I thought and said perhaps another person will follow suit and do the same and the situation would proliferate and lead to its complete destruction. I left it. Whoever leaves something for the sake of God, He will recompense him the likes of it.' Then al-Niẓām stayed with me for a number of months and it so happened that he entrusted me with the sandal [which] I took whole.

²¹⁷ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2. 46–7.

²¹⁸ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 2. 457–8. Khilāt (variant Akhlāt) was a town in the province of Armenia on the north-west shore of Lake Van.

When al-Ashraf took Damascus, he purchased Dār Qaymāz al-Najmī and turned it into a place for Hadith scholarship (*dār hadīth*), deposited the sandal and moved all the valuable books there and endowed it with many endowments . . .²¹⁹

Al-Nuʿaymī reports that when al-Ashraf endowed the Ashrafiya, he deposited the sandal of the Prophet there.²²⁰ During the sixteenth century Ibn al-Ḥawrānī mentions that it was buried in the 'southern wall' of the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiya, but does not mention its twin.²²¹ It was also believed that 'the right sandal of the Prophet . . . was in [the] Madrasa al-Dāmāghīya'²²² and the left one in the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiya, but no other account mentions the existence of a second sandal. The account of the fourteenth-century philologist and biographer al-Ṣafadī suggests that al-Ashraf tried to display the sandal so that it would be visited in the time of Aḥmad b. Abī al-Ḥadīd's father. Since rulers controlled access to relics, the cult of relics was not an entirely popular phenomenon. In the case of the sandal, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd and al-Malik al-Ashraf 'controlled' the dispensing of *baraka*. It was not a public relic as was the ʿUthmānī codex.²²³

Did imitating the Sunna of the Prophet include possessing the relics of saints? Since the Prophet's person embodied *baraka*, it was natural for his washing water and objects which he touched to be blessed or for his Companions to use his saliva for healing as it was common for Sufis to experience visions in which they received saliva from the Prophet in a dream.²²⁴ Insufficient evidence exists to suggest a correlation between acquiring and seeking blessings from objects with which the saint came into contact and the Sunna of the Prophet.

Saints' relics

Charismatic saints and their relics possessed *baraka*. Ibn Rajab mentions that a man from Dimyāṭ desired the garment that 'Abd

²¹⁹ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, 8(2). 713.

²²⁰ Al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, I. 15.

²²¹ Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishbārāt*, 30. It remained there until the 19th cent. when it was transferred to Istanbul. See Mouton, 'Reliques', 246.

²²² Al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, I. 177–82. The *madrasa* was probably built in 614 H.

²²³ Mouton alleges that the Ashrafiya was a public place, 'Reliques', 249. This may be true for the 15th cent.; Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 212–13.

²²⁴ Schimmel, *And Muḥammad is His Messenger*, 76.

al-Ghanī al-Maḡdisī (541/1146/7–600/1203) was wearing for a burial shroud.²²⁵ After obtaining it the man first uses it to cure illness. ‘Abd al-Ghanī’s son recounts the event in the words of the man from Dimyāt:

‘One day I was with the Ḥāfiẓ [‘Abd al-Ghanī] and said to myself: I desire that the Ḥāfiẓ would give me his inner garment so that I would be buried in it. When I wanted to get up, he said: “Do not leave.” When the group departed, he removed his inner garment and gave it to me.’ The man said: ‘The garment remained with us. Whoever fell ill or suffered headaches wore the robe and was cured [lit. they left it on him until he was cured], God the Exalted willing.’²²⁶

So blessed was Shaykh Ḥammād al-Bawāzījī that the ruler of Irbil Muẓaffar al-Dīn Kökbürī²²⁷ (r. 563/1168) summoned him. Normally pious rulers made special visits to such holy men in order to receive their blessings. Ibn al-‘Adīm reports:

I heard our Shaykh, the chief Qadi Abū al-Maḡāsīn Yūsuf b. Rāfi’ b. Tamīm say: ‘Shaykh Ḥammād al-Bawāzījī was a pious man. The ruler of Irbil Muẓaffar al-Dīn Kökbürī longed to see him and obtain blessings from him (*yatabarrak bihi*). [Kökbürī] sent for Shaykh Ḥammād al-Bawāzījī from Irbil to al-Bawāzīj. [Kökbürī] communicated to him, “If I were able to travel to you, I would have come and visited you (*jītu li-ziyāratika*).” Shaykh Ḥammād complied with his request and went to him to Irbil. Muẓaffar al-Dīn came out to meet him. He met with him and requested a memento (*athar*) of his so that he would receive blessings from it (*yatabarrak bihi*). Shaykh Ḥammād gave him a *mīẓar*²²⁸ of his.’ [Our Shaykh] said, ‘Muẓaffar al-Dīn never took that *mīẓar* off his head and wears it over a hat (*shurbūsh*)²²⁹ down to this day.’²³⁰

Saints commonly worked miracles involving food and water. In one such instance, al-Ṣāhib Muḡyī al-Dīn b. al-Naḡḡās, who owned an orchard with fig trees, accompanied by his son and his servant took the figs to the shrine (*mashhad*) of the village of ‘Alam where Ibn Qiwām and his companions were sitting. Ibn al-Naḡḡās

²²⁵ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 122. Chamberlain misidentifies the man as from Damascus.

²²⁶ Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-Dhayl ‘alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. M. Ḥ. al-Fiḡī, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1952–3), 2. 27.

²²⁷ See C. Cahen, ‘Begtegnīds’, *EI*(2), 1. 1160–1.

²²⁸ *Mīẓar* is a garment which covers the lower part of the body beneath the waist.

²²⁹ *Shurbūsh* is a high triangular hat. ²³⁰ Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 6. 2910.

intended to give the figs to the Shaykh but was well aware that he did not have enough for all those present. The Shaykh reached his hand in the bowl and put it on his thigh whereupon he produced enough for 240 people. Ibn al-Nahhās narrates:

The servant distributed the figs to the people one by one giving the Shaykh one, taking one for himself, giving me one and one to my son. I have never seen more *baraka* from Ibn Qiwām. His *baraka* caused the figs to multiply so that the forty were enough for 240 individuals.²³¹

In another account, Ibn Qiwām comes to a village along with many people. The narrator mentions that there was not enough food to feed them. So the village council met to think about what to do. Suddenly the Shaykh's servant entered and invited them to bring whatever food they had. There was ample food for everybody.²³² Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Kafr Balāṭī, a companion of Ibn Qiwām, reported that his family possessed Ibn Qiwām's walking stick, which they used to ensure that they always had ample food:

We used to put the stick in a small quantity of . . . food and along with the poor, who used to frequent us, eat from it for a whole year. There would be leftovers. It remained with us and we continued to receive its *baraka* (*naltamis barakatabu*) until God made it disappear in the civil strife with the Mongols in the year 699/1300.²³³

Although clearly of a popular nature, such accounts none the less provide insight into the function of *baraka*. A saint's association with a well, the fact that he dug it or drank from it, is sufficient to ensure continued *baraka*. The Damascene Shaykh Arslān (Raslān), about whom Ibn Ṭūlūn wrote a work in praise of his virtues, built a well that became a pilgrimage site where people went to obtain *baraka* from its water.²³⁴

The people of that neighbourhood drink from it and receive blessings from its water (*yatabarrakūna bi-māihā*). Whoever has a stomach-ache or any pain and drinks from it, will be cured with God the Exalted's permission. Many people have tried it.²³⁵

²³¹ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, I. 404–6.

²³² *Ibid.* I. 406.

²³³ *Ibid.* I. 406–7.

²³⁴ *Ghāyat al-Bayān fī Tarjamat al-Shaykh Arslān* has been translated for publication by the author.

²³⁵ Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 89.

The curative properties of holy water associated with medieval saints are discussed in Chapter 3.

Baraka and the Qur'anic codex of 'Uthmān

Muslims made *ziyāra* to holy objects and venerable copies of Scripture and relics as they did to living and dead saints.²³⁶ A copy of the Qur'an (*muṣḥaf*) which the third caliph 'Uthmān dispatched to al-Shām was believed to have been kept in Tiberias and was subsequently transferred to Damascus after the Mongol invasion of Palestine. Al-Nu'aymī states that 'in the year 500/1107, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān's copy of the Qur'an . . . was relocated from Tiberias to Damascus . . .'.²³⁷

Al-Harawī and Ibn al-Ḥawrānī mention that it was in 'Uthmān's handwriting.²³⁸ Ibn Baṭṭūta mentions in *Tuḥfat al-Nuẓẓār* and al-Ḥimyarī (d. 723/1323 or 727/1327) in *al-Rawḍ al-Miṭār* that the venerable codex was accessible to people on Friday after the noon prayer and that debtors swore on it. Ibn Baṭṭūta reports:

In its eastern corner opposite the mihrab is a great chest which contains the noble copy of the Qur'an which the Commander of the Faithful 'Uthmān b. 'Affān dispatched to al-Shām. That cabinet is opened every Friday after the noon prayer. The people crowd around to kiss that noble Qur'an (*fa-yazdahimu al-nās 'alā lathm dhālika al-muṣḥaf al-karīm*). There the people make their debtors swear on it and those against whom they have a claim (*ghuramāahum wa-man iddā' 'alayhi shay'an*).²³⁹

²³⁶ Also see Meri, 'Aspects of Baraka', 46–69.

²³⁷ Ibn Kinnān, *al-Mawākib al-Islāmiya fi-al-Mamālik wa-al-Mahāsini al-Shāmiya*, ed. H. Ismā'il, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1992–3), I, 421.

²³⁸ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 15, 66. In a manuscript of the *Ishārāt*, al-Harawī also mentions that a copy of the 'Uthmāni codex was in Ḥims, 8 n. 'k'. He also records a codex in the city of Nišibīn in Masjid Bāb Sinjār, 66. Ibn Shaddād, *al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīra fi Dhikr Umarā' al-Shām wa-al-Jazīra*, ed. Y. Z. 'Abbāra (Damascus, 1991), 125. Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 22. See further J. Sourdel-Thomine, 'Anciens', 80 n. 6. Al-'Umarī mentions a codex in Buṣrā which has a trace of blood, believed to be 'Uthmān's. *Masālik al-Aḥsār fi Mamālik al-Amṣār* (ed. A. Z. Bāshā), I, 216. Ibn Baṭṭūta also mentions at a congregational mosque at Basra another codex which 'Uthmān was reading before he was killed. Ibn Baṭṭūta, *Tuḥfat al-Nuẓẓār fi Gharāib al-Amṣār wa 'Ajāib al-Asfār (Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūta)*, ed. 'A.-'A. al-Kattāni, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1975), I, 207–8; *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūta*, 2, 277. Al-Maqqarī mentions a copy in the congregational mosque at Córdoba, *Nafḥ al-Ṭib min Ghush al-Andalus al-Raṭīb*, ed. I. 'Abbās, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1968), I, 605.

²³⁹ Ibn Baṭṭūta, *Riḥla*, 105.

Al-Himyarī mentions that people ‘seek blessings through getting a glimpse of the Qur’an and kissing it (*fa-yatabarraku al-nās bi-lambīhi wa taqbīlihi*)’.²⁴⁰ Increased access would have led to its destruction; thus it was necessary to limit access to one day a week.²⁴¹ In fact, Ibn Jubayr mentions that this was one of the copies which ‘Uthmān dispatched and that ‘the large cabinet in which it was housed is opened every day immediately after the prayer (probably the noon prayer). The people seek blessings from touching (*lams*) and kissing it (*taqbīl*) and crowd around it.’²⁴²

Times of crisis such as invasions, drought, famine, and plague necessitated the invocation of venerable copies of the Qur’an as well as making pilgrimage to tombs of holy men. In the year 543/1148, the Franks approached Damascus with 10,000 knights. Al-Dhahabī reports that the people of Damascus took to the Congregational Mosque, where they displayed great devotion to God: ‘They brought out the ‘Uthmānī codex to the courtyard of the Congregational Mosque [where] men, women and children raised a clamour while bareheaded . . .’²⁴³ Ibn al-Jawzī gives a fuller account of this occasion:

The whole land was weeping and wailing (*wa kāna al-bukā wa-al-awīl*) and spreading ashes on themselves (*farsh al-ramād*) for days. The ‘Uthmānī codex was brought out into the courtyard of the Congregational Mosque (lit. to the middle of) and men, women and children congregated around it, baring their heads and supplicated (*dā’aw*). God responded to them. . . .²⁴⁴

During the reign of al-Malik al-Manṣūr Sayf al-Dīn Qalāwūn in 680/1282, at the time of an imminent Mongol invasion, the people of Damascus took part in a ritual procession to the Congregational Mosque, as did the inhabitants of Ba‘labakk, who also sought the tomb of the saint ‘Abd Allāh al-Yūnīnī. Al-Yūnīnī reports:

On the morning of Wednesday, 13 Jumādā II, all of the people took refuge in the Congregational Mosque of Damascus—the weak, the young and the

²⁴⁰ Al-Himyarī, ‘Waṣf Dimashq fī-al-Rawḍ al-Miṭṭar’, ed. S. K. Harmaneh, in *Folia Orientalia*, 9 (1967), 282.

²⁴¹ Mouton, ‘Reliques’, 252.

²⁴² Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*, 268.

²⁴³ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Ibar* (Beirut), 2. 463.

²⁴⁴ Mouton inaccurately interprets this scene as only referring to women removing their veils. Mouton, ‘Reliques’, 252. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa-al-Umam* (Hyderabad, 1938–9), 10. 130–1.

old humbling themselves in worship (*yataḍarrāʿūna*) in the presence of God the Exalted to make the Muslim faith victorious and destroy the enemy. The noble ʿUthmānī copy of the Qurʾan and other venerable copies were taken out [carried] on the heads of the people. Accompanying them [the copies of the Qurʾan] were the preacher, the Qurʾan reciters, and the muezzins to the prayer place in Qaṣr Ḥajjāj, requesting victory from God the Exalted. The inhabitants of Baʿlabakk did likewise and ascended to the tomb (*ḍarīb*) of Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Yūnīnī . . .²⁴⁵

Ibn Kathīr reports that the ʿUthmānī codex was again invoked in 711/1312 when a levy of 500 dirhams for each of 1,500 horsemen was imposed on Damascenes. The people, accompanied by the preacher and the judges, marched in procession to confront the Mamluk governor Karāy with the ʿUthmānī codex, the relic of the Prophet (*al-athar al-nabawī*) (i.e. the sandal) and the caliphal standards.²⁴⁶ This is not the only mention of an ʿUthmānī codex. Abū al-Fidāʾ mentions a codex in the fortress of Anṭarsūs on the Mediterranean coast.²⁴⁷

Whose relics are they?

It was relatively easy for confusion to arise concerning the Prophet's relics. Damascus had its share of relics. The Syndic of the Nobles,²⁴⁸ who was a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, led a procession of the Prophet's relics from Jerusalem to Damascus. This was accompanied by fanfares. The common people turned out to witness this momentous occasion. The deputy ruler sent for the relics in order to receive blessings. Ibn Ṭūlūn, who was present, doubted their authenticity. It was discovered that they belonged to the Follower Layth b. Saʿd (d. 94/713). Ibn Ṭūlūn narrates:

On Wednesday 16 Rabī II 921/1515, The Syndic of the Nobles al-ʿUjaymī came from Noble Jerusalem accompanied by the paternal nephew of Abū al-Faḍl b. Abī al-Luṭf al-Maqdisī both wearing robes of honour. Accompanying them were among the Prophet's relics . . . a drinking vessel (*qadah*) and part of a walking stick (*ʿukkāz*), covered and being carried upon the head of a man before Malik al-Umarāʾ (Sībāy), the judges, the Sufis of Damascus (*mutaṣawwifat Dimashq*) and others. Before them (i.e. the relics) were standards and lute-playing. Many of the common people came out to behold that. I asked about [both relics]. It was said that they were

²⁴⁵ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 4. 92–3. ²⁴⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 14. 50.

²⁴⁷ Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Taqwīm*, 229. Also see n. 238.

²⁴⁸ A. Havemann, 'Naḳīb al-Ashrāf', *El*(2), 7. 926–7.

in the possession of Ibn Abī al-Luṭf's father. The deputy ruler sent for them so that he would receive blessings from them. Then it became apparent that they were not from among the relics of the Prophet (*al-athar al-nabawī*), but rather from those of al-Layth b. Sa'd, which were in the possession of the Qalqashandīs.²⁴⁹

Saints were a charismatic force to be reckoned with. Those who defied them incurred their wrath. Those who invoked them were recipients of their miracles and blessings. Rulers and common people feared them, while others regarded them as charlatans and misguided individuals who strayed from the path of righteousness and belief. Although saints often denied performing miracles or going without food for long periods at a time or causing superabundance of food, their *karāmāt* were immortalized by family, friends, and historians who shaped their image for posterity. Saints were universally recognized throughout the Islamic world by their heroic deeds, miracles, and exemplary pious behaviour, and yet others like the *muwallahūn* were equally recognized as saints through their charisma and uniquely strange behaviour. Saints cannot be classified as Egyptian, Syrian, or Iraqi, except in so far as to identify their place of origin. Saints often journeyed long distances in their lifetime and thus came to be known to many. Just as the quest for knowledge prompted pupils and masters to traverse great distances, so too did the desire to learn from Sufi masters, thus universalizing the institution of learning and scholarship. The same can be said of pious retreat, mystical exercises, and removal to remote locations where the saint communed with God. Some like the sixteenth-century Maghribī saint 'Alī b. Maymūn resided first in Şafad in Palestine and later in Damascus. Similarly, Ibn al-'Arabī hailed from Andalusia but settled in Damascus, where he died. Other individuals came from saintly families, such as the Banū Qudāma of Damsacus and the Yūnīnīs of Aleppo.

Any Muslim had the potential to become a saint, though the vast majority of saints were learned in the religious sciences and practised Sufism. Saintliness as medieval Muslims perceived it was the

²⁴⁹ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Ilām al-Warā bi-Man Waliya Nāiban min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-Kubrā*, ed. M. A. Duḥmān (Damascus, 1964), 209. The Qalqashandīs were a famous Jerusalemite family of Shafī'i scholars originally from Qalqashanda in Egypt. See C. E. Bosworth, 'al-Qalkāshandī', *EI*(2), 4. 509–11.

product of these phenomena. Whereas in the Christian tradition saints were officially recognized holy men and women, in Islam a saint was recognized through the devotion, belief, and piety of Muslims from all walks of life. In the Jewish context, the absence of historical saints did not preclude the formation of vibrant cults around traditional saints which was rooted in the Talmud and Midrash and in the belief that the righteous ancestors would look upon Israel with favour.²⁵⁰

The living saint was shaped by the images and memories of his companions, friends, and disciples and was, in a sense, the product of the biographer, who immortalized his deeds, miracles, and other qualities. Sainly biographies consisted of memories and observations of historians, contemporaries, and disciples, who shaped the saint's character. The popular strata throughout hagiographical accounts reflect a 'historicization' of truth, legend, and belief, a fusion of literary and historical memory. Historians were generally hostile in their descriptions of saints who performed outlandish miracles or displayed illuminations. In their construction of sainly biographies and obituaries, they often regarded the view of the common people toward the saint important enough to mention because it was a source of controversy; however, they were dismissive of popular beliefs, attacked naive Muslims for seeking certain saints, and rationalized the miracles and spiritual illuminations of some in terms of the inspiration of the jinn, in whom all Muslims believe, or assessed the mental and physical state of the individual.

Theological discussions admit miracles and hence provide a basis for their rejection or acceptance. In the Jewish case, the display of miracles is prevalent in Scripture and the Talmud. By extension, miracles could be worked at the tombs of Jewish saints whose miracles were known to all. In the Jewish sources, only the devotional and the literary existed. However, rainfall as a result of intercession at a tomb or the performance of rituals are historical occurrences, which to the believer were articles of faith.

The role of saints as intercessors with God generally was not questioned. The historicity of outlandish acts or, rather, belief in them was a point of contention among Muslims. By casting doubt

²⁵⁰ The distinction between historical and traditional saints is discussed above on pp. 60-5.

on the character of the saint who does not follow the Sunna, such as the *muwallah*, the historian and theologian took this and the mental state of the saint as a basis for rejecting them as *awliyā*. Thus, it can be said that opposition to an individual's sainthood and miracles provided a strong basis for accepting the historicity of these accounts and the saints in question. After all, saints were historical persons. This tension routinely manifested itself in historical biographies. As for literary works like *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā* or *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā*, mentioned earlier, there was never any opposition to the miracles which they contained and the individuals in question were generally members of the Prophet's household, Companions, Followers, or the imams. Hence, such works are largely literary and devotional and meant for edification, despite the fact that some of the traditions were of a historical nature.

On the ritual level, the gestures and signs that a saint exhibited provide important clues into the manner in which saints performed miracles. Rarely do literary works provide such details in time- and place-specific contexts to which medieval devotees could relate. A saint mortifying his flesh, displaying ascetic tendencies, and abstaining from food or drink were generally never contentious devotional acts. The same is true of healing, which was a *karāma* of some saints. The mention of rulers visiting a saint or his burial site or of large gatherings of individuals where often notables or rulers would be present, as in the case of the twelfth-century Ba'labakkān ʿAdī b. Musāfir, further strengthens the historical dimension of sainthood. The burial sites of historical saints were generally known as were the miracles transacted through them or their burial places, particularly by their contemporaries and generations of disciples.

Experiencing the Holy: Sacred Ritual and Pilgrimage

The sacred is always dangerous to anyone who comes into contact with it unprepared, without having gone through ‘gestures of approach’ that every religious act demands.

Mircea Eliade¹

PILGRIMAGE is a drama, pilgrimage sites are the stage upon which it is enacted, saints and their devotees are the dramatis personae, and God is the director. Pilgrimage is a cornerstone of many world religions through which adherents seek a higher form of spiritual fulfilment through prayer, supplication, contemplation, and devotion. This discussion is not only about pilgrimage—the physical journey to the holy site, or pilgrimage itineraries, but rather the culture of saint devotion of which they constituted an important part. Most Jews and many Muslims could not afford to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Mecca. However, going on a pilgrimage to shrines and tombs was a regular affair. Although it is difficult to quantify the number of devotees who undertook pilgrimage, extensive shrine inventories in Jewish and Islamic works are the best indicator of the pervasiveness of saint veneration, particularly in the Islamic case. Medieval devotees lived among tombs and shrines—quite literally in Cairo²—which were found in mosques, synagogues, churches, colleges for religious instruction, Sufi convents, and caravanserais, etc. Devotees, like actors, interacted with each other and performed certain rituals and gestures to demarcate their veneration of saints and to signify that they had disengaged themselves from the profane and left behind their

¹ Eliade, *Patterns*, 370–1.

² Al-Ḥimyarī, *Kitāb al-Rawḍ al-Miṭār fī Khabar al-Aqṭār*, ed. I. ‘Abbās (Beirut, 1975), 460.

sins.³ Various rituals, including lighting candles, making votive offerings, praying, supplicating for rain, and pilgrimage were publicly performed by groups and individuals for private and public reasons and on behalf of one's co-religionists or the inhabitants of a city or nation. Any Jew or Muslim could pray for rain. Yet, collective supplication, particularly at the tombs of saints as at synagogues and mosques, was generally believed to be more efficacious than individual supplication.⁴

Rulers undertook pilgrimage not only out of devotion to the saint, but also to demonstrate their piety to their subjects. Doing so resulted in a precedent for saint veneration. A number of early Islamic traditions mention the Umayyad caliphs 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 99/717–101/720) and Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 106/724–125/743) journeying to the Grotto of Blood on Mt. Qāsiyūn overlooking Damascus in order to supplicate for rain.⁵ This ritual continued down to the modern era.⁶ Jews prayed for rain in special places, such as the tombs of the Talmudic sage R. Yossi the Galilean or Ḥoni the Circle Drawer and his descendants.⁷ Rulers, common people, and theologians performed pilgrimage rituals and partook in celebratory rites.

This chapter will focus on five primary issues. First, it will define and discuss the *ziyāra* through an exposition of its theological bases, its relationship to canonical pilgrimage, and the ambiguous status it occupied at times in the writings of Sunni and Shi'i theologians. While canonical pilgrimage, at least in Islam, was a religious obligation at the centre of the faith, a tenet enshrined in Scripture, the *ziyāra* was a liminal phenomenon.⁸ Second, it will turn to Muslim opposition to *ziyāra*. What do these accounts reveal

³ This is a recurring theme in A. Van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago, 1960), and in the works of Victor Turner: cf. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Ithaca, NY, 1974), 196.

⁴ Goldziher, 'Veneration', 285–6.

⁵ Al-Raba'i, *Faḍā'il al-Shām*, 64–8; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 105–9.

⁶ For a description of a late Damascene rain processional to a mosque containing the footprint of Moses, see Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Flām*, 204.

⁷ See above, p. 64.

⁸ For a discussion of liminality and pilgrimage, cf. V. Turner, 'Pilgrimages as Social Processes', in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 166–7, 195–7. On the basis of its voluntary nature, Turner later defined it as a 'liminoid' phenomenon. V. and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York, 1978), 253–4.

about the nature of devotional behaviour in which devotees engaged? Third, it will explore the various literary and historical genres which concern pilgrimage. Fourth, it will look at the cults of individual saints and their devotees. Finally, it will examine the role of talismanic objects and designs and their therapeutic value and situate them in the context of the cult of saints.

Dead and living saints appeared in dreams and visions and influenced individual decisions and actions, sometimes threatening negative consequences to those who did not heed the signs. Such events were crucial for perpetuating a cult—individual and collective devotion and veneration of a saint, which is time and place specific and involves the performance of ritual, and often includes the sanctification and use of devotional objects.⁹ A saint's cult also required his presence, such as his apparent or physical remains, finger- and footprints, or some other tangible manifestation, such as a shrine or supernatural phenomena which designated a pilgrimage site as holy. The saint exercised control over the living through dreams and visions and sometimes demanded that a shrine be constructed. The devotee subsequently revealed his encounter with the saint in order to negotiate his social standing, gain acceptance, build a shrine, or proclaim a cure. The dead saint was not only the object of pilgrimage; in fact, he was a facilitator who made his presence known in the realm of the living, either through devotees invoking him or through his spontaneously appearing to them, and by the will of God influenced the course of human affairs. Islamic biographical accounts contain many reports of individuals encountering saints, though few actually depict the encounter. A number of such accounts will be explored. The discussion also focuses on the lives of devotees, for the continuance of the saints' cults depended upon them. In contrast with their Christian counterparts, Jewish and Muslim theologians exercised minimal control over the formation of cults, which ultimately lay with saints and devotees. Devotees created cults for a variety of reasons, including material gain, improvement of social standing, and bringing meaning to their lives.

Not all who visited pilgrimage sites did so for the sake of devotion. Pilgrimage sites were also centres of social and economic

⁹ For Christian pilgrimage cf. V. and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*.

activity where people came together for religious observance and economic opportunity, particularly at celebrations of holy days and saints' days (i.e. the anniversary of the birth or death of a saint). While few Muslim saints' days existed in the period under consideration, apart from the *mawlid* or birthday of the Prophet, visitation to saints' tombs often coincided with agricultural festivals or seasonal celebrations of pre-Islamic or Christian origin, such as 'Rice Thursday' (*khamīs al-ruzz*) in Syria and 'Lentil Thursday' (*khamīs al-adas*) in Egypt.¹⁰ Jews, Muslims, and Christians interacted, commented on each other's piety, employed similar rituals to venerate their holy dead, and possessed similar frames of mind and expectations from the encounter. In performing pilgrimage and venerating saints, devotees traversed social boundaries and understood each other's objectives, such as receiving blessings and cures for themselves, their families, and their animals, rain and plentiful harvests, and seeking protection from evil. The resulting unmediated temporal experience whereby individuals come together for a common purpose is 'normative communitas'.¹¹ Communitas is 'social cement' which binds Christians, Jews, and Muslims together in their respective places of worship on celebration days. Victor Turner observed that communitas 'liberates (identities) from conformity to general norms'.¹² A form of communitas existed among devotees of different faiths when they formed friendships and business associations as they worshipped God, venerated saints, and partook in celebrations. In Egypt, Jews invited Muslim neighbours

¹⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-al-Itibār bi-Dhikr al-Khitāṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Būlāq, 1853-4), I, 490-5 for a description of the various festival days. Concerning the Christian holy day of Khamīs al-'Ahd or Khamīs al-'Adas patronized by the Fatimids, see I, 495. Also see Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 95-6, where he quotes Ibn Shaddād. The passage illustrates the Christian origins of the celebration at the tomb of three saints: *Alāq* (Sourdel), 56; Al-Harawī mentions that the Aleppan village of al-Khātīmīya 'contains a shrine (*mashhad*) which is visited from all of the nearby places. It is visited on Rice Thursday and is a blessed site (*mawḍi' mubārak*)', *Ishārāt*, 6. The Shi'ī inhabitants of the upper Mesopotamian village of Madā'in to the west of the Tigris held an annual *mausim* on the 15th of Sha'bān in honour of Salmān al-Farīsī, whose shrine (*mashhad*) was located there. Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād wa Akhbār al-Ibād*, 303. For a brief discussion of festivals, cf. A. Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. S. A. Bakhsh and D. S. Margoliouth (Patna, 1937), 418-29. For criticism of popular festivals and celebrations, cf. Ibn al-Hājj, *al-Madkhal*, I, 283-5, 290-312, 2, 49-60; al-Suyūfī, *al-Amr bi-al-Ittibā' wa-al-Nahy 'an al-Ibtidā'*, ed. M. Ḥ. Salmān (al-Dammām, 1990), 141-52.

¹¹ Turner, 'Pilgrimages as Social Processes', in *Dramas*, 166-228; also Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago, 1969), 131-65.

¹² Turner, *Image*, 250-1.

to participate in festivities, sometimes despite the protest of religious authorities and community elders.¹³ Although women rarely appear in sources, it was not uncommon for Jewish and Muslim women to visit saints' shrines, discuss health problems, seek cures for infertility, and make private visits to a saint. But, Galilean pilgrimage was almost exclusively the domain of Muslims and Jewish men, particularly during the later Middle Ages, which was characterized by increased European Jewish settlement in upper Galilee.

Fundamental rituals, such as making votive offerings, lighting candles, prostrating before or kissing a shrine were not expressly pagan, Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. Within the multi-faith environment of the Near East natural similarities existed in practice. Moreover, the veneration of prophets was of universal appeal as evidenced by shrines where Muslims, Jews, and Christians at times collectively worshipped, such as the Cave of Elijah at Mt. Carmel, the shrine of Ezekiel in Iraq, or the tomb of Samuel outside Jerusalem.¹⁴

The hajj or canonical pilgrimage to Mecca, which takes place over a six-day period during *Dhū al-Ḥijja*, the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is one of the five pillars of Islam and incumbent upon Muslims at least once during their lifetime as prescribed in Qur'an 3: 97. Before the rise of Islam pagan Arabs venerated idols in the sacred precinct of the Kaaba, believed to have been built by the Prophet Abraham and containing the Black Stone. Muḥammad destroyed the idols and consecrated the precinct to God. In performing the hajj, Sunnis and Shi'is—men, women, and children from all over the world—don white garments as they converge upon the sacred precinct to perform collectively the annual rite before God. Pilgrims follow legally prescribed etiquette in their dress, comportment, supplication, prayer, and other rituals as they retrace the footsteps of the Prophet and his Companions in the rite,

¹³ For Ibn Taymīya's views concerning Muslims adopting Christian practices, see below, pp. 131–4. Al-Turkumānī expresses similar objections concerning Muslims celebrating Christian and Jewish holy days in Egypt and elsewhere, *Kitāb al-Lum'a fi-al-Hawādith wa-al-Bida'*, ed. S. Labib, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1986), I. 287–317.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the medieval cults of Ezekiel or Ḥizqil and Samuel, see Ch. 4. In the modern context, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Druze venerate Elijah and his Islamic counterpart al-Khaḍir on Mt. Carmel, see A. Augustinović, *'El-Khadr' and the Prophet Elijah*, trans. E. Hoade (Jerusalem, 1972); T. Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (London, 1927).

which includes circumambulating the Black Stone seven times. After the last day, many pilgrims also make the recommended visit to the mosque of the Prophet in Medina where he is buried and where they recite prayers for him.

PILGRIMAGE: HAJJ AND ZIYĀRA

While the hajj was a universal rite, the *ziyāra* (lit. visiting, a visit) or pilgrimage to saints' tombs and other pilgrimage sites was universally popular, but lacked the authority of Scripture and the Traditions of the Prophet. The *ziyāra* was an anomaly for which no legal precedent existed. *Ziyāra*, in the sense of visitation to living saints, was also a common custom attested to earlier. Unlike the hajj, *ziyāra* was performed on various days of the week. According to a Companion of the Prophet: 'Whoever visits a tomb before sunrise on Saturday, the dead is aware of his visit.' He was asked: How is that? He said, 'Because of the importance of Friday.'¹⁵

Devotees undertook *ziyāra* to tombs, shrines, mosques, and other pilgrimage sites throughout the Near East. This included al-Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem, to which the Damascene historian Abū Shāma and learned companions made *ziyāra* during the month of Sha'bān in 624/1227.¹⁶ As early as the eighth century *ziyāra* is used in the extended sense of 'pilgrimage'. Other related expressions include 'safar (journeying)' and 'safar ilā ziyārat al-qubūr (journeying to visit graves)'. Devotees were to conduct the *ziyāra* in accordance with Scripture and the Sunna of the Prophet and the *salaf* (i.e. the righteous ancestors of the first three generations of Islam) like all other aspects of life. That is to say, prayer and supplication were pronounced for the deceased.¹⁷ Popular beliefs and practices associated with the *ziyāra* often led to tension and conflict with theologians' understanding of the proper manner of performing it. Moreover, this tension prompted theologians to reassess *ziyāra* etiquette and to condemn certain practices which they associated with common people.

¹⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1955), 4. 491.

¹⁶ Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 151; he stated: 'I travelled to Bayt al-Maqdis in the company of the jurist 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām and others in the way of *ziyāra* (*alā sabīl al-ziyāra*) to al-Aqṣā, al-Khalil and what those lands contain of ancient sites (*āthār*).'

¹⁷ Ibn Taymiya, *Majmū'*, 27. 13.

Theologians generally did not deem as unorthodox visiting tombs for the purpose of remembering the dead, reciting the Qur'an, and remembering God, the Prophet Muḥammad, and the Day of Judgement. The Prophet was accustomed to visiting his dead Companions and interceding with God for them. He once said, 'I previously prohibited you from visiting tombs, now visit them and do not say foul words (*hujr*).'¹⁸ Similarly, some interpreted this and other traditions as permitting pilgrimage to shrines. Various traditions mention that the dead are aware of their visitors on Friday, Monday, and Wednesday.¹⁹ It was not this universal sense of the *ziyāra*, but rather the performance of certain practices which became contentious and challenged the very foundations of Islamic orthodoxy. The fact that the Prophet never mentioned *ziyāra* to saints' tombs and its rituals made it necessary for theologians to interpret Scripture and Tradition through individual reasoning (*ijtihād*) and systematic reasoning or analogy (*qiyās*).

Ten fundamental issues confronted theologians as they considered the legality of the *ziyāra* which are summarized here: journeying to a pilgrimage site, praying for the dead, addressing the dead while regarding them as aware of visitors, praying for rain at tombs, praying directly to the dead, supplicating and seeking intercession for oneself or others, glorifying and venerating the dead through ritual acts or erecting commemorative structures, making physical contact with the tomb, asking the dead directly to answer prayers, fulfil supplication, and work miracles, and partaking in pilgrimage festivals.

OPPOSITION TO THE ZIYĀRA AND THE VENERATION OF SAINTS

Concerted opposition to the *ziyāra* first emerged in ninth-century Iraq, the seat of the Abbasid caliphate from 750 to 1256 CE, where traditions concerning saint veneration circulated widely among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in its most important cities and towns, including Baghdad, Kufa, and Karbalā'. Some Sunni the-

¹⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 4. 490, 492. This and like traditions are to be found for instance in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's *Kitāb al-Qubūr*.

¹⁹ Ibn 'Uthmān, *Murshid*, 35.

ologians opposed the widespread practice of *ziyāra* among Sunnis and Shi'is because they regarded such practices as going against the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet. Beginning in the eleventh century, opposition to *ziyāra* practices took root in Syria, though it never reached the scale it did in Iraq, which was a bastion of Hanbali jurisprudence until the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1256 CE. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), an Iraqi preacher who expressed concern with the manner and custom of properly conducting oneself when visiting tombs, rebuked people for forgetting the solemn purpose of such visits and for engaging in unacceptable behaviour, such as eating at tombs.²⁰ As early as the seventh century during the Muslim conquest of Tustar in Persia, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī and the Muslims are said to have discovered the Prophet Daniel's sarcophagus, (*sarīr*) bearing inscriptions of historical events (*ḥawādith*). It was the custom of the region's inhabitants to supplicate for rain at the shrine. Abū Mūsā wrote to the second caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 16/634–23/644), who ordered that thirteen plots be dug during the day and that Daniel be buried at night in one of the unmarked plots in order to prevent people from being misguided (*iftitān*).²¹

Opposition to the *ziyāra* crystallized after the founding of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence in Iraq. It was not its founder Ibn Ḥanbal (164/780–241/855), but rather subsequent generations of disciples who were concerned with Muslims engaging in *ziyāra* practices which violated the Qur'an and the Sunna. However, Ibn Ḥanbal did at first forbid the reciting of the Qur'an at funerals, but immediately changed his mind afterward.²² Hanbalis affirmed that as no precedent existed in the Qur'an or Sunna for the veneration of saints, and making *ziyāra* to tombs, with the exception of reading the opening chapter of the Qur'an, supplicating on behalf of the dead, and contemplating death and the Hereafter, etc., *ziyāra* was to be considered heretical innovation (*bid'a*) and venerating saints as polytheism (*shirk*). They also rejected the *ziyāra* on the grounds that it encouraged immoral practices, such as the

²⁰ Al-Turkumānī, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, I. 214.

²¹ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'*, 27. 120–1, 270–1. Ibn Taymīya mentions that this account is told by Yūnus b. Bakr in *Ziyādāt Maghāzī Ibn Ishāq* from Abū al-Khulda Khālid b. Dīnār, *Majmū'*, 27. 270–1. Al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akbbār al-Ṭiwāl* (Baghdad, 1959), 130. The use of *iftitān*, suggests this is a late tradition.

²² Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 4. 492.

intermingling of the sexes, especially at festivals and on saints' days (*maawsims*).²³

Ibn 'Aqīl

One of the earliest Hanbali condemnations of the *ziyāra* came from the eleventh-century Baghdadi jurisconsult and resident of Damascus Ibn 'Aqīl (431/1039–513/1119),²⁴ who castigates the ignorant and wretched (i.e. the common people) for practices 'which they created for themselves', namely glorifying tombs and physically coming into contact with them.²⁵

Ibn 'Aqīl argues that proponents of the cult of saints justified pilgrimage to tombs and shrines by invoking a tradition on the authority of the Companion Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh (d. 78/697) in which the Prophet visited the Mosque of Aḥzāb.²⁶

The Messenger of God . . . prayed to God in the Mosque of the Aḥzāb, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and his prayers were answered on Wednesday between the two ritual prayers of midday and afternoon, and we recognized the joy on his countenance.²⁷

On the basis of this tradition, Ibn 'Aqīl and later generations of Hanbalis deliberated whether it was legal to perform *ziyāra* with the intention of visiting saints' tombs, shrines, and mosques. Devotees engaged in nights of religious devotion called *Iḥyā'* where they would recite the Qur'an and pray.²⁸ Such occasions engendered immoral behaviour.

I declare myself free from the gatherings of our contemporaries in the congregational mosques and shrines (*mashāhid*) on nights which they call *Iḥyā'* [i.e. entire nights passed in religious worship]. Upon my life, those nights are for the purpose of enlivening their passions, and awakening their carnal appetites: gatherings of men and women; reasons for justifying the expenditure of great sums of money, with the most vain of intentions, namely,

²³ Al-Turkumānī, *Kitāb al-Lumā'*, I, 214. Concerning the treatises against innovation, cf. M. Fierro, 'The Treatises Against Innovation (*Kutub al-Bidā'*)', *Der Islam*, 69 (1992), 204–46.

²⁴ G. Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqīl, Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (Edinburgh, 1997).

²⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, I, 221.

²⁶ Yāqūt mentions this mosque in Medina which was built during the Prophet's lifetime, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, I, 137.

²⁷ Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqīl*, 209 (modified).

²⁸ *Iḥyā'* refers to 'passing the night in religious service, worship, adoration, or devotion, abstaining from sleep'. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 680.

so that people would see it and hear of it; and the diversion, deceit, and foolishness there is in the disorder of every gathering.²⁹

He further elaborates on objectionable rituals.

When the prescriptions of the revealed law (*takālīf*)³⁰ became difficult for the ignorant and the wretched, they turned away from the Law to glorifying conventions (*awḍāʿ*)³¹ which they created for themselves and were convenient for them since, with these conventions, they did not come under the jurisdiction of others. In my estimation, they are infidels by virtue of these innovations, such as glorifying tombs and honouring them with what the Law prohibited of kindling lights (*iqād al-nirān*), kissing the [tombs] (*taqbīl*), and covering them with fragrance (*takbliq*),³² addressing the dead with needs (*khiṭāb al-mawtā bi-al-ḥawāʾij*), writing formulae on paper (*katb al-riqāʿ*) with the message: ‘Oh my Lord, do such and such for me’; taking earth [from the grave] as a blessing (*akhdh turbatihī tabarrukan*), pouring sweet fragrances over graves (*ifādat al-ṭīb ʿalā al-qubūr*), setting out on a journey (*shadd al-riḥāl*) for them, and casting rags on trees (*ilqāʿ al-khiraq ʿalā al-ashjār*) in imitation of those who worshipped the gods Lāt and ʿUzza.³³

Woe unto him—according to them—who does not kiss Mashhad al-Kaff³⁴ or rub himself against (*yatamassah*) the fired brick [of the [east side] Mosque of al-Maʿmūniya]³⁵ on Wednesday, and unto the pallbearers at his funeral who do not say, ‘Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq’, or say ‘Muḥammad’, or ‘Alī’³⁶ [or whose funeral procession is not accompanied by lamentation],³⁷

²⁹ Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 210 (modified).

³⁰ This is Makdisi’s translation of *takālīf*, *ibid.* 212.

³¹ This is Makdisi’s translation of *awḍāʿ*, *ibid.*

³² *Khalāq* is an admixture of fragrance and saffron or pure saffron and water. Cf. later, ‘amūd mukhallaq’, a pillar perfumed or covered with saffron, p. 208. Cf. Al-Kindi, *Kitāb Kīmīyāʿ al-ʿIṭr wa-al-Taṣīdāt*, ed. and trans. K. Garbers (Leipzig, 1948), 2224–5; B. Shoshan, ‘takhliq al-ʿamūd’, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*, 73. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya condemns the practice of perfuming walls and pillars with fragrance, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1. 238. He also mentions a pillar inside the Small Gate, 1. 239. Similarly, al-Suyūṭī condemns the practice of common people perfuming walls and pillars with an admixture of saffron and rosewater, *Al-Amr bi-al-Ittibāʿ*, 115.

³³ Two pre-Islamic idols.

³⁴ For a description of this Damascene mosque which allegedly contained Moses’ footprint, see Ibn Taymīya, *Iqtidāʿ al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafat Ahl al-Jahīm*, ed. M. H. al-Fiqī (Cairo, 1950), 318. Makdisi refers to this as ‘Mashhad al-Kahf’ (Shrine of the Cavern), *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 212.

³⁵ Added from Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 212.

³⁶ I am unaware of this practice of uttering the names of Abū Bakr, Muḥammad, and ʿAlī in any other context.

³⁷ Added from Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 212.

or who did not construct on his father's grave a vault (*azaḡ*) with gypsum and fired brick, or rend his garments down to the extremity (*yakhbriq thiyābahu ilā al-dhayl*), pour rose water ([*lam*] *yuriq mā' al-ward*) on [his] tomb and [bury his garments with him].³⁸

In polemicizing against these practices, which he regarded as un-Islamic, Ibn 'Aqīl established a Hanbali precedent for the condemnation of heretical *ziyāra*. Such funerary practices were widespread among Iraq's inhabitants. If indeed they posed a threat to Islamic orthodoxy, it was incumbent upon the caliph to oppose them. However, due to the risk of causing further instability in his dominion, he did not take an express interest in the legality of the *ziyāra*. In fact, Abbasid caliphs made *ziyāra* to 'Alid shrines, as is shown later.

Ibn Taymīya and the ziyāra

The Syrian theologian Ibn Taymīya (661/1263–728/1328)³⁹ was one of the foremost critics of the cult of saints and the author of several highly controversial responsa (*fatāwā*) and treatises concerning *ziyāra*, which provide insight into the rituals of saint devotion among Muslims and Christians throughout the Near East, particularly in Damascus, where he lived most of his life.

Ibn Taymīya distinguishes between the heretical *ziyāra* (*al-ziyāra al-bid'īya*), which he associates with pagans, Jews, and Christians, and the legal *ziyāra* (*al-ziyāra al-shar'īya*), which is enjoined by the Prophet. The former was tantamount to heretical innovation (*bid'a*) and polytheism (*shirk*). The heretical *ziyāra* is when

the visitor intends that his supplication be fulfilled at the tomb or that he would supplicate the deceased, supplicate for rain through him and make a request of him or take an oath (abjure) by God in requesting a need.⁴⁰

However, Ibn Taymīya does not deny the possibility that supplication can be fulfilled, going so far as to say that 'If anything is

³⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, I, 221. Bracketed text is added from Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqīl*, 212.

³⁹ Two important studies concerning Ibn Taymīya and the *ziyāra* are N. H. Olesen, *Culte des saints et pèlerinages chez Ibn Taymīyya* (661/1268–728/1328) (Paris, 1991), and M. 'U. Memon (trans.), *Ibn Taymīya's Struggle against Popular Tradition; with an Annotated Translation of his Kitāb Iqtidā' al-Širāt al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafat Abl al-Jahīm* (The Hague, 1976). Concerning the response to Ibn Taymīya, cf. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 195–218.

⁴⁰ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'*, 27. 31–2.

granted, it should be attributed to the personal merit of the tomb's patron.⁴¹ While some theologians acknowledged the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the living and the dead, Ibn Taymīya argues that

In the legally permissible *ziyāra*, the living does not have need for the dead by making a request of him (*maʿāla*) or seeking his intercession (*tawas-sul*). But rather, the dead derives benefit from the living. God the Exalted has mercy upon the living who supplicates for the dead.⁴²

In the legal *ziyāra* as defined by Ibn Taymīya, the visitor supplicates for the dead; but does not seek the intercession of the deceased.

Ibn Taymīya and Christian practices

A fundamental aspect of Ibn Taymīya's critique of the cult of saints rests upon the refutation of the authenticity of tombs and shrines and the characterization of certain practices as un-Islamic and Christian. Yet, the polemical nature of his arguments against Christian and Jewish practices must be borne in mind. Such is the case with the tomb in Damascus of the Jewish convert and Companion Ubayy b. Kaʿb (d. 30/650), who was believed to have been buried in Medina.⁴³

Some of the people used to say that it is the tomb of a Christian. This is not unlikely. The Jews and Christians are the ones who established a precedent in the veneration of tombs and shrines. It is for this reason that the Prophet . . . said in a [sound] tradition: 'May God curse the Jews and Christians. They have taken the tombs of their prophets as places of prayer (lit. prostration). Such behaviour is to be warned against.'⁴⁴

He questions Muslims following certain Christian practices which he and other Hanbali theologians stood alone in impugning. To what extent did Muslim theologians regard the devotional practices of the common people as 'un-Islamic'? Here he invokes a tradition in which the Prophet condemns Muslims visiting Christian places and imitating their practices in Abyssinia:

The Christians are more fanatic in that than the Jews according to what is said in the two major authoritative collections of canonical Hadith: on

⁴¹ Ibn Taymīya, *Iqtidāʿ*, 374. ⁴² Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿ*, 27. 71.

⁴³ Al-Harawī mentions a shrine in eastern Damascus (*Ishārāt*, 14) and a tomb of Ubayy in Baqīʿ al-Gharqad in Medina (ibid. 94). Also see Sourdel-Thomine, 'Anciens', 80 n. 3.

⁴⁴ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿ*, 27. 460.

the authority of ʿĀʾisha [the Prophet's favourite wife] that Umm Ḥabība and Umm Salama [two of his wives] . . . mentioned to the Prophet . . . a church in Abyssinia. They mentioned its beauty and murals contained within it. The Prophet said that when a righteous man (*raḡul ṣāliḡ*) died among them, those people constructed a place of worship (lit. a place of prostration) over his tomb and painted on it those icons.⁴⁵ These are the most evil of creation to God on the Day of Resurrection.⁴⁶

He further rebukes misguided individuals who visit Christian priests and monks for blessings:

Christians mainly venerate the relics (*āthār*) of their saints (*qiddīsūn*). It is not improbable that they passed this [practice] to some ignorant Muslims, namely that this is the tomb of one whom the Muslims extol so that they would agree to venerate him with them. How is it not so seeing that they have misguided many ignorant Muslims such that they even began to baptize their children by alleging that it ensures longevity for the infant? The Christians even got them to visit the shrines and churches they glorify. Many ignorant Muslims even made votive offerings to places which the Christians venerate. By the same measure, many visit churches and seek blessings (*yaltamisūna al-baraka*) from their priests, monks and the like . . .⁴⁷

While Ibn Taymīya attributes such practices to Christians, he fails to recognize that certain practices may have originated with some Muslims, such as the veneration of the Prophet's relics. The Hanbalis perceived certain forms of ritual behaviour and visiting saint relics and venerating icons in churches as a threat from common people to Islamic orthodoxy. However, Muslim veneration of Christian saints was hardly the norm.

Prayer for rain at tombs of prophets and saints was forbidden, despite the fact that the second caliph ʿUmar requested the Prophet's paternal uncle ʿAbbās to lead the supplication prayer for rain.⁴⁸ Ibn Taymīya reasons that this was permissible at the time because of the latter's relationship to the Prophet. In addition to

⁴⁵ Ibn Taymīya affirms that praying in Christian places which contain icons is forbidden. *Ibid.* 27. 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 27. 460. ⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 27. 460–1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 27. 31–2, 180; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḡīḡ al-Bukhārī*, ed. and trans. M. M. Khān, 9 vols. (Riyadh, 1997), 2. 84–5: ʿAnas: Whenever drought threatened them, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, used to ask al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib to invoke God for rain. He used to say, “O God. We used to ask our Prophet to invoke You for rain, and You would bless us with rain, and now we ask his paternal uncle to invoke You for rain. God, Bless us with rain.” And so it would rain.’

the Qur'an and Hadith, Ibn Taymīya turns to the founders of the four schools of jurisprudence to argue against the legality of making *ziyāra* to saints' tombs:

As for journeying for the sole purpose of making *ziyāra* to Ibrāhīm's tomb in [Hebron (al-Khalīl)] or other tombs of prophets and righteous men, their shrines (*mashāhid*), and their relics (*āthār*), not one of the imams of the Muslims recommended it, not the four [i.e. the founders of the four schools of jurisprudence] nor others.⁴⁹

Conversely, none of the founders of the four schools directly confronts the issue of making *ziyāra* to shrines. Since the practice is not mentioned in early texts and by the founders, it must inevitably be considered a *bid'a* and, as such, reprehensible. Unlike the other schools, the Hanbalis rejected *ziyāra* to saints' relics and shrines. Tombs and shrines should not be singled out for prayer and supplication, nor should one expect the performance of miracles and the fulfilment of supplication. In the following legal query to which he responds by urging sincere worship of God, Ibn Taymīya takes issue with various common practices, such as making votive offerings, entreating the dead saint, and touching the tomb with one's hands or face through a series of rituals through which *baraka* was obtained:

Query concerning the one who visits a grave and seeks aid from the deceased when he, his horse, or donkey is afflicted by illness; the one who requests dispelling illness with which [he] is afflicted and who says: 'Oh my master! I am under your protection and at your reckoning; so-and-so perpetrated wrong against me, so-and-so intended to harm me'; the one who says that the deceased is an intercessor (*shafī'*) between him and God the Exalted; concerning the person who makes votive offerings of dirhams, camels, sheep, candles, and oil, etc. to mosques, *zāwiyas*, and living or dead shaykhs (*mashāyikh*) and says; 'If my son is cured I will give to Shaykh 'Alī such and such sum', and the like; the one who seeks the aid of his shaykh requesting that his heart be made sound from that disaster and the one who visits his shaykh and touches (*yastalim*) his tomb, rubs his face against it (*yamragh*), wipes his hand (*yamsah*) on it and in turn wipes both hands on his face and the likes of that; the one who seeks [his Shaykh] with his need and says: 'Oh so-and-so by your blessing' or who says: 'Fulfil my need through the *baraka* of God and so-and-so'; concerning the one who holds a musical session, comes to the tomb, bares his face

⁴⁹ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'*, 27. 20.

and places it (*yahūtṭ*) on the ground before his shaykh whilst prostrating himself . . .⁵⁰

Ibn Taymīya collectively condemns these practices.⁵¹ Supplication to God alone is permissible on behalf of a tomb's patron. It is also permissible for a person to ask another to supplicate (*ṭalab al-du'ā*) on their behalf in prayer.⁵²

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya and the ziyāra

Ibn Taymīya's disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya (691/1292–751/1350) continued his master's crusade against *ziyāra* practices which threatened orthodoxy, and in a scathing polemic against the *ziyāra* argued that medieval Syrians were observing rites (*manāsik*) similar to those of the Pilgrimage to Mecca.⁵³ This constituted sufficient grounds for concern. He also refers to a pilgrimage guide probably of Shi'i origin—*Manāsik Ḥajj al-Qabr (Rules for Making Pilgrimage to Shrines)*.⁵⁴

Should you see the fanatics of those who take [tombs] as places of feasting (*ʿyādan*),⁵⁵ they dismount from their saddles and mounts when they behold them from afar. They place their faces upon the tomb, kiss the ground, bare their heads and their voices rise in a clamour. They cry almost weeping. They see themselves having received greater benefit than the pilgrims to Mecca. They seek the aid of one who does not grant it the first time or the second. They call out but from a distant place. In approaching it, they pray two *rakʿas* near the tomb and believe that they have obtained recompense—not the recompense of the one who prays toward the two *qiblas* [i.e. Mecca and Jerusalem]. You see them prostrating, bending themselves, and seeking favour and satisfaction from the dead [only to fill their hands] with disappointment and loss. To other than God, rather to Satan, their tears flow there, their voices rise. The deceased is called upon to fulfil needs, to dispel sorrows, make the indigent free of want, to relieve the diseased and afflicted. After that they turn to circumambulating the grave in imitation of the Bayt al-Ḥarām [i.e. the Kaaba] which God had made holy and guidance unto the inhabitants of the world. Then they begin to kiss [it] and touch it (*istilām*)—Did you not see the Black Stone and what those visiting the Bayt al-Ḥarām do with it? Then they soiled their foreheads and cheeks near it [i.e. the grave] which God

⁵⁰ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿ*, 27. 64.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 27. 64–71.

⁵² *Ibid.* 27. 69.

⁵³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, I, 220–I, 304.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* I. 220. This work is unknown. For a discussion of the significance of the word *manāsik*, see below, p. 157.

⁵⁵ *ʿĪd* also means a festival place or a place frequented.

knows are not soiled thus before it in prostration. Then they conclude the rites (*manāsik*) of the pilgrimage to the grave with shortening and shaving their hair there.⁵⁶ They take pleasure in their share from that idol since they do not have a share with God and offer up sacrifices to it. Their prayers, ceremonies and sacrifices were to other than God, the Lord of the inhabitants of the world. If you beheld them, they would congratulate one another saying, 'May God lavish you with abundant recompense and good fortune.' When they return, the fanatics of those who remained behind ask of them for one of them to sell the recompense of the pilgrimage to the grave (*hijja*) for the Pilgrimage of the one setting out on the Pilgrimage to the Kaaba. He would say, 'No, [not] even with your making Pilgrimage every year.'⁵⁷

The similarities between these rituals and those of the hajj are immediately striking. Ibn Qayyim was personally aware of people imitating the rites of the hajj in their performance of *ziyāra*. This had dangerous implications for Islamic orthodoxy. The occurrence of such words as *hajj*, *riḥla*, *safar*, and *manāsik* suggests that some theologians acknowledged that performing *ziyāra* had the potential to become a substitute for the canonical pilgrimage. Several Hadith oppose journeying to mosques for the purpose of venerating saints: Ibn Taymīya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya argue that *shadd al-riḥāl* (journeying; lit. fastening saddles to mounts) contradicts the Prophet's prohibition on journeying to mosques apart from Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and Masjid al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem.⁵⁸ The permissibility of journeying (*shadd al-riḥāl*) to places other than the three mosques designated in Hadith was a point of contention among theologians of other schools, not just the Hanbalis.⁵⁹ Al-Ghazālī and later theologians, who argued that *shadd al-riḥāl* is permissible for the purpose of making *ziyāra* to tombs and shrines, took the Prophet's

⁵⁶ Men shave their heads during the hajj.

⁵⁷ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, I, 220.

⁵⁸ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿ*, 27, 5, 193; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, I, 221. Various traditions mention *shadd al-riḥāl*, including 'Mounts are not fastened except to three mosques: Masjid al-Ḥarām, Masjid al-Aqṣā, and my mosque' (*lā tushadd al-riḥāl illā ilā thalāth masājid: masjid al-ḥarām, masjid al-aqṣā, wa masjidī*), *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2, 172, no. 1197. See A. J. Wensinck, *et al.*, *al-Muʿjam al-Mufabras li-Alfāz al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, 8 vols. (Leiden, 1936–88), 2, 234–53. Concerning the possible variations, interpretations, and problematic aspects of this tradition, see M. J. Kister, "You Shall Only Set Out for Three Mosques": A Study of an Early Tradition', *Le Muséon*, 82 (1969), 173–96.

⁵⁹ Kister, 'You Shall Only Set Out for Three Mosques', throughout.

prohibition to refer only to mosques but not always to sacred places and shrines.⁶⁰

The Hanbali historian and Qur'an memorizer Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (567/1172–643/1245),⁶¹ who chronicled the lives and *karāmāt* of the Maqdisī family from their immigration from the village of Jammā'il during the Crusader invasion of Palestine in 551/1156 to Damascus and the slope of Mt. Qāsiyūn, which became known as 'al-Ṣāliḥiyya', suggests that medieval Damascenes believed that pilgrimage to the tombs of saints assumed the status of the hajj and *ziyāra* to the Prophet's tomb.⁶² The fact that the Prophet appears in a dream to an unspecified inhabitant of Damascus confirms the validity of making *ziyāra* to a saint's tomb.

The Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḍiyā' mentions among the merits (*manāqib*) of Shaykh Abū 'Umar that the Prophet . . . was seen in a dream (*ru'ya fi-al-naum*) (lit. sleep) saying: 'Whoever visits (*zāra*) the Shaykh at his grave, it is as if he made Pilgrimage (*fa-ka-annamā ḥajja*).' In one of the accounts, it is Friday night or daytime. In [another] one of the accounts, it is as if he visited me (*ka-annamā zāranī*).⁶³

The expression 'ka-annamā ḥajja' initially suggests that *ziyāra* to the tomb of renowned saints was an acceptable substitute for the hajj.⁶⁴ The account further suggests that Friday night or daytime were designated as efficacious times for *ziyāra* to Abū 'Umar. Indeed some devotees were misled into believing that the religious commandment of the hajj could be fulfilled through performing *ziyāra*. Yet another account attributed to the Hanbali Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī suggests in a manner reminiscent of Shi'i *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn, that the *ziyāra* to Abū 'Umar's tomb was as if one made *ziyāra* to the Prophet's tomb.⁶⁵ In Ibn Qayyim's description above, notwith-

⁶⁰ Concerning al-Ghazālī's view, cf. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Madkhal*, 1. 256. Also see below, pp. 138–40.

⁶¹ For a number of biographies of the Maqdisī family, see Duhmān's introduction to Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 1. 12–15. Concerning the Maqdisī immigration to al-Ṣāliḥiyya, see above, Ch. 2, n. 114.

⁶² Jammā'il is a village in the mountain of Nābulus, Yāqūt, *Muġjam al-Buldān*, 2. 113.

⁶³ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 561.

⁶⁴ Goldziher, 'Veneration', 2. 287–90, 322.

⁶⁵ Ḍiyā' al-Maqdisī gives two differing traditions, *Manāqib*, 83: 'Whoever visits the tomb of Shaykh Abū 'Umar on Friday night, or [Ibn Muflīḥ] said, on Thursday, it is as if he visited the Ka'ba', or he said, 'it is as if he made Pilgrimage'. The second is of an Indian Muslim who saw in his sleep a mysterious caller (*qā'il*) or the Prophet: 'Whoever visits the tomb of Shaykh Abū 'Umar, it is as if he made Pilgrimage.'

standing its polemical dimension, some Damascenes conceived of the recompense of *ziyāra* as greater than that of the hajj. Ibn Qayyim had good reason to be worried about the potential threat of *ziyāra* to orthodox Islam if the Prophet were invoked as stating that *ziyāra* is 'as if making the hajj'. Invoking Ibn Taymīya, the Egyptian Shafi'i theologian Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (849/1445–911/1505) mentions the practice of grave visitation among those in the Islamic east and west as a 'kind of heretical innovation of the hajj' (*wa hādihā naw' min al-hajj al-mubtada'*).⁶⁶ In Iraq, Sunnis performed pilgrimage to certain tombs at the time of the hajj. Ibn al-Mustawfī (d. 637/1239), the author of *Tārīkh Irbil* (*History of Irbil*), specifically mentions that pilgrimage is made to (*yuhajj ilā*) the tomb of the Sufi saint Shaykh 'Alī al-Hītī (444/1052–564/1169) in Zarīrān,⁶⁷ especially at the time of the hajj to Mecca.⁶⁸ Similarly, he mentions that the tomb of Shaykh al-Ḥusayn al-Kīlī (al-Gīlī) who died in the twelfth century 'is . . . journeyed to (*yurḥal ilayhi*) from all around and blessings are sought from it (*yutabarrak bihi*)'.⁶⁹ The expression 'yurḥal ilā'⁷⁰ was not intended to violate the Prophet's prohibition on 'setting out (*shadd al-riḥāl*)' to mosques and shrines. The geographer al-Muqaddasī (b. c. 335–6/946) mentions a mosque over a hill in Mosul built by the daughter of a prominent ruler to which seven pilgrimages equal (*tusāwī*) a hajj.⁷¹ Not only did *ziyāra* traditions circulate among scholars, they were inscribed on tombstones.

In an unusual account, the twelfth-century traveller and savant al-Harawī describes an elaborate inscription on the tomb of Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. Ismā'īl, a descendant of the sixth imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq in Damascus, which bears the names of no fewer than four prominent theologians, as well as the presumed words of the Prophet in a devotee's vision of him urging those unable to visit his tomb in Medina to visit that

⁶⁶ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Amr bi-al-Ittibā'*, 183. Al-Suyūṭī criticizes the practice of great gatherings at tombs of highly regarded persons on the Day of 'Arafāt (*tārīf*).

⁶⁷ A village located seven parasangs from Baghdad. Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 2. 629, mentions that the tomb lies on the main road to the hajj and that over his tomb is 'a high domed mausoleum (*qubba*) which is visited. Votive offerings are made there (*tundhar lahā*) and miracles were worked there.'

⁶⁸ Ibn al-Mustawfī, *Tārīkh*, 1. 54.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 1. 221.

⁷⁰ See above, n. 58.

⁷¹ Al-Muqaddasī, *Kitāb Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1906), 146.

of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh. Inscriptions which attested to a shrine's efficacy are unknown in other contexts.

The Judge, the Preacher Abū al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. Abī al-Ḥadīd reported this and the jurisconsult Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn, both of them saying: Abū al-Ḥasan b. Māsā informed us: Shaykh Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan and others reported from Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan b. Māsā, the honourable person, that he saw the Prophet . . . north of the ruined domed mausoleum (*qubba*) which contains the Sharīf,⁷² the devout worshipper, saying: 'He who desires to visit me and cannot do so, let him visit (*fal-yazur*) the tomb (*qabr*) of my son Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh.'⁷³

With the notable exception of individuals who were misguided into believing in the fulfilment of the hajj through *ziyāra*, such occurrences as illustrated above may have represented a means of bringing devotees spiritually closer to identifying with the centres of their faith. The poor, the old, the sick, and others who could not afford to undertake the hajj, believed that they would derive some recompense from undertaking *ziyāra* to other sacred places. However, Muslims never regarded visiting such symbolic centres as a substitute for fulfilment of the hajj, or *umrah*.

IN DEFENCE OF ZIYĀRA

Writing in defence of the *ziyāra* during the eleventh century in *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn (Revivification of the Religious Sciences)* Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (450/1058–505/1111) took the opponents of *ziyāra* to task by affirming the existence of saints and the permissibility of making *ziyāra* to all tombs. But he, too, qualified the true meaning of *ziyāra*, which he did not merely associate with saints. The presence of holiness as manifest in the dead and God's presence made a pilgrimage site efficacious. Muslims and Christians possessed a universal sense of the holiness of the dead which manifested itself in the devotee's physical and spiritual contact with the site. Al-Ghazālī stresses the universality of the interpersonal experience of

⁷² A *sharīf* is a descendant of the Prophet.

⁷³ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 14; Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Dahhān, 1956), 186.

self-surrender and embracing the dead with all one's senses, a recurring theme in the pilgrimage guides.⁷⁴

What is intended from visiting tombs (*ziyārat al-qubūr*) is for the visitor to reflect on the *ziyāra* and for the visited (*mazūr*) to benefit from his supplication. The visitor ought not to be heedless of supplicating for himself and for the deceased or on reflecting on him. He is in a state of reflection when he pictures in his heart the dead, how his members have separated and how he will be resurrected from his grave.⁷⁵

Ziyāra should be conducted in accordance with the Sunna of the Prophet. For al-Ghazālī, the goals of *ziyāra* were contemplation, remembering death, and obtaining blessings, a view with which even the Hanbalis would agree. However, the devotee may obtain blessings only through his own contemplation and supplication, not through the dead saint. The exception is the Prophet. Al-Ghazālī cites two traditions, one of which affirms that the Prophet serves as an intercessor on the Day of Judgement for those who visit him.

Visiting tombs is altogether recommended for remembrance (*dhikr*) and contemplation (*i'tibār*). Visiting the tombs of the righteous is recommended for the purpose of seeking blessings [and] contemplation. The Messenger of God . . . forbade visiting tombs and then permitted that afterwards.⁷⁶

Al-Ghazālī then quotes a canonical Tradition related by the Prophet's son-in-law and cousin 'Alī in which the Prophet changed his mind about permitting Muslims to visit the dead.

'Alī . . . related from the Messenger of God . . . that he said: 'I forbade you to visit graves. Visit them, they make you remember the Hereafter but do not say foul words.' The Messenger of God . . . visited his mother's tomb. . . . He was never seen crying as much as on that day. He said: '[God] permitted me to visit her without seeking mercy.'⁷⁷

Unlike the Hanbalis, al-Ghazālī did not distinguish between *ziyāra* to the tombs of loved ones and those of saints. The goals were one and the same—supplicating God on behalf of the dead. Since the Prophet visited his mother's grave, it is permissible for

⁷⁴ Brown, *Cult*, 11. Christian theologians in late Antiquity like Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome had similar experiences which brilliantly capture a universal spiritual quality of awe and reverence also encountered in the Islamic context. Ibid. 10–11.

⁷⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 4. 492.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 4. 490.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Muslims to visit all graves and remember the dead. However, the Prophet never kissed, lay upon, or rubbed against tombs.

SHI'Ī ZIYĀRA

All Shi'is, wherever they resided, recognized the importance of making *ziyāra* to the tomb of the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn and the other Shi'i imams. Although the *ziyāra* was not obligatory like the hajj, a similar obligatory status, merits, and recompense were ascribed to it. The major Shi'i *'atabāt*, pilgrimage cities, were an almost 'secondary *qibla*'.⁷⁸ The threat of divine punishment for not performing *ziyāra* figures prominently in *ziyāra* traditions. Shi'is upheld the intercession of the imams for their followers, in contrast to the Sunnis among whom the orthodox scholars like al-Ghazālī and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya denied the intercession of saints, except the Prophet.

Ziyāra traditions arose in the context of Sunni-Shi'i antagonism precipitated by the massacre of Ḥusayn and his party at Karbalā' in Iraq. Performing canonical prayer (*ṣalāt al-farīda*) was equivalent to the commendable status of performing the hajj and supererogatory prayer to that of the recommended Lesser Pilgrimage to Mecca (*umrah*). Other Shi'i traditions mention that performing the pilgrimage on the Day of 'Arafāt equals 'one thousand Pilgrimages, one thousand lesser pilgrimages and one thousand military expeditions with the Prophet . . .'.⁷⁹ Since the *ziyāra* did not represent a legal substitute or alternative to the hajj, the reward of merits surpassing those of the hajj were explicit. Ḥusayn's son Abū 'Abd Allāh likened the requirements of setting out on *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn to those of the hajj. 'What is incumbent upon us (*mā yalzimunā*) is what is incumbent in the hajj.'⁸⁰ Further traditions address the commendable status of *ziyāra*.

Abū al-'Abbās from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn from Aḥmad b. al-Naḍr from Shihāb b. 'Abd Rabbihi or from a man from Shihān from Abī 'Abd

⁷⁸ H. Algar, 'Atabāt', *EI*(2), suppl., p. 95.

⁷⁹ Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, p. 20, tradition no. 1, and p. 56, tradition no. 4. Al-Majlisī also enumerates similar traditions in which the devotee's recompense is often greater than that of the hajj, *Bihār al-Anwār*, ed. J. al-'Alawī *et al.* (Tehran, 1957-85), 101. 28-44, no. 49; 101. 46.

⁸⁰ Ibn Qūlūya, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (Beirut, 1997), 250-1.

Allāh . . . who said: He asked me: 'Shihāb, how many Pilgrimages have you made (*hijja*)?' I said: 'Nineteen Pilgrimages.' He said to me: 'Should you complete twenty-one Pilgrimages, they will be counted for you (*tuḥsab laka*) as a *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn . . .'.⁸¹

Shi'is placed greater emphasis on *ziyāra* ritual than did Sunnis. The institutionalization of ritual contributed to the formation of pilgrimage centres in the towns and cities of Iraq. Similarly, the devotional role ascribed to the Shi'i imams and the Family of the Prophet in Fatimid Egypt subsisted with the successor Sunni dynasties. It was customary for Shi'is to pray at tombs.⁸² For Shi'is *ziyāra* to the tombs and shrines of the imams and the other members of the Prophet's family was a recognized and recommended practice whose recompense, at least in practical terms and temporal benefits, outweighed those of the hajj. No Shi'i theologian opposed the making of *ziyāra*.

EXPLORING ISLAMIC PILGRIMAGE GUIDES AND LITERATURE

Unlike Jews and Christians, Muslims composed pilgrimage guides,⁸³ known as *ziyārāt* or *kutub al-ziyārāt* to commemorate sacred sites and the lives of the holy dead. Pilgrimage guides variously contain brief hagiographical biographies of prominent persons, comments about the efficacy of holy sites, shrines, tombs, relics, talismans, descriptions of the pietistic behaviour of devotees, and proper *ziyāra* etiquette. They also mention sacred rocks, talismanic objects, and wells associated with saints and sacred episodes from Islamic and pre-Islamic history, sarcophagi in sacred caves, and saints' clothing.

The guide was a companion for learned pilgrims to remember and invoke blessings upon the dead saint and make pilgrimage to his tomb or shrine. Although they reflect a variety of influences and traditions from the early Islamic period, pilgrimage guides provide

⁸¹ Ibn Qūlūya, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (Najaf, 1356 H.), 141; Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 101. 42, no. 73. Also compare traditions nos. 73–6.

⁸² Al-Majlisī mentions the required 'ghusl' (ritual immersion) of the *ziyāra*, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 100. 134.

⁸³ For a brief discussion of pilgrimage guides, cf. al-Harawī, *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, trans. Sourdel-Thomine, pp. xxvi–xlii.

a real sense of the variety of *ziyāra* ritual and thus constitute an important source for understanding the cult of saints. Guides occasionally mention Jewish, Christian, and common holy sites. Such works were composed at the request of rulers or friends of the authors about Cairene and Damascene *ziyārāt*, as well as those of other Syrian cities, including Aleppo, Ḥamā, and Ḥims.

Several factors contributed to the emergence of pilgrimage guides as a devotional genre. First, authors were concerned with establishing a location's sanctity. This is the broader context of sanctity discussed in Chapter 1 which relied on Hadith, historical reports, and oral accounts.

Second, the Islamic territorial expansion of the seventh to ninth centuries led to Muslim scholars recording and commenting on the burial sites of the Prophet's Companions who settled in the garrison towns and those martyred in battle. Traditions concerning the prophets and other scriptural figures are also frequently mentioned. The soundness of these traditions is not directly relevant to understanding how Muslims performed *ziyāra*.

Faḍā'il (lit. merits, excellent qualities) traditions initially served the purpose of sanctifying places and people but were not necessarily associated with pilgrimage or the veneration of saints.⁸⁴ An indirect form of scholarly rivalry emerged. Damascenes in the ninth to the eleventh centuries did not only coincidentally take an interest in preserving traditions concerning Damascus at a time when the Abbasid caliphate in the East reached its apogee as a seat of literary and religious scholarship in the Islamic world. *Ziyāra* traditions evolved from *faḍā'il* traditions which emphasize the Islamic nature and sanctity of a location by identifying the burial place of a prophet, martyr, or hero. Such traditions, which can be classified as either sound, false, or *Isrā'īliyyāt* (Israelite traditions), extol the merits of particular cities, holy sites, and saints.⁸⁵ Crusader rule in the Holy Land stimulated growth in the collection of *faḍā'il* traditions.

The systematic compilation of traditions contributed to the emergence of regional histories and pilgrimage guides for such cities as Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Kufa, and Najaf and also other literary genres which often mention pilgrimage sites. In the absence of a

⁸⁴ R. Sellheim, 'Faḍā'il', *EI*(2), 2. 728–9. Also see Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, introd.

⁸⁵ Al-Raba'i, introd.; G. Vajda, 'Isrā'īliyyāt', *EI*(2), 4. 211–12.

universal tradition of pilgrimage guides, many traditions emerged which reflected a variety of local and regional practices as attested to in the diversity of guides. The earliest known guide is *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt* of the Kufan Shi'i jurist al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Faḍḍāl al-Taymī al-Kūfī (d. 224/838–9).⁸⁶ Authors of Sunni and Shi'i guides rely upon the *faḍā'il* literature for the purpose of glorifying a location.⁸⁷ However, the Shi'i guides also draw upon traditions attributed to the imams, most notably the sixth imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, which largely concern Ḥusayn, 'Alī, and other members of the Prophet's Family.

The earliest known specimen of pilgrimage literature for the entire Islamic world and parts of the Christian Mediterranean and Byzantium during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries is the Syrian savant and ascetic 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī's (d. 611/1215) *Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā Mārifat al-Ziyārāt* (*Guide to Pilgrimage Places*).⁸⁸ The author records sites and popular traditions concerning them based on first-hand knowledge and second-hand accounts.⁸⁹ Al-Harawī regularly includes popular traditions which he indicates in several ways: 'It is said' (*qīla/yaqāl*), 'according to local custom' (*kamā dhakarū/yadhkurūna*), or 'according to what the people of the site mentioned' (*kamā dhakarū ahl al-mawḍi'*). Al-Harawī often questions these traditions by stating, 'the truth is . . .' (*wa-al-ṣaḥīḥ anna . . .*). Such expressions reflect a popular level of discourse mirrored by writers.

The *Ishārāt* provided a basis for late medieval pilgrimage guides and regional histories particularly in al-Shām. Unlike other pilgrimage guides, there is no evidence to suggest that it was employed during *ziyāra*. In fact, the author dedicated the work to the Abbasid

⁸⁶ Rāghib, 'Essai', 259. The work is mentioned in Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Kitāb Lisān al-Mizān*, 6 vols. (Hyderabad, 1911–13), 2. 225, no. 976 and Aghā Buzurg, *al-Dharī'a ilā Taṣāniḥ al-Shī'a*, 26 vols. (Najaf, 1936–85), 12. 77, no. 527. The author is mentioned in Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel (Leipzig, 1871), 223; *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, trans. B. Dodge, 2 vols. (New York, 1970), 1. 479, 541; K. Zirikli, *al-'Ālam: Qāmūs Tarājim li-Ashbar al-Rijāl wa-al-Nisā' min al-'Arab wa-al-Musta'ribim wa-al-Mustashriqin*, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1979), 2. 215. He was an associate of the eighth Shi'i imam.

⁸⁷ Rāghib ascribes a Shi'i origin to pilgrimage guides without providing sufficient evidence. Neither the Egyptian nor the Syrian tradition betrays a Shi'i origin, 'Essai', 259.

⁸⁸ Concerning al-Harawī, see J. Sourdél-Thomine, 'Les Conseils du Ṣayḥ al-Harawī à un prince Ayyubide', *BEO* 17 (1962), 205–16.

⁸⁹ See Sourdél-Thomine, 'Anciens', 65–85.

caliph.⁹⁰ Moreover, it is not as explicit as Egyptian pilgrimage guides in providing directions and distances. The *Ishārāt* is akin to a travel itinerary, but it does not provide distances between places or mention the time spent in a given location. In fact, the guide is a compilation from memory, trustworthy sources, and notes which may have survived being taken by the Franks in 588/1192.⁹¹ All pilgrimage guides employ a common language to refer to pilgrimage sites, a language not merely descriptive in nature, but indicative of the rituals devotees performed and the sacred nature of sites.

EGYPTIAN PILGRIMAGE LITERATURE

Unlike al-Harawī's sacred travel itinerary, Egyptian pilgrimage guides were written specifically for devotees making pilgrimage to the Qarāfa Cemetery on Jabal al-Muqaṭṭam, the primary Muslim pilgrimage site in Cairo from the tenth century. Apart from enumerating the burial places of saints, the authors of Egyptian and Syrian pilgrimage guides devote considerable attention to discussing pilgrimage etiquette.

Ibn 'Uthmān (d. 615/1218)

The earliest surviving Egyptian pilgrimage guide, which served as a basis for later works, is *Murshid al-Zuwwār ilā Qubūr al-Abrār* (*The Pilgrims' Guide to the Tombs of the Righteous*) of the Shafi'i juriconsult and Hadith scholar 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn 'Uthmān (d. 615/1218), who was from a learned family.⁹²

Like other guides, *Murshid al-Zuwwār* begins with the sacred topography of the pilgrimage centre, in this case Jabal al-Muqaṭṭam and the Qarāfa cemeteries. This is followed by descriptions of mosques and their endowers, historical accounts concerning the *ziyāra* and traditions concerning the dead hearing the living, discussion of the propriety of walking in the cemetery with sandals, formulas pronounced at entering the cemetery, pilgrimage etiquette,

⁹⁰ Similarly, Ibn al-Nāsikh (d. c.696/1296–7), a minor Egyptian official in the service of the wazir Ibn Hanna, composed *Misbāh al-Dayāji wa Ghawth al-Rāji wa Kabf al-Lāji* (*Lamp for the Darkness, Aid for the Expectant Seeker and a Haven for the One Seeking Refuge*) for his patron. This is Taylor's translation, *The Cult of the Saints*, 9. Rāghib, 'Essai', 272–3.

⁹¹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 30.

⁹² Rāghib, 'Essai', 272.

various ritual acts (making sacrifice, prayer, etc.). Finally, the author lists tombs, their efficacious qualities, associated rituals, and exact pilgrimage routes. The guide was not merely descriptive but also prescriptive. In fact, it is replete with instructions and directions to the pilgrim as he walked from station to station: 'Then you walk eastward approximately one hundred steps where you will find . . .'.⁹³

Ibn 'Uthmān devotes a section to *ziyāra* etiquette (*adab*) in which he enumerates twenty rules (*wazā'if*) for conducting pilgrimage.⁹⁴ The first rule is that one must be sincere in declaring one's intention to perform *ziyāra*. (2) *Ziyāra* should be performed on Fridays. (3) Devotees should avoid walking among and sitting on graves. (4) One must seek (*tawakkhkhī*) the graves of prophets, the Companions, and close relatives. (5) The dead should be greeted as if they were living. (6) One should avoid kissing the tomb (*taqbīl*), touching it with the hands and then touching the hands to the face in order to obtain blessings (*lil-tabarruk*). Ibn 'Uthmān regards this as a Christian practice (*fa-dhālika min 'ādāt al-naṣārā*). (7) One should avoid throwing oneself down on the tomb (*ilqā nafsihi 'alā al-qabr*) and rubbing its soil on oneself (also rolling around in) (*tama'uk bi-turābihi*). (8) Reading the Qur'an at tombs is acceptable. Ibn 'Uthmān lists several chapters, including the opening chapter, Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ, Sūrat al-Falaq, and Sūrat al-Nās (*al-mu'wwadhatayn*), which should be dedicated to the deceased after which (9) one should offer supplication to the tomb's inmate (*mazūr*). He mentions a special *ziyāra* supplication called *du'ā' al-ziyāra*.⁹⁵ Occasionally he mentions supplications and poetry recited by unspecified individuals, such as at the tomb of al-Sayyida Nafisa.⁹⁶

Then the author details etiquette for performing *ziyāra* on Friday and in general.

Should you resolve to make *ziyāra* on Friday morning, you ought to begin by [praying] two *rak'as* at sunrise in which you read what comes to mind of the Qur'an. Then you say, 'O Lord, bless Muḥammad and his Family and enjoin me to [do] good with which you have enjoined one from your slaves whom you have called and who have answered You and whom You have commanded and who have obeyed You . . .'.

⁹³ Ibn 'Uthmān, *Murshid al-Zuwwār*, 206.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 55.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 187-91.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 32-65.

Of those you visit you begin with the Household of the Prophet . . . and the shrines (*mashāhid*) which are soundly attributed to the pure Family. . . . You supplicate with your need from the affair of the worldly life and the Hereafter and exert yourself before this supplication in reciting a chapter of the Qur'an small or big. Then you visit some of the excellent descendants of the Prophet (*al-sāda al-akhyār*) and the righteous saints (*al-ṣulahā al-abrār*) in the cemetery. For their tombs are the location for supplication (*du'ā*) and fulfilment (*ijāba*). You sit at each tomb and recite a chapter and supplicate with a pious prayer (*dāwa ṣāliha*) either memorized [beforehand] or what God makes come to your mind (*mā yaftaḥu bihi 'alā qalbika*) . . .⁹⁷

We were commanded to supplicate when in a mild disposition (*inda riqqat al-qalb*). This is where the heart becomes filled with compassion most of the time.⁹⁸

(10) One should greet the Prophet among the graves and (11) supplicate for oneself at the tombs of prophets and the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*). (12) The devotee should remember the fine qualities (*mahāsīn*) of the dead at his grave. (13) One should frequently visit deceased relatives. (14) One should look with insight (*tabaṣṣur*) upon viewing the tombs of relatives and abandon anguish (*jazā'*). (15) One should avoid loud wailing (*niyāha*), striking the cheeks (*laṭm al-khudūd*), rending the front of the garment (*shaqq al-juyūb*), and supplicating with the prayer (*dāwa*) of the *Jāhiliyya*. (16) It is acceptable to sit on the graves of friends and relatives, recite the Qur'an and dedicate that to [them] and greet them upon going and leaving. (17) One should refrain from cursing or uttering obscenities at seeing the tomb of an enemy. 'The fact that he will be following them in that (i.e. death) will prevent him even if his days should be prolonged.' (18) One should refrain from laughing (*ḍahk*) among the graves. Weeping (*bukā'*) is more appropriate. (19) One should not pray in the cemetery. (20) One should level the grave and put gravel on it. The Prophet did this for his son Ibrāhīm's grave. As for spraying water on the tomb, Ibn 'Uthmān points out that Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, and Aḥmad permit this. He cites a tradition of Jābir in which the Prophet did so because he believed that there would be no trace of the grave otherwise.

Ibn 'Uthmān mentioned that shaykhs urged making *ziyāra* to particular tombs. According to him, the historian and Shafi'i Hadith

⁹⁷ Ibn 'Uthmān, *Murshid al-Zuwwār*, 55–6.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 59.

scholar Muḥammad b. Salāma al-Quḍā'ī (d. 454/1062) used to urge visiting seven tombs.⁹⁹

Ibn al-Zayyāt (9th/15th century)

Ibn al-Zayyāt's *al-Kawākib al-Sayyāra fī Tartīb al-Ziyāra* (*Planets in the Organization of the Ziyāra*), a fifteenth-century guide like *Murshid al-Zuwwār*, upon which it partly relies, begins by describing the sacred topography of Cairo in terms of early Islamic traditions. After enumerating twelve classes of saints, the author mentions the efficaciousness of the tombs and shrines and follows the customary practice of learned guides leading devotees in circuits around the tombs and shrines of the Qarāfa cemeteries and recounting the saints' miracles and praiseworthy qualities during their lifetime.¹⁰⁰ Each shrine possessed a unique history, which normally included a *vita* of a saint which learned pilgrims and pilgrimage guides transmitted to devotees partaking in the *ziyāra*. Ibn al-Zayyāt and other pilgrimage guide writers also record and discuss conflicting traditions regarding particular tombs, not merely accepting them at face value, as well as accepted *ziyāra* customs generally observed by all segments of society who visited shrines. Like other writers of pilgrimage guides, Ibn al-Zayyāt was particularly concerned with pilgrimage etiquette. He begins by asserting that it is a religious duty to visit the tombs of prophets and saints. This is followed by a detailed and systematic description of the proper way to conduct *ziyāra*.¹⁰¹

Ibn al-Ḥājj (b. 737/1336)

Ibn al-Ḥājj, a North African theologian writing during the fourteenth century, in his work on Maliki jurisprudence, *al-Madkhal*, expresses the view that few people knew the proper manner in which to perform the *ziyāra*.¹⁰² He begins his discussion with *ziyāra* etiquette and the manner in which the devotee is to obtain *baraka* from saints and prophets, including the Prophet Muḥammad. Intercession was sought from God through the saint and also through His Prophet. The dead are able to intercede on behalf of the living. It is also permissible to seek rain through any tomb because the

⁹⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz*, 2. 461.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the categories of saints, see above, pp. 79–82.

¹⁰¹ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-Sayyāra fī Tartīb al-Ziyāra*, 257–8.

¹⁰² Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Madkhal*, 1. 254.

Companion and later Caliph 'Umar did so through the Prophet and his uncle 'Abbās.¹⁰³ Ibn al-Ḥājj provides an elaborate description of proper etiquette which includes sitting on tombs facing the deceased whilst one engages in prayer and supplication. In the supplication one should say: 'Peace be upon you (all the dead, etc.). Oh God forgive us and them.'¹⁰⁴

Do not add nor subtract from these words . . . exert great effort in supplication on their behalf. They are the people most deserving of that because of the cessation of their good works. Then (the visitor) should sit at the *qibla* of the [grave] of the deceased and greet him face-to-face. He is free to sit in the vicinity of his feet toward his head or opposite his face. Then the visitor should praise God the Most High with whatever comes to mind. Then he should pray a lawful prayer for the Prophet. . . . Then he should supplicate for the deceased as he is able and likewise he should supplicate near these graves [remembering] a misfortune which happened to him or to the Muslims and entreat God the Most High to dispel it and reveal it (i.e. its true nature) to him and them. This is a description of *ziyārat al-qubūr*.¹⁰⁵

Ziyāra consisted of a series of ritual acts beginning with the salutation to the dead and ending with supplication. Proponents of the *ziyāra* like Ibn al-Ḥājj and Ibn al-Zayyāt distanced themselves from certain practices of the masses, which included kissing, rubbing, and lying on tombs and making votive offerings. Both believed that tombs are sources of *baraka*, which is transferred to the devotee, a view which the Hanbalis rejected. Only Ibn al-Ḥājj permits sitting on tombs, which al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Uthmān prohibit. In a canonical tradition, the Prophet said, 'Do not sit on the graves and do not pray facing towards them.'¹⁰⁶ According to another tradition, he stated, 'It is better that one of you should sit on live coals which would burn his clothing and come in contact with his skin than that he should sit on a grave.'¹⁰⁷

Al-Maqrīzī (766/1364–845/1442)

The fifteenth-century historian al-Maqrīzī sheds light on an institution of *ziyāra* unparalleled anywhere else in the Islamic world—the *mashāyikh al-ziyāra*, the shaykhs of the *ziyāra* who led pilgrims on various days of the week in circuits around the

¹⁰³ Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Madkhal*, I, 254–5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. I, 254.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Muslim, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8 vols. (Cairo, 1329–32 H.), 3, 62.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

cemeteries of Cairo. The tradition of *mashāyikh al-ziyāra* may have evolved in the Fatimid era. The earliest surviving evidence preserved by Maqrīzī rather suggests that it developed during the Ayyubid era. Local practice dictated *ziyāra* days. According to Al-Maqrīzī, the *ziyāra* to the Qarāfa was originally on Wednesday. At some point, it was changed to Friday night. He also mentions that shaykhs established traditions for visiting on particular days of the week.

The first to visit on Friday night was the righteous Shaykh, the Qur'an reciter, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Jawshan, who is known as Ibn al-Jabbās. He gathered the people and made *ziyāra* with them (*zāra bihim*) on Friday night weekly. On some nights the Sultan al-Mālik al-Kāmil Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū al-Ma'ālī Muḥammad b. al-'Ādil Abī Bakr b. Ayyūb (r. 615/1218–635/1238) and, walking with the latter, the most important ulema made *ziyāra* with him.¹⁰⁸

The fact that the Ayyubid Sultan and eminent scholars made *ziyāra* suggests that it was a regular affair which received official sanction.¹⁰⁹ There is insufficient evidence to conclude that the Umayyad caliphs regularly made *ziyāra* to tombs and shrines. With few notable exceptions, the same holds true for the Abbasids. The elite of various Sunni and Shi'i dynasties—Buyids, Hamdanids, Ayyubids, and Mamluks made pilgrimage.

Writers seldom give reasons for the inception of customs connected with *ziyāra*, such as visiting on particular days of the week or starting from a particular station. Al-Maqrīzī provides an account of the reasons behind the inception of the custom of *ziyāra* on Friday—the Ayyubid Sultan al-Malik al-'Ādil's (r. 592/1196–615/1218) release of Ibn al-Jabbās and his companion from prison.¹¹⁰ Al-Maqrīzī also mentions that there was disagreement concerning the propriety of this custom. He further relates that one theologian suggested to a man in a desperate state and suffering from debt that he make *ziyāra* to seven tombs.¹¹¹ There was not a single *ziyāra* tradition, but many traditions reflecting regional practices. Some became obsolete while others persisted. Theologians and scholars disagreed over the permissibility of certain *ziyāra* days.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz*, 2. 460.

¹⁰⁹ Concerning Ayyubid patronage of shrines, see throughout Ch. 5.

¹¹⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz*, 2. 461.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Ziyāra was almost always performed on foot. Those who were unable to do so because of physical disabilities rode on mounts. Al-Maqrīzī states:

At first they used to make *ziyāra* after the morning prayer on foot until in the days of the *Shaykh al-Zuwwār* (shaykh of the pilgrims) Muḥammad al-ʿAjāmī al-Saʿūdī (d. 10 Ramaḍān 809/1406), who visited riding on Saturday after sunrise because his feet were crooked and he could not walk on them. That was at the end of the year 800/1398 . . .

After him came the pilgrim (*zāʾir*) Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Marjūshī al-Saʿūdī and Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿĀlam al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān who is better known as Ibn ʿUthmān (d. Rabīʿ II 815/1412). He did the same . . .¹¹²

Shaykhs established a precedent for visiting the tombs of ulema in groups of seven on certain days. Al-Maqrīzī comments that tombs

are visited on Friday after the morning prayer. This is the established *ziyāra* practice at present (*wa-al-amal ʿalayhā fi-al-ziyāra*), except that [visitors] meet in parties (*ṭawāʾif*) each with a *shaykh*. They set up big and small lamps (*manāwir*) and go out on Friday nights and on Saturday morning and every Wednesday after the Noon prayer while remembering God. They perform *ziyāra* and countless throngs of men and women come out to meet them. Among them are those who fix appointed times for exhortation sessions (*majālis al-waʿz*). The shaykh of each party is called *al-shaykh al-zāʾir*. As for the Saturday *ziyāra*, it was earlier mentioned that there is disagreement concerning it. Al-Muwaffaq b. ʿUthmān narrated from al-Qudāʾī that he used to urge making *ziyāra* to seven tombs and that a man had complained to him about his desperate state and his debt. The former (al-Qudāʾī) said to him, 'You must make *ziyāra* to seven tombs.'¹¹³ They encounter during the *ziyāra* commendable and reprehensible acts . . .¹¹⁴

SYRIAN PILGRIMAGE LITERATURE

In contrast to Egypt, where *ziyāra* literature was known in Fatimid and Mamluk times, the earliest extant pilgrimage guide for Syria dates to the early sixteenth century.¹¹⁵ The absence of institution-

¹¹² Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʾiẓ*, 2. 461.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Rāghib, 'Essai', 259–80.

alized Sunni control over the *ziyāra* as in the *mashāyikh al-ziyāra*, and of an early tradition of scholarship centred on pilgrimage traditions prompted the later appearance of guides. However, poems such as the one recited by a poet to the Damascene historian Ibn ‘Asākir (499/1105–572/1176) on Mt. Qāsiyūn, praise making *ziyāra* to Mt. Qāsiyūn’s pilgrimage sites.¹¹⁶ Muslims were accustomed to writing poetry about their holy places.¹¹⁷ Brief descriptions of pilgrimage sites are found in geographical works like al-Dimashqī’s *Kitāb Nukhbat al-Dahr* and fuller accounts in travel itineraries like the *Rihlas* of Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Baṭṭūta, who routinely mention the pilgrimage sites in a given locality.¹¹⁸ Khalīl b. Shāhīn al-Zāhirī (813/1410–873/1468) consistently enumerates the congregational mosques, *madrāsas* (teaching colleges), shrines (*mashhads*), pilgrimage places (*mazārāt*), and blessed places (*amākin mubāraka*). The centrality of these designations in Ibn Shāhīn’s work and the emphasis which he places on ‘blessed places’ indicate the importance of pilgrimage places to the medieval Muslim.¹¹⁹ The twelfth and thirteenth centuries are characterized by increased activity in the compilation of pilgrimage traditions and descriptions of pilgrimage places and the rituals and legends associated with them. These works represent a transition from an oral to a written *ziyāra* ‘tradition’ among scholars and historians in al-Shām. Historians like Ibn ‘Asākir, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-‘Azīmī (483/1090–c.556/1161), Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭayyī’ (d. 625–30/1228–33),¹²⁰ Ibn al-‘Adīm (588/1192–660/1262), Ibn Shaddād (613/1217–684/1285), and Ibn al-Shiḥna (805/1402–890/1485) include in their histories detailed inventories of tombs, shrines, and other monuments for the Mirdasid, Hamdanid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk periods. Their works provide significant details concerning the founding of monuments, their efficaciousness, legends associated with them, and the practices and beliefs of the common people and their encounters with the holy. Some of these traditions are based on the personal experiences of the writers or their

¹¹⁶ Al-‘Adawī, *al-Ziyārāt bi-Dimashq*, 8; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1), 112–13.

¹¹⁷ See above, pp. 50–1.

¹¹⁸ Sourdel-Thomine discusses the *riḥla* genre and its relationship to Damascene pilgrimage guides, ‘Anciens’, 65–85.

¹¹⁹ Ibn Shāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Kitāb Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik wa Bayān al-Ṭuruq wa al-Masālik*, ed. and trans. E. F. C. Rosenmuller (Leipzig, 1828).

¹²⁰ C. Cahen, ‘Ibn Abī Ṭayyī’’, *El*(2), 3, 693.

contemporaries. The prominence accorded to *ziyāra* traditions concerning the tombs of the Family of the Prophet, his Companions and the Followers, and other pilgrimage places throughout these works indicates the importance of pilgrimage sites and associated rituals.

Ibn ʿAsākir dedicates a number of chapters of his *Tārīkh* to places of prayer, tombs, and shrines in and around Damascus to which *ziyāra* is made.¹²¹ One section includes nineteen traditions concerning the burial places of prophets and Companions narrated by various Companions and several reports by the Damascene historian Abū Zurʿa (d. 270/894), who is critical of the authenticity of some tombs, stating for instance: ‘Regarding Mudrik b. Ziyād, I did not find any mention of him, except on the tablet on his tomb from an unverifiable source . . .’.¹²²

Like al-Harawī’s *Ishārāt*, the works of Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Ibn Shaddād reflect a popular level of discourse and also mention the activities of the people. All Syrians knew the legends concerning saints and the miraculous attributes of shrines in their localities. Ibn al-ʿAdīm, a contemporary of al-Harawī, from whom he personally heard accounts, devotes a chapter of his *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab* to ‘the pilgrimage sites (*mazārāt*), tombs of prophets and saints and the noble localities (*mawāṭin*) in Aleppo and its districts, which are known for the fulfilment of supplication’.¹²³ The chapter covers fifty-seven pilgrimage places for Aleppo and its districts and comprises accounts taken from al-Harawī and the author’s father.

Ibn Shaddād dedicates three chapters of *al-Aḷāq al-Khaṭīra* to pilgrimage sites in Aleppo, Damascus, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon. He relies extensively on al-Harawī for Palestinian and Damascene *ziyārāt* and on Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Ibn Abī Ṭayyīʿ for Aleppan sites. The Hanbali jurist Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 744/1343), who was a member of the Maqdisī family, also composed several no longer extant works, including a pamphlet concerning the *ziyāra*, a pamphlet on the virtues of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and another on the Hadith concerning the lives of the prophets and their graves.¹²⁴ He also includes unique details concerning Ayyubid pilgrimage sites.

¹²¹ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 96–115.

¹²² *Ibid.* 2(1). 199–200.

¹²³ Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1. 459.

¹²⁴ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalāʿid*, 2. 433–34.

IBN ṬŪLŪN AND LATER WRITERS

Muḥammad b. Ṭŭlŭn (880/1475–953/1546), who was a prolific historian and commentator on the political and social climate of Mamluk and early Ottoman Damascus, was one of the many devout who made *ziyāra* on a regular basis to tombs and shrines in his native Damascus, judging by his numerous works which mention or are devoted to Damascus's pilgrimage sites and saints, including¹²⁵ *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān* (*Entertaining Friends about History*) and *al-Qalā'id al-Jawhariya fī Tārīkh al-Ṣāliḥiya* (*Jewelled Necklaces about the History of al-Ṣāliḥiya*). Ten other compositions dealing with various aspects of the cult of saints are now lost but widely quoted in the aforementioned works and in his autobiography—*al-Fulk al-Mashḥūn fī Aḥwāl Muḥammad Ibn Ṭŭlŭn*. Five other works survive, the first of which, *Tuḥfat al-Ḥabīb fīmā Warada fī-al-Kathīb*,¹²⁶ concerns the tombs of Moses in Damascus and Jericho, while *Ghāyat al-Bāyān fī Tarjamat al-Shaykh Arslān* is a brief biography of a twelfth-century Damascene saint and a description of his burial place. The three remaining works are in manuscript form: *Tuḥfat al-Kirām fī Tarjamat Sidī Abī Bakr b. Qiwām*,¹²⁷ *al-Maqṣad al-Jalīl fī Kahf Jibrīl*, and *Malja' al-Khāifīn fī Tarjamat Sidī Abī al-Rijāl wa Sidī Jandal bi-Manīn*.¹²⁸ Women visiting shrines prompted Ibn Ṭŭlŭn to write *al-Tawajjuhāt al-Sitt ilā Kaff al-Nisā' an Qabr al-Sitt*, a no longer extant treatise against their visiting the reputed shrine of the Prophet's granddaughter Sayyida Zaynab in a village south of Damascus.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Ibn Ṭŭlŭn mentions 694 titles in his autobiography *al-Fulk al-Mashḥūn fī Aḥwāl Muḥammad b. Ṭŭlŭn* (Damascus, 1348 H.).

¹²⁶ Leiden MS Or. 2512. J. Sadan has discussed this manuscript and its background in a number of essays, most recently, 'Le Tombeau de Moïse à Jéricho et à Damas', *REI* 49 (1981), 59–99.

¹²⁷ Ibn Qiwām is mentioned above, pp. 75–6, 112–13.

¹²⁸ The author is currently translating these three works for publication. Sidī Jandal and this work are mentioned above, pp. 98–9 and n. 168.

¹²⁹ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 133–6. Concerning other shrines dedicated to her in Cairo, see al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, p. 1; Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-Sayyāra fī Tartīb al-Ziyāra*, 242, 284; al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat al-Ahbāb wa Bughyat al-Tullāb*, 38. Ibn 'Uthmān mentions the *mashhad* of a Sayyida Zaynab al-Mutawwaj, not the daughter of Fātima and 'Alī, but rather the servant of al-Sayyida Nafisa and her brother, cf. *Murshid al-Zuwwār*, 162, 166, 174, 175, 422. In the modern context, cf. de Jong, 'Cairene Ziyara Days', 26–43.

In *al-Qalā'id al-Jawharīya*, which he composed about the history of the al-Ṣāliḥīya neighbourhood outside Damascus, Ibn Ṭūlūn dedicates a chapter to its famous pilgrimage sites and mausoleums. He begins by listing grottoes and caves, and mihrabs, mosques, and *madrasas* followed by the most important tombs, for which he provides detailed biographical accounts based on those of the Maqdisī family and others. The Maqdisīs also composed important biographical works parts of which survive.¹³⁰

The first known Damascene pilgrimage guide is Ibn al-Ḥawrānī's (d. 1000/1592)¹³¹ *Al-Ishārāt ilā Amākin al-Ziyārāt* (*Guide to Pilgrimage Places*),¹³² which relies upon the works of Ibn Ṭūlūn, al-Rabā'ī's *Faḍā'il al-Shām*, and Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*.¹³³ Ibn al-Ḥawrānī wrote the *Ishārāt* in response to a request, intending 'to guide [others] to righteousness so that it will serve as an aid to the one who sets out on pilgrimage (*ṭālib al-ziyāra*), obeying the words of God the Exalted, "Let there become of you a community that shall call for righteousness."¹³⁴ The guide, which includes over one hundred pilgrimage sites for Damascus and the outlying villages and other Syrian localities like Aleppo and its surrounding villages, tombs, shrines, mosques, minarets, and sacred grottoes, opens with praise of Damascus and its congregational mosque, the traditions concerning the head of Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā', the minaret where 'Īsā will descend at the end of time, and a number of individual shrines, such as the tombs of Hūd, al-Sayyida Ruqayya, and Nūr al-Dīn. For each entry the author provides a biography of the saint. The rest of the guide is ordered by location, beginning with the western part of the city, then proceeding to the southern, eastern, and northern parts. The sixth chapter includes pilgrimage sites in the outlying villages. This is followed by other northern Syrian localities. Ibn al-Ḥawrānī includes pilgrimage sites

¹³⁰ One such work concerns the life of Abū 'Umar; see above, p. 85.

¹³¹ Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī gives 1000 H. as his year of death, *al-Kawākib al-Sā'ira bi-A'yan al-Mī'a al-Āshira*, ed. J. S. Jabbūr, 3 vols. (Beirut, 1945–59), 3, 178–9. For a discussion of his year of death, see Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *al-Ishārāt ilā Amākin al-Ziyārāt*, ed. B. 'A. al-Jābī, introd.

¹³² Lit. *The Book of Indications of Pilgrimage Places*.

¹³³ A brief study and annotated translation of this work was published by the author as: 'A Late Medieval Syrian Pilgrimage Guide: Ibn al-Ḥawrānī's *Al-Ishārāt ilā Amākin al-Ziyārāt* (*Guide to Pilgrimage Places*)', *Medieval Encounters: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue*, 7 (2001), 3–79.

¹³⁴ Qur'an 3, 104; Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 5.

on the basis of established *ziyāra* traditions, such as those found in the works of al-Rabāʿī, Ibn ʿAsākir, and Ibn Ṭūlūn. He states:

The pilgrimage sites (*ziyārāt*) are many, innumerable, yet we have limited the scope of this work to the famous ones which the critical investigators of the ulema mention. We have left aside many visible and famous pilgrimage sites (*ziyārāt*). We did not find any one from the ulema who mentioned them, nor did anybody speak of them.¹³⁵

The concluding chapter is devoted to *ziyāra* etiquette. According to Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, the *ziyāra* begins with the remembrance of God and the intent to perform pilgrimage:

It is necessary for one who desires to undertake visiting the tomb of a Companion, saint (*walī*), or scholar that he intends with his visit first: Getting nearer to God the Exalted through visiting His beloved and the special dead from among his servants, supplicating for the tomb's patron and receiving his blessing, and bringing mercy upon the visitor.

It is customary practice to position oneself facing the face of the tomb's inhabitant, to approach, and greet him. The pilgrim stands near the tomb comporting himself, humbling himself, surrendering himself, bowing his head to the ground with dignity, God-inspired peace of mind, and awe, casting aside power and chieftainship. He should imagine himself as if he were looking at the tomb's inhabitant and he looking at him. Then he should look with introspection to what God had granted to the one visited of loftiness, dignity and divine secrets and how God has made him a locus of sainthood, for secrets, closeness, submission, and divine gnostic truths.¹³⁶

The author then indicates that the devotee should reflect upon himself and his sins, which prevent him from drawing near to God:

He looks with . . . insight on himself how God prevented him from competing with the saints because of [his sins] and prevented him from imbuing himself with the moral virtues of His pious servants and His beloved and attaching himself to the trail of their way and their paths to their Lord and realizing their high and precious truths. Then he conceives in his mind of the Day of Judgement, the Resurrection, the arising of the [saints] from their tombs, happy with God's pleasure with them, delighted, riding on the loftiness of mercy. The angels surround them and upon their heads are crowns of their pious devotions, interceding on behalf of sinners.¹³⁷

The devotee experiences a cathartic state in which he rebukes and scolds himself and then weeps. Then he supplicates God and reads

¹³⁵ Ibid. 154.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 155–6.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 156–7.

from the Qur'an while being sincere in trying to reach his goal, refrains from speaking foul words and recalls the Prophet's Hadith:

'Whoever desires to visit a grave, let him do so; but say not foul words.' . . . For that brings down its doer from the eye of God the Exalted, invoking His ire, and it is feared that he would regress, be defiant, [succumb to] ignominy, his state fading to perdition, all the while he is not perceiving this. Caution and again caution.

Let his sole concern be in the state of his *ziyāra* with all of his senses focused on remembrance of God the Exalted, prayer and reading the Qur'an. That is great proof of the soundness of the *ziyāra* and its acceptance, descent of mercy, fulfilment of supplication and attaining the desired object.¹³⁸

Ziyāra was not only a means for fulfilment of personal supplications. The devotee was to remember God and the Afterlife, pray, and read the Qur'an. This is the ultimate purpose of *ziyāra*.

Qadi Maḥmūd al-ʿAdawī's (d. 1032/1623) *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt bi-Dimashq* (*Book of Damascene Pilgrimages*), which is an acknowledged imitation of Ibn al-Ḥawrānī's *Ishārāt*, relies upon many of the same sources, including literary, devotional, and historical works, and mentions ninety-eight saints' tombs and other pilgrimage sites. An emphasis on biographical details renders this a biographical work, rather than a pilgrimage guide to be employed during *ziyāra*.¹³⁹ Al-ʿAdawī states:

Now then, this represents a small token [lit. portion] and a radiant glimmer, a paucity of words and splendid expressions concerning those among the prophets, Companions, Followers, scholars, saints, and righteous individuals who were buried in Damascus and its environs, Mt. Qāsiyūn, al-Ṣāliḥiyya and the outlying areas. I have transmitted this from dependable sources on history, monuments and what the most excellent scholars transmitted on the excellences of Al-Shām . . .¹⁴⁰

Al-ʿAdawī is not explicit about the purpose for which the guide is to be used. However, it may be assumed that it served a similar commemorative function to Ibn al-Ḥawrānī's *Ishārāt*, but does not stress pilgrimage etiquette.

Yāsīn al-Faraḍī b. Muṣṭafā al-Juʿfi al-Biqāʿī al-Hanafī al-Māturidī (d. 1095/1684), the author of a guide, *al-Nubdha al-Laṭīfa fi-al-Mazārāt al-Sharīfa* (*A Concise Pamphlet Concerning Noble*

¹³⁸ Qur'an 3: 104; Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 159–60.

¹³⁹ Al-ʿAdawī, *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt bi-Dimashq*, 6. ¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 3.

Pilgrimage Sites), is explicit about the purpose for which devotees should use his guide:¹⁴¹

What is intended is [not] that the visitor possess or be without biographies when engaged in devotion (*amal*), [but rather], that he be prompted to visit the person (*mazūr*)¹⁴² he does not know. [However,] he does not need them for those he already knows. For this reason, I have supplied the biographies of some in preference to others.

Al-Biqā'i intended his guide to be used during pilgrimage as an aid to remembering the saints who were buried in a particular location, perhaps even suggesting that the pilgrim should visit as many pilgrimage sites as he possibly could.

SHI'Ī PILGRIMAGE LITERATURE

Shi'ī pilgrimage guides are concerned with rites (*manāsik*) of *ziyāra* and not only with *adab* or etiquette as in the Sunni case.¹⁴³ *Manāsik* ordinarily and in Sunni usage refers to the ceremonies and rites of the hajj. Shi'ī guides stress the importance of ritual behaviour to a greater degree than Sunni guides. The earliest known Shi'ī guides include the Kufan jurist al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Faḍḍāl al-Taymī al-Kūfī's (d. 224/838–9) *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt*, Ibn Qūlūya's (d. 368–9/978–9) *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*,¹⁴⁴ his disciple Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Nu'mān al-Hārithī's (Shaykh al-Mufid's) (d. 413/1022) *Kitāb al-Mazār*, and Ibn Dāwūd al-Qummī's (d. 368/978 or 379/989) *Kitāb al-Mazārāt al-Kabīr*. Shi'ī pilgrimage guides describe ritual behaviour and supplications pronounced before undertaking pilgrimage, such as the types of rituals and rites which Shaykh al-Mufid refers to as *manāsik*.¹⁴⁵ Ibn Qūlūya and al-Shaykh al-Mufid cite traditions indicating that Shi'īs placed great emphasis on the *ziyāra* to 'Alī's tomb in Najaf¹⁴⁶ and that of his son Ḥusayn in Karbalā'. One such tradition of Ḥusayn's son Abū 'Abd Allāh states that 'Making

¹⁴¹ This guide has been translated by the author for publication.

¹⁴² The one to whom *ziyāra* is made.

¹⁴³ Āghā Buzurg mentions a work still in manuscript by an 'Alid Abū Ya'lā Hamza b. al-Qāsim, entitled *al-Ziyārāt wa-al-Manāsik: Dhari'a*, 12. 78, no. 535.

¹⁴⁴ Ibn Qūlūya, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (Najaf, 1356 H.).

¹⁴⁵ Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, 41.

¹⁴⁶ Yāqūt, *Muġam al-Buldān*, 4. 760–1. Najaf is located outside of Kufa.

ziyāra to Ḥusayn . . . is equal to and more meritorious than twenty pilgrimages to Mecca.¹⁴⁷ A similar tradition concerns visiting Ḥusayn on the Day of ‘Arafāt.

Whoever visits him on the day of ‘Arafa, God will record for him the recompense of one thousand accepted pilgrimages and one thousand *umrah*s accepted into the grace of the Lord (*mabrūra*).¹⁴⁸

Since prescribed ritual acts constituted a central part of Shi‘i *ziyāra* devotion, Shi‘i scholars and imams exercised control over its rites and urged devotees to make *ziyāra* according to the traditions of the imams to the extent that not doing so was considered un-Islamic and would result in a shorter lifespan. Al-Mufid states:

Whoever [allows the] year [to lapse] and does not visit the tomb of al-Ḥusayn . . . God will diminish his lifespan by a year. Even if one of you should say that he will die thirty years prior to his appointed time, you would be correct for the reason that you have abandoned making pilgrimage to him. Do not forgo it, may God lengthen your lifespans and increase your livelihoods. If you abandon visiting him, God will diminish your years and your livelihoods.¹⁴⁹

This is in contrast to the Sunni *ziyāra* in which little control existed. For the Shi‘i, performing *ziyāra* had many benefits in addition to receiving the temporal benefits of performing the hajj and *umrah*, as well as dispelling sadness and expurgating sins.¹⁵⁰ Wherever they resided, Shi‘is observed the same rites and rituals. Although the Shi‘is of al-Shām had their own local shrines dedicated to ‘Alid saints including Ḥusayn and ‘Alī, those who could afford to do so, made pilgrimage to the shrines of the imams located in Medina, Iraq, and Iran. The formalization and consolidation of ritual was a necessary corollary to the development of central pilgrimage centres, which did not exist in the Sunni case.

Local cults were not insignificant either. However, local ritual practices were not preserved in pilgrimage guides, and have only survived in local histories. The Shi‘i ruler of Aleppo Sayf al-Dawla (r. 333/944–356/967) was a devotee of saints and patronized and constructed shrines in Aleppo and its outlying villages.¹⁵¹ Sayf al-Dawla assembled the leading ‘Alids before constructing a shrine. According to the historian Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭayyī², he established a

¹⁴⁷ Ibn Qūlūya, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, (Najaf), 161.

¹⁴⁸ Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, 174. Also see above, n. 79.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 43. ¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 44–6. ¹⁵¹ Ibn Shaddād, *Aṭāq* (Sourdell), 48.

pilgrimage centre in the name of Muḥassin, a legendary son of Ḥusayn who was delivered prematurely.

Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭayyī' said in his *Ta'rikh*: 'In this year—that is, 351/962—Mashhad al-Dakka appeared.¹⁵² The reason for its appearance was that Sayf al-Dawla 'Alī b. Ḥamdān was in one of the viewing areas (*manāẓir*) of his house on the outskirts of the city and saw a light descending a number of times upon the place which contains the *mashhad*. When he awoke the next morning he personally rode out to that place, dug [there], and found a rock with [the following] inscription: "This is the tomb of Muḥassin¹⁵³ b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib . . .". Then Sayf al-Dawla brought together the 'Alids (*al-'Alawīyīn*) and asked them: "Did Ḥusayn have a son named Muḥassin." One of them said: "That did not reach us, rather it reached us that Fāṭima . . . was pregnant [with a son]." The Prophet . . . said to her, "In your belly is *Muḥassin*." On the day of the *bay'a* they attacked her in her house in order to get 'Alī out . . . to the *bay'a* [i.e. of Abū Bakr].¹⁵⁴ [Consequently], she delivered a premature child. It is possible that the capture of Ḥusayn's women when they arrived at this place [led to] one of them prematurely delivering that child. We recount from our fathers that this place was called Jawshan because Shamir b. Dhī al-Jawshan descended upon it with the captives and decapitated heads and that it was a copper mine and that its owners rejoiced at the captives. Then Ḥusayn's daughter Zaynab invoked God against them and from that day on the mine stopped producing."¹⁵⁵

An unidentified Shi'i villager told those present of the pristine state of Ḥusayn's son Muḥassin by invoking a common Muslim belief that the remains of saints and prophets never decomposed.

One of them said: 'This writing which is on the rock is ancient as is the vestige (*athar*) of this site. [Here] is the miscarried foetus which tradition has did not decay (*lam yafsid*). Its existence is indication that it is Ḥusayn's son.' This conversation (*mufāwāḍa*) which took place spread among the people (*shā'a bayna al-nās*). They set out for this place intending to build

¹⁵² 'Dakka' means elevated bench or platform, cf. M. M. Amīn and L. 'A. Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Mīmāriyya fī al-Wathā'iḳ al-Mamlūkīya* (923/1250–648/1517) (Cairo, 1990), 47–8. Concerning Mashhad al-Dakka, see al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 4 and Sourdell-Thomine, *Guide*, 7 n. 6; M. Sobernheim, *Das Heiligtum Shaikh Muḥassin in Aleppo*, in *Mélanges H. Derenbourg* (Paris, 1909), 379–90; J. Sauvaget, 'Deux sanctuaires', *Syria*, 9 (1928), 320–7.

¹⁵³ See below, n. 255.

¹⁵⁴ *Bay'a*—a contract, oath; the collective action of a group of individuals who come together to recognize the authority of the Caliph. cf. E. Tyan, 'Bay'a', *EI*(2), I. 1113.

¹⁵⁵ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdell), 49; Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 2. 155–6. Yāqūt mentions Shi'i tombs and shrines on the slope of Mt. Jawshan near Aleppo.

it. Then Sayf al-Dawla said, 'This is a place (*mawḍiʿ*) which God the Exalted has given me permission to build (*ʿimāratihi*) in the name of Ahl al-Bayt.¹⁵⁶

After Mashhad al-Dakka's founding near a Christian monastery, Sayf al-Dawla invited imams from Ḥarrān or Qum to take up residence there.¹⁵⁷

It was incumbent upon the Shi'i devotee making *ziyāra* to degrade his physical state and abstain from worldly pleasures. *Ziyāra* to the shrine of Ḥusayn in Karbalāʾ was a special experience which demanded the full participation of the devotee in the martyrdom of Ḥusayn and the expression of great sorrow, not merely the sadness which one expresses over the death of relations, but rather its ultimate manifestation which required the pilgrim to experience physical and emotional debilitation.¹⁵⁸

Unlike the majority of Sunni guides, Shi'i guides were written by prominent theologians, such as Ibn Qūlūya and his disciple Shaykh al-Mufid. Shaykh al-Mufid's *Kitāb al-Mazār* is divided into two parts, the first of which concerns the merits (*faḍāʾil*) of Kufa, its [congregational] mosque and the Euphrates, etc. This is followed by a description of the *ziyāra* to ʿAlī's tomb and a discussion of the necessity of visiting Ḥusayn's tomb and the merits of performing *ziyāra* to it, especially on various holy days.¹⁵⁹ So highly developed were the *ziyāra* rites that Shi'is pronounced formulaic expressions at every stage. Shi'i guides could perhaps be regarded as manuals for theologians who would instruct illiterate and common pilgrims in the ways of the *ziyāra*. The *ziyāra* was a group activity. The second part of al-Mufid's guide deals primarily with *ziyāra* to the Prophet Muḥammad and the Household who were buried in Medina and to the Shi'i imams. Shaykh al-Mufid devotes a section to abridged supplications, which suggests that they were meant primarily for instantaneous memorization before the performance of the *ziyāra*, rather than for reading or study.

Shi'is also prayed special *ziyāra* prayers as at the tomb of the first imam ʿAlī, which consisted of a series of supplications and recitations of particular chapters of the Qurʾan, placing the right

¹⁵⁶ Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Sourdel), 49.

¹⁵⁷ T. Bianquis, 'Sayf al-Dawla', *EI*(2), 9. 103-11; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, I. 412; 6. 2726.

¹⁵⁸ Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, 44.

¹⁵⁹ Ibn Qūlūya places *ziyāra* to the Prophet's tomb first.

and left cheek on the ground and pronouncing imprecations against the enemies of 'Alī and those who wronged him.¹⁶⁰

These guides do not mention places in Syria to which Iraqi Shi'i pilgrims undertook pilgrimage as no imams were buried there. However, many of the rites and rituals mentioned in these guides were performed by the Shi'is of Syria and Lebanon at local shrines as well as at the shrines of the imams in Iraq and Iran. Shi'is would have mourned and wept over the death of Ḥusayn as they made pilgrimage to, and circumambulated, his shrines and those of the other imams and members of the Prophet's family on 'Āshūrā'. In spite of the absence of evidence concerning *ziyāra* rituals of Shi'is at Syrian shrines of the imams, Aleppan and Damascene Shi'i theologians would have travelled to the holy cities of Iraq and theologians who hailed from the east and settled in al-Shām would have disseminated the proper teachings of the imams and taught proper *ziyāra* rites. The only known account of Shi'i pilgrimage ritual in Sunni writings occurs in a responsum of the Hanbali theologian Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya, which was discussed earlier.

AUTHENTIC IN WHOSE EYES?

Not all Muslims considered pilgrimage sites to be authentic. Multiple shrines of Elijah, Abraham, and other scriptural figures are discussed later. The authenticity of a tomb or shrine was as much a matter of local tradition and established custom as belief. The Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron (al-Khalīl) was one such contentious site. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who visited Hebron during the fourteenth century, questioned the local residents about its authenticity:

All the scholars whom I have met accept as a certainty that these graves are the very graves of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (upon our Prophet and them be peace), and the graves of their wives. No one raises objections to this but followers of false doctrines; it is a tradition which has passed from father to son for generations and admits of no doubt.

. . . Inside this mosque [there is shown] also the grave of Joseph (on him be peace), and eastward of the sanctuary of al-Khalīl is the *turba* [mausoleum] of Lot (on him be peace) . . . which is surmounted by an elegant building.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, 79–81.

¹⁶¹ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, I. 75 (modified).

Abū Shāma mentions a scholarly tradition according to which the *ziyāra* to Hebron was established with Ṣalāḥ al-Ḍīn's conquest of Jerusalem from the Crusaders:

Shaykh Abū 'Amr b. al-Ṣalāḥ said: 'Among the common people are some who allege that the Messenger of God, said, "Whoever visits me and my father Ibrāhīm in [the same] year, I will vouchsafe for them Paradise." This is false. It is not known in [any] book.¹⁶² Making *ziyāra* to al-Khalīl . . . is recommended, not reprehensible. What is reprehensible is what he said.' Abū 'Amr said: 'It reached me of a scholar among our shaykhs that he said: "This was not heard except after Ṣalāḥ al-Ḍīn's capture of Jerusalem. God knows best."¹⁶³

Ibn al-Qalānīsī (c.465/1073–555/1160) mentions an oral account which indicates the appearance of the tombs of Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, and Ya'qūb in 513/1119:¹⁶⁴

In this year, somebody hailing from Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis) told (*ḥakā*) of the appearance of the tombs of the Friend (Ibrāhīm) and both his sons the prophets Ishāq and Ya'qūb together in a grotto in the land of Jerusalem as if they are like the living, of uncorrupted bodies and bones (*lam yubla lahum jasad wa lā rumma 'azamun*). Candles of gold and silver are suspended over them in the grotto (*maghāra*). The tombs were returned to the way they previously were. This is a transcript of what the narrator (*ḥākī*) told. God knows best the truth . . .¹⁶⁵

Syrian scholars like al-Raba'ī, al-Harawī, and Ibn 'Asākir were instrumental in preserving *ziyāra* traditions. Such traditions demonstrate a scholarly interest from the early Islamic period in the burial places of the prophets and Companions and in visiting them. Such traditions partly reflected common beliefs concerning pilgrimage sites. Ibn 'Asākir states:

Abū Zur'a al-Dimashqī informed us: I saw scholars in our town mention that among the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . in the Cemetery of Damascus are Bilāl, the client of Abū Bakr, Sahl b. al-Ḥanzaliya and Abū al-Dardā'.

The two garrison towns (Basra and Kufa) did not concur about establishing the truth of the tomb of a prophet or Companion except for our

¹⁶² Hadith collections and historical accounts.

¹⁶³ Abū Shāma, *al-Bā'ith 'alā Inkār al-Bidā' wa-al-Ḥawādith*, ed. 'U. 'A. 'Anbar (Cairo, 1978), 95–6.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Harawī mentions a similar tradition, *Ishārāt*, 31.

¹⁶⁵ Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Tārikh Abī Yalā Ḥamza b. al-Qalānīsī al-marūf bi-Dhayl Tārikh Dimashq*, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Beirut, 1908), 202.

Prophet Muḥammad . . . and that of his companions Abū Bakr and ‘Umar . . .¹⁶⁶

The Damascene historian and Hadith scholar ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Kattānī (389/999–466/1074) showed the tombs of the Companions to another Hadith scholar Hibat Allāh b. al-Akfānī (444/1052–524/1129):

Ibn al-Akfānī said: Shaykh Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Aḥmad al-Kattānī showed me the tombs of the Companions who were buried outside Damascus at Bāb al-Ṣaghīr: The Commander of the Faithful Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, Faḍāla b. ‘Ubayd, Wāthila b. al-Asqa‘, Sahl b. al-Hanzaliya, Aws b. Aws, which are inside the enclosure (*ḥaḏīra*) following the *qibla*. Abū al-Dardā’ is outside the enclosure (*ḥaḏīra*), Umm al-Dardā’ is behind it and ‘Abd Allāh b. Umm Ḥarām, who is known as the son of ‘Ubāda b. Ṣāmit’s wife, is opposite the main road. A group say that it is the tomb of Ubayy b. Ka‘b, which is not true. Upon the tomb of Mu‘āwiya’s sister Umm Ḥabība bt. Abī Sufyān . . . wife of the Messenger of God is an inscribed slab (*balāta*). Upon the tomb of Bilāl b. Rabāḥ, muezzin of the Messenger of God . . . is a slab upon which his name is inscribed.¹⁶⁷

. . . (Al-Kattānī) showed me the tomb of the Commander of the Faithful al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik and his brother Maslama behind the enclosure (*ḥaḏīra*) which contains the tombs of the Companions opposite the mausoleum (*maqbara*) of the Amīr al-Juyūsh.¹⁶⁸

Recognition of tombs did not only depend on the consensus of scholars as in the above traditions, but so too on that of the common people. Ibn ‘Asākir states:

As for the tomb of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ubayy, that did not appear from a trustworthy source, but rather that was mentioned through its spreading among the common people. ‘Abd Allāh used to reside in Jerusalem. I have not yet come across his having entered Damascus.¹⁶⁹

WAR AND PEACE

During the siege of Aleppo in 421/1030, the Byzantine emperor Romanus Argyros, according to Ibn al-‘Adīm and Ibn Shaddād,

¹⁶⁶ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 196.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 2(1). 196–7.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 2(1). 197 and n. 3. This title refers to the Fatimid commander Badr al-Dīn al-Jamālī.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 2(1). 199.

experienced a vision of the Messiah, who commanded him to lift his siege for the sake of the Muslim ascetic saint Ibn Abī al-Numayr.¹⁷⁰ The ascetic beheld ‘Alī in a dream, who told him of God’s fulfilling his need. At the time, lights were seen descending upon the spot where the saint prayed. It became an important Nuṣayrī¹⁷¹ pilgrimage place (*yaḥujjūna ilayhi*).¹⁷² Hence, the saint was an intercessor for the people of Aleppo.

SEEKING A CURE

Lying upon tombs and touching them transmitted *baraka* and effected cures. In the Aleppan village of Burāq there was a place of worship (*mābad*) which offered such cures and probably attracted people of all faiths.¹⁷³ Al-Harawī reports:

Burāq is a village from [Aleppo’s] districts which contains a place of worship (*mābad*) which attracts the chronically ill (*zamnā*) and the sick from everywhere and in which they reside. Either the sick would see someone who would tell him: ‘Your cure is in such and such thing (*dawā’uka fi-al-shay’ al-fulānī*)’, or he would see somebody who would [take] and rub (*yamsaḥu*) his hand against it, and he would get up cured, God the Exalted willing, as it is mentioned by the people of the site. God knows best.¹⁷⁴

In performing the *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn’s tomb, Shi’is consumed the soil (*ṭīn*) from his tomb. Al-Mufīd writes:

The soil from the tomb of Ḥusayn . . . is a cure (*shifā*) for every malady (*dā*). Upon eating it, say (*fa-idhā akaltahu fa-qul*), ‘In the name of God and by God. Oh Lord make it abundant sustenance (*rizq wāsi*)’, beneficial knowledge and a cure for every malady. You are powerful over everything.¹⁷⁵

Sunnis like Shi’is partook in the curative properties of their saints. In Damascus as elsewhere, people and animals visited shrines in order to be cured. This was the case in respect of Shaykh

¹⁷⁰ Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, I. 461–2; Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Sourdel), 43–4.

¹⁷¹ A Shi’i sect which believes in the divinity of ‘Alī and a trinity of Muḥammad, ‘Alī, and Salmān al-Fārisī.

¹⁷² Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, I. 461–2; Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Sourdel), 43–4.

¹⁷³ Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, I. 537.

¹⁷⁴ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, 125.

Abū 'Umar¹⁷⁶ and Aḥmad b. Qudāma—both of the saintly Maqdisī family—whose tombs were a panacea for the devout. Ibn Ṭūlūn states:

It is known among the people (*bayna al-nās*) that if an animal which is suffering from stomach discomfort brought on by his ingesting dirt is led around his tomb seven times, this condition would go away. It is said that whoever suspends seven stones from Shaykh Abū 'Umar's tomb on himself whilst afflicted with fever, it will go away and the one afflicted will be cured of it.¹⁷⁷

Similar is [the case of] Aḥmad b. Sālim b. Abī 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh b. Sālim b. Abī al-Faṭḥ b. Ḥasan b. Qudāma . . . It is said that whoever is afflicted with fever, if soil from his grave is [applied] to him (*'ullīqa 'alayhi*), he will be cured (*yabra'*), God the Exalted willing. He died in 600/1203–4 in Zura'.¹⁷⁸

READING AND RECITING

Ritual reading was an integral part of the pilgrimage culture of Damascene theologians in the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods, though the practice was certainly much older. Muslims recited the *fātiḥa* or opening chapter of the Qur'an at tombs and shrines. Reciting Scripture was both an individual and a group ritual. Holy days, such as the Feast of Immolation, which marks the conclusion of the hajj, were special occasions for devotees to journey together to cemeteries and pilgrimage sites and for all Muslims to visit the graves of family members and saints. Scholars and theologians travelled throughout Damascus and the environs visiting holy sites on holy days and upon the visit of important guests. They performed a variety of other group rituals centred around making pilgrimage and read aloud pilgrimage guides and other compositions on Damascus's saints and holy sites.

In his Mamluk and early Ottoman chronicles, *Mufākahat al-Khillān*, Ibn Ṭūlūn relates personal accounts of *ziyārāt* in which he and his learned companions participated. Scholars and theologians like Ibn Ṭūlūn formed groups which journeyed together to Damascene pilgrimage sites and where each participant read from

¹⁷⁶ Concerning Abū 'Umar, see above, pp. 105–6.

¹⁷⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 560–1.

¹⁷⁸ A Damascene village: Yāqūt, *Muḥam al-Buldān*, 2. 743.

notebooks containing Hadith in order to receive an *ijāza*, or a licence to transmit and teach them, or at other times listened to their own compositions being read to them in order to grant *ijāzas*.¹⁷⁹ In twelfth-century Cairo and in late medieval Damascus the learned read works like al-Rabāʿī's *Faḍāʾil al-Shām*, which contains many sacred traditions concerning Damascus's holy sites. Such compositions concerned holy sites and saints. Devotees participated in these learned circles as a means of interacting with each other and their physical surroundings and to collectively venerate saints.

In 922/1516 the qadi Ibn al-Akram invited the Medinan traveller and scholar Muḥibb al-Dīn (Muḥibb) Jār Allāh to a banquet in his honour and to various religious sites in and around Damascus, particularly in the al-Ṣāliḥiyya neighbourhood and the outlying villages. Muḥibb al-Dīn was the guest for several days of various shaykhs from whom he sought an *ijāza*. On the first day the men began their journey in al-Ṣāliḥiyya and set out for the orchard of Ibn al-Jundī north of the village of Qaṣr al-Labbād¹⁸⁰ and agreed to meet in the residence of Karīm al-Dīn in ʿAnnāba.¹⁸¹ Along the way they stopped at Bayt al-Āliha,¹⁸² where they prayed in the ruins of its congregational mosque. They finally met up at the orchard. Ibn Ṭūlūn reports:

Al-Muḥibb Jār Allāh read a fine quick reading to . . . our master al-Muḥyawī (Muḥyī al-Dīn) [of] a pamphlet on the *Merits of al-Shām* by al-Rabāʿī which pleased those present. I recorded some two hundred names on the aforementioned pamphlet. Then the righteous Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Khayyāṭ al-Madanī, the muezzin in [the Prophet's Mosque in] Medina, and his company praised aloud the reading and delighted those present. Most of them wept and with that recalled his making the call to prayer in the Prophet's Mosque . . .¹⁸³

The itinerary was to include a visit to the shrines of two Damascene saints buried in the village of Manīn. According to Ibn Ṭūlūn,

¹⁷⁹ G. Vajda, 'Idjāza', *El*(2), 3. 1020–1.

¹⁸⁰ The village is on the road to Mayṭūr. Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 86 and n. 2. It is also known as 'Qaṣr al-Labbān'.

¹⁸¹ ʿAnnāba or Maḥallat al-ʿAnnāba is mentioned in a number of Ibn Ṭūlūn's works, though its exact location is unknown.

¹⁸² Bayt al-Āliha was an eastern quarter of Damascus. Ibn Ṭūlūn, 'Ḍarb al-Ḥūṭa', 44.

¹⁸³ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufaḥkaha*, 2. 8.

the time of the afternoon prayer was approaching and they intended to go to Manīn¹⁸⁴ to visit Sidī Abū al-Burhān and Sidī Jandal.¹⁸⁵ They resolved not to do so.

The Medinan guest then found faults in Ibn Ṭūlūn's composition concerning the efficaciousness of Mt. Qāsiyūn which he read on Mt. Qāsiyūn:

We ascended to visit Maghārat al-Umarā' (Grotto of the Princes) on the slope of Mt. Qāsiyūn.¹⁸⁶ The aforementioned al-Muḥibb Jār Allāh pointed out faults to me in the pamphlet I compiled on its excellences, which I called *Tafriḡ al-Hamm fī Ziyārat Maghārat al-Dam* (*Dispelling Sorrow in Visiting the Grotto of Blood*).

The visitor is extended two further invitations, which included visiting pilgrimage sites at Barza and Mt. Qāsiyūn.

Among them [who hosted al-Muḥibb Jār Allāh] was Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā al-Kinānī in the Maqām of al-Khalīl at the highest point of the village of Barza.¹⁸⁷ Al-Muḥibb Jār Allāh read to him the aforementioned pamphlet of Abū al-Jahm and read to me my pamphlet which I compiled on the shrine's (*maqām*) merit . . .

Among them [who hosted al-Muḥibb Jār Allāh] was al-Shihāb (Shihāb al-Dīn) b. al-Mujāwir. Then we ascended to the Cave of Gabriel (Kahf Jibrīl) on the slope of Mt. Qāsiyūn and al-Muḥibb Jār Allāh read to al-Shihāb b. al-Mujāwir the pamphlet *Fadā'il Qāsiyūn* (*Merits of Mt. Qāsiyūn*)—the collection of the Ḥāfiẓ Diyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī.¹⁸⁸

The Ottoman Sultan Selim I made *ziyāra* after praying in the Congregational Mosque of Damascus. Ibn Ṭūlūn reports:

On Monday night, the 17th of Ramaḍān 922/1516, the Khunkār¹⁸⁹ came to the Congregational Mosque at around midnight to engage in devotion there and entered it from Bāb al-Barīd in [a group of] a few people and prayed in the *maqṣūra*¹⁹⁰ and read in the 'Uthmānī codex of the Qur'an

¹⁸⁴ A village near Damascus: Yāqūt, *Muḡam al-Buldān*, 4. 674.

¹⁸⁵ Reading Jandal for Jandar.

¹⁸⁶ Ibn Ṭūlūn is probably referring to Maghārat al-Dam, since he mentions his composition concerning it.

¹⁸⁷ Barza at the farthest end of Qāsiyūn would have taken them considerably off route. It is likely that this passage belongs before Qaṣr al-Labbād, but most likely the visit took place on another occasion.

¹⁸⁸ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 2. 8–9.

¹⁸⁹ Lit. Sultan, a reference to Selim I.

¹⁹⁰ The *maqṣūra* is the apportioned or screened-off prayer enclosure in a congregational mosque normally reserved for the ruler or caliph.

and visited the tomb of the head of our master Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā' . . . then the tomb of Hūd . . . then ascended the Eastern Minaret.

Afterwards, he visited the Sufi Shaykh Muḥammad al-Balkashī . . . al-Ḥanafī . . . [Ibn 'Arabī's follower].¹⁹¹

Making *ziyāra* inspired devotees, some of whom experienced adversity, to compose poetry. Upon visiting the tomb of Sīdī Abū al-Rijāl and Jandal¹⁹² in the Damascene village of Manīn, a down-trodden scholar seeking a favour or divine grace composed verses in the saints' honour.¹⁹³ Al-'Adawī states:

When my master the Shaykh 'Abd al-Nāfi', the son of my master Shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Irāq, visited my masters Shaykh Jandal and Abū al-Rijāl, he composed aloud these verses:

Abū al-Rijāl, O luminary of luminaries, O he whose affair has spread far
and wide among the people
And you, O Rock (Jandal) of the noble people, O lion whose loud roar
[reverberates] in the Jungle forever
I have come to both of you [with] a troubled mind, tearful eyes, and a
broken heart
I shall not depart from these doorsteps until I return with a grace which
contains a facilitation
You are both my refuge [from] every misfortune and I have sought you
when the back was burdened¹⁹⁴

WOMEN DEVOTEES

Although women devotees seldom appear in historical sources, they are often mentioned in legal works with regard to visiting graves.¹⁹⁵ Theologians generally did not object to women visiting tombs, but urged that they observe the solemnity of the occasion by not wailing, screaming, and engaging in other reprehensible acts such as dressing immodestly. Such acts had the potential to produce *fitna*, or social unrest.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 2. 36.

¹⁹² Ibn Ṭūlūn dedicated a composition to Abū al-Rijāl and Jandal. See above, Ch. 2, n. 168.

¹⁹³ Al-'Adawī, *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt bi-Dimashq*, 68–70. ¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ The author is completing a study of medieval Muslim women and the *ziyāra*.

¹⁹⁶ Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Madkhal*, 1. 267–9. For a brief discussion of Ibn al-Ḥājj's views toward Cairene women making *ziyāra*, see H. Lutfī, 'Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Shar'i Order in

It has been argued that *ziyāra* to shrines represented a particularly attractive alternative form of religious practice to women because of their exclusion from communal prayers.¹⁹⁷ However, legal, historical, and architectural evidence does not conclusively support this claim. Nor do they in any way suggest that women regarded *ziyāra* as an alternative to communal prayer. As the following examples illustrate, the *ziyāra* represented as much a spiritual and social occasion for women as a spiritual undertaking. Moreover, women patrons as illustrated herein and in Chapter 5 played a significant role in the founding and upkeep of shrines.

Ibn Ṭūlūn recorded a local Damascene custom of women visiting the tomb of King Ṭālūt outside Damascus:¹⁹⁸

I witnessed this tomb with a roof over it [with] a sepulchre (*tābūt*)¹⁹⁹ and beside it, a blue Egyptian granite column. . . . Over this tomb is a small mosque with a stone door. Outside it is a place of which it is said that it was a Christian monastery (*dayr lil-rubbān*). Before the door of this outer monastery is an ancient ruin at the edge of [the Yazīd river].

It is the custom in this place that the women go there every Wednesday on summer days. There they spend time, and the blind recite the accounts of [saints'] birthdays (*mawālid*) to them and those seeking sustenance benefit from them. They reclined around the outer door of this place.²⁰⁰

While women sat listening to blind storytellers recounting the miracles and heroic exploits of saints, the poor sought from them food or money. Wednesday was also an important *ziyāra* day.

Legend has it that forty prophets died of hunger and were buried in the Grotto of Hunger on Mt. Qāsiyūn. Local residents regarded it as a place for the fulfilment of supplication.²⁰¹ It was also a

Muslim Prescriptive Treatises', in N. R. Keddie and B. Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History* (New Haven, 1991), 114–15.

¹⁹⁷ B. Shoshan, 'High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam', *SI* 73 (1991), 83; C. Williams, 'The Cult of 'Alid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo', *Muqarnas*, 3 (1985), 40.

¹⁹⁸ Concerning Ṭālūt see Qur'an 2: 247, 249. He is identified with the Prophet Samuel. B. Heller, 'Ṭālūt', *EI*(1), 4. 642–3; R. Firestone, 'Ṭālūt', *EI*(2), 10. 168–9.

¹⁹⁹ Also translated as cenotaph, it commonly refers to a raised wooden structure built over a grave.

²⁰⁰ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 560.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* 2. 560–1.

gathering place for the women of Damascus, who went there after the noon prayer:

It was the custom at this place all year round that women would go there every Friday immediately after the noon prayer passing time after time, and those seeking sustenance would request from them [food] there.²⁰²

Bint al-Bā'ūnī and Shaykh Ismā'īl

The Bā'ūnī family of Damascus were adherents of Sufism. A female member of the family expressed her devotion to the saint and scholar Shaykh Ismā'īl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 900/1495) by residing at his tomb after his death. In his biography of the shaykh, Ibn Ṭūlūn mentions his personal association with him.

Tomb of the righteous, the famous, enamoured of God (*muwallah*) Shaykh Ismā'īl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣāliḥī, one of the fakirs in the Madrasa of Abū 'Umar. He was among the companions of Shaykh Khalaf and Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān Abū Sha'r. He recited the Qur'an and completely memorized it. Then a bath attendant forcefully took hold of him and he subsequently lost his sense of reasoning. Rather, it is said that the reason for this was [his] studying the Qur'an a lot. Rather, it is said, that he loved a person, was patient and concealed [it]. While in his state of infatuation, he used to read the Qur'an a lot.

It is said that he is often seen on the mountain [i.e. Mt. Qāsiyūn] on the Day of 'Arafāt. In his last days, he used to frequent the new congregational mosque and Jāmi' al-Afram. I used to meet with him in both places a lot and he would ask me about verses from the *mutashābihā*.²⁰³

He died on the twenty-ninth of Ramaḍān in the year 900/1495 and was buried east of al-'Imād's (Imād al-Dīn's) tomb in the Rawḍa. [His funeral] was famous and he was lifted up by [many] hands. Bint al-Bā'ūnī built a wooden cenotaph (*tābūt*) over the tomb of Ismā'īl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣāliḥī and built for herself a house (*bayt*) opposite his tomb. Every Friday night she used to light a candle upon his tomb. That ceased after her death and the cenotaph (*tābūt*) was removed.²⁰⁴

Devotion drove the likes of Bint al-Bā'ūnī to erect a house in the cemetery. By doing this, Bint al-Bā'ūnī not only demonstrated her devotion to the departed saint but also traversed the boundary from the world of the living to that of the dead.

²⁰² Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 560.

²⁰³ *Mutashābihāt* are the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an which can be interpreted in a number of ways. They are contrasted with the *muḥkamāt* or unambiguous verses.

²⁰⁴ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 531.

A woman's devotion to the shrine of a Companion

Under the patronage of a chief of the Yārūqīya clan, a shrine was erected in honour of the Companion ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī at the edge of the village of al-Yārūqīya near Aleppo.²⁰⁵ The following account given by Ibn Shaddād provides significant details about a manumitted female slave of the amir who after her master's death undertook the restoration of the shrine and isolated herself within it, where she engaged in pious devotion. Her activities attracted other devotees, who frequently made *ziyāra*, and she provided sweets and rosewater for them. Her descendants carried on the tradition until the Mongols devastated Aleppo in 1256 CE.

Masjid al-Anṣārī, south of Mt. Jawshan at the edge of al-Yārūqīya. Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī said: This *mashhad* contains the tomb of ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī as mentioned [by local tradition]. One of the wives of the Yārūqīya amirs had a night vision in which she saw somebody saying, 'Here is the tomb of ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī, Companion of the Messenger of God . . .'. They dug, found a tomb and built a *mashhad* and erected a cenotaph (*ḍarīḥ*) over it. The aforementioned *mashhad* was destroyed. Azanilūfar, the emancipated slave of Amir Sayf al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAlam al-Dīn Sulaymān b. Jandar, restored it (*jaddadathu*). When her emancipator . . . died in the year 622/1225 she retreated there (*inqaṭʿat ilā*) and undertook providing for the needs of the visitors (*zuwwār*) who come there all the time. She would feed them sweets and give them rosewater to drink until she died. Some of her female slaves and her grandchildren remained there attending the place until, when the Mongols took control, the building was ravaged because [they wrought] havoc.²⁰⁶

CHARITY AND WAR

The Ottoman conquest of Syria in 1516 CE, brought about a revival of the cult of saints. Upon his entry into Damascus, Sultan Selim I and the leading men of state made *ziyāra* to the long-neglected shrine of Ibn al-ʿArabī. In patronizing this and other shrines, and by distributing alms to the poor who congregated at the shrine of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the al-Ṣāliḥīya neighbourhood, leading theologians and officials displayed their piety to Damascenes. The *ziyāra* was a social

²⁰⁵ Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 4, 1001.

²⁰⁶ Ibn Shaddād, *Aṭāq* (Sourdel), 52.

event. For the Ottoman Sultan it was a means of celebrating his victory against the Mamluks in Palestine, and obtaining blessings for a campaign against the Mamluks in Egypt, and also an occasion to publicize his piety to the people of Damascus. In visiting the shrine, he revived the custom of venerating the Andalusian saint. Taking soil from the tomb suggests an established custom among the inhabitants of Damascus, as it does among the Ottomans. The servant of the shrine was a local woman called Umm Muḥammad upon whom Qāḍī al-ʿAskar bestowed favours. Ibn Ṭūlūn states:

Dhū al-Qāʿda, 922/1516: Qāḍī al-ʿAskar Rukn al-Dīn ascended to al-Ṣāliḥīya where he visited the tomb of Muḥyawī Ibn al-ʿArabī and took along with him soil from his tomb. Then he bestowed favours upon its servant Umm Muḥammad. The Khunkār [i.e. Selim] then followed him and also visited [the tomb]. Then he distributed many dirhams to the inhabitants of al-Ṣāliḥīya at his tomb and outside. It is said that on this day, he visited most of the pilgrimage sites (*mazārāt*) of Damascus like Barza [i.e. the shrine and mosque of Ibrāhīm], Shaykh Raslān, and the Small Gate Cemetery and handed out dirhams at each place. The reason for that is that he received glad tidings that his army had taken Jerusalem, Gaza, and the surrounding areas; therefore he resolved to head out after his troops so as to take Egypt from the hands of the Circassians²⁰⁷ and he wanted to bid the sites (*maʿāthir*) of Damascus farewell.²⁰⁸

Selim was granted victory, whereupon he commissioned the upkeep of Ibn al-ʿArabī's shrine and the construction of a dome and a *takīya*. Al-ʿAdawī gives an account of its renovation:

On Saturday, the 24th of Ramaḍān in 923/1517, the Chief Qadi Walī al-Dīn b. Furfūr came to al-Ṣāliḥīya of Damascus to the renowned *turba* of Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn which was previously the *turba* of Ibn al-Zakī. Accompanying him were the Sultan's master artisan and a group. By decree of the Sultan [Selim I. . .], they planned the *turba* in order to build a Friday prayer mosque (*jāmiʿ bi-khuṭba*).²⁰⁹ He ordered that a dome be built over Ibn al-ʿArabī's mausoleum, a congregational mosque beside it, and a *takīya* across from it. The Sultan charged the . . . Chief Qadi with these tasks. He built it as the aforementioned building. It turned out to be the most splendid and most perfect construction. All of this was made pos-

²⁰⁷ The Mamluk dynasty of Circassian origin.

²⁰⁸ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 2. 40.

²⁰⁹ This is probably a later addition since Ibn Ṭūlūn mentions in *Mufākaha*, 2. 72, that the cupola was erected under the cover of darkness in Dhū al-Qāʿda in 923 H.

sible by our master the Shaykh Ibn al-ʿArabī, may the clouds of Mercy rain over him.²¹⁰

Although the Sultan and the chief Shafiʿi qadi Ibn Furfūr were responsible for erecting monuments in Ibn al-ʿArabī's honour and renovating his mausoleum, Ibn Ṭūlūn attributes their construction to the saint's blessings.²¹¹ Muslims and Jews commonly believed that saints were responsible for the growth of towns. In 926/1520 Ibn Furfūr visited the Small Gate Cemetery, and according to Ibn Ṭūlūn, it was an Ottoman custom to visit Ibn al-ʿArabī:

On Thursday, the 14th of Muḥarram 926/1520, the Qadi of the Land travelled around to its towns after he visited (*zāra*) the Small Gate. He did not visit Muḥyawī b. al-ʿArabī [i.e. the tomb of Ibn al-ʿArabī] as is the custom of the *arwām* [i.e. the Ottomans] when they travel. Then he sought Masjid al-Qaṣab wearing a fine dagger . . .²¹²

DAMASCUS REPENTS

The power of collective prayer and pilgrimage was sometimes more efficacious than individual ritual acts as attested to in this historical record of an epidemic. During the month of Shawwāl in 919 H. (October 1513), inflation was rampant and the children of Damascus were dying of an epidemic.²¹³ Heavy rains, plague, and deaths, especially of girls, followed this.²¹⁴ Nothing short of a miracle would save them. The Sufi Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Ḥamza experienced a vision which prompted the deputy ruler Sībāy to proclaim a public fast and exhort the population to go on pilgrimage to shrines.²¹⁵ In invoking the Prophet in a dream, the saint, who is a representative of moral authority, challenged the temporal authority of the ruler. Ibn Ṭūlūn reports that

On Wednesday, the start of Dhū al-Qaʿda 919 H. (December 1513), the shop owners of the Mizīrīb reviewed the decision and announced low

²¹⁰ Al-ʿAdawī, *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt bi-Dimashq*, 33–4.

²¹¹ It was commonly believed that neighbourhoods grew through the blessings of dead saints.

²¹² Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufaḥkaha*, 2. 92. ²¹³ Ibid. 1. 377.

²¹⁴ Ibid. 1. 379. Concerning the Black Death, see M. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977).

²¹⁵ This is the only known instance of collective pilgrimage at the time of a plague.

prices. On Thursday the 16th, the deputy ruler [Sibāy] ordered the public display of piety by fasting for three days, repentance, retreating into the desert and making pilgrimage to pilgrimage sites (*mazārāt*) so that the epidemic would cease. The Shafi'i Qadi [Walī al-Dīn Ibn al-Furfūr] said, 'This evil has increased, you should stop it, it is a meritorious deed.' He did not make matters easy for the deputy and made him hear what is loathsome. There is no power save in God! The reason which prompted the deputy ruler to make these proclamations is that one of the Sufis (*mutamaṣṣihūn*), Ibn Ḥamza, alleged that he saw the Prophet . . . in his sleep and that he commanded it.²¹⁶

DISCORD IN DAMASCUS

Saints did not always bring peace to those who lived in their presence. Such is the case with Ibn al-ʿArabī, whose veneration polarized Damascenes along ethnic lines. The Ottoman period in Syria and Egypt was characterized by the proliferation of Sufism throughout all classes of society and the parallel growth of saint veneration and the construction of shrines.²¹⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn, who lived at a pivotal time in the history of Damascus marked by the dissolution of one empire and the succession of another, was himself a party to the conflict. Damascene society was divided into four camps: (1) Those who believed in Ibn al-ʿArabī's sainthood (*tāṭāqīdu walāyatahu*), made pilgrimage to him (*taqṣīduhu bi-al-ziyārāt*), and numbered him among the mystical poles were non-Arabs (*āʿajim*) and those of Turkish extraction (*arwām*) and the Bāʿūnī family. (2) Those who deemed him a sinner (*tāṭāqīdu dalālatahu*) and a heretic (*mubtadiʿan*), a believer in union with God (*ittiḥādī*), and an infidel were most of the Arab jurists and all Hadith scholars. (3) There were those who had doubts about him and (4) those who remained silent about him.²¹⁸

One of the Andalusian saint's charismatic devotees entered Damascus in 914/1508, nearly eight years before Sultan Selim's visit and

²¹⁶ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 1. 378. Also see Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Plām*, 203.

²¹⁷ Concerning Sufism in Mamluk and early Ottoman Egypt and Syria, cf. É. Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans*.

²¹⁸ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 397-401.



FIG. 3. Tomb of Ibn al-ʿArabī, Šāliḥīya quarter, Damascus

proceeded to organize a session at the tomb of the saint. Ibn Ṭūlūn reports:

On Thursday the 17th of Muḥarram 914 H., the would-be Sufi (*mutaṣawwif*) Ibn Ḥabīb about whom it was well known that he embraced the doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī arrived at the Šāliḥīya of Damascus from Šafad. Then he went to the *turba* of Ibn ʿArabī in the company of adherents to that [doctrine]. A rabble (*khalq min al-rāʿā*) met up with and sought blessings from him (*tabarrakū*). He visited Ibn ʿArabī's tomb and decreed repudiation of those who rebuked him and mentioned words not appropriate to mention.²¹⁹

Ibn Ṭūlūn viewed him as an innovator and attributed his appearance to the absence or temporary absence of religious authority and to internal disputes, particularly concerning the repair of the wall in the vicinity of Shaykh Arslān. He continues:

On Thursday the 24th of the month, the deputy paid him a visit at the house in which ʿAbd al-Nabī put him up in the vicinity of the house of al-Qārī. Then Damascus was astir, and the people . . . were polarized into three factions: a faction against him, who were the People of the Sunna

²¹⁹ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, I, 328–9.

for whom God desired good; a group who supported him, who spread falsehood in undertaking his slogans and venerating him; and a faction that said that he was an enraptured person (*muwallah*) who lacked the faculty of reasoning.²²⁰

Upon the Sufi's entry into the Umayyad Mosque, Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nu'aymī shouted at him uncontrollably:

'We are free of reproach before God from the innovators.'

I heard [al-Muḥyawī al-Nu'aymī] and yelled to disgrace [Ibn Ḥabīb] that he heard Ibn 'Arabī's teachings for nearly two years and that he adhered to his *madhhab*.

At the end of this day he ascended to visit Ibn al-'Arabī, where he engaged in devotion for a while. Then he sent after me the Erudite Burhān al-Dīn b. 'Awn. The latter said to me, 'Go tonight to the *turba* of [Ibn] al-'Arabī and be present [to see] what transpires there with Ibn Ḥabīb and his group.' I obeyed his order and realized that he did not exceed the *ziyāra* and the *dhikr*. On Saturday, the 26th, Ibn Ḥabīb went to al-Rabwa, [which] was at that time full of people, and while clapping and playing the flute cut a path across its market with the riffraff. There is no strength except in God!²²¹

The North African Sufi 'Alī b. Maymūn al-Maghribī (c.854/1450–917/1511) paid a visit to the tomb of Ibn al-'Arabī in 904/1498, a decade prior to Ibn Ḥabīb's visit. In his polemical treatise in defence of Ibn al-'Arabī, entitled *Tanzīh al-Ṣiddīq 'an Waṣf al-Zindīq* (*Exonerating the Righteous from the Charge of Heresy*), he records his own journey to the saint's tomb outside Damascus and his encounters with the local inhabitants. The Sufi 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Umar al-Ṣafadī whom 'Alī visited in Ṣafad in Palestine urged him to visit the shrine of the Andalusian saint. 'When I approached Damascus, I affirmed my intention (*'aqadtu al-nīya*) to visit him by the blessing of the aforementioned Shaykh al-Ṣafadī.'²²² The inhabitants of Damascus had all but abandoned the patron saint and no longer thought highly of him. Consequently, his tomb had fallen into a state of disrepair. Controversy continued over Ibn al-'Arabī's belief in the doctrines of *ḥulūl* and *ittiḥād*.²²³ Ibn Maymūn speaks of the fear that people had for some of the religious elite.

²²⁰ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufaḥkaha*, I, 328–9.

²²¹ Ibid. I, 329.

²²² Ibn Maymūn al-Maghribī, *Tanzīh al-Ṣiddīq 'an Waṣf al-Zindīq*, MS Damascus, Maktabat al-Asad, 7511 'āmm, fo. 2^v.

²²³ Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme*, 459; *ḥulūl*—a Sufi doctrine of divine inherence in man regarded as heretical; *ittiḥād*—controversial Sufi doctrine of the union of the created with the divine.

Upon arriving I did not find anybody who would conduct me so that I could visit him because of the great fear the people were in from the injustice (*ẓulm*) of the unrighteous elite (*al-fasaqa al-khāṣṣa*) . . .²²⁴

After he interjects several lengthy imprecations against Damascus's theologians in the treatise, he describes how he sought and obtained directions to the shrine.

Then I asked about the holy shrine (*maqām*). I was quietly told [about its whereabouts] from a distance. I was also told to 'inquire about such and such place. When you arrive, you will find a bath. It is next to it.'

I proceeded until I came to the bath. I asked the attendant to open the door for me so that I could enter the shrine (*maqām*) and behold the tomb. He used artful means and climbed one of the walls and opened the door to the shrine (*maqām*). I did not find any visitors, [only] overgrown weeds which indicated that nobody goes there. In fact, that is a great honour for him (Ibn al-ʿArabī).²²⁵

ABŪ AL-FATH AL-ʿARAWDAKĪ AND AL-KHAḌĪR
(6TH/12TH CENTURY)

The veneration of the Islamic prophet al-Khaḍīr was widespread throughout the medieval Near East from Egypt to Yemen, where there was a shrine to him of pre-Islamic origins, and to Palestine, Syria, and Iraq.²²⁶ The Islamic shrines of al-Khaḍīr, unlike the Jewish sanctuaries of Elijah, were not unique to Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Travellers like Ibn Jubayr (540/1145–614/1217), Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (703/1304–770/1368–9 or 779/1377), and al-Harawī (7th/13th cent.) report shrines (*maqāms*, *mashhads*), Sufi hospices (*ribāṭs*), convents (*khānqas*), prayer rooms (*muṣallās*), and mosques dedicated to al-Khaḍīr throughout the Near East from Egypt to Anatolia, Palestine, Iraq, Persia, Bahrain, and India. Al-Harawī reports that the village of Shumayrif in Egypt 'contains a shrine (*mashhad*) of al-Khaḍīr . . . which is the object of pilgrimage from all around'.²²⁷ However, the great majority of Palestinian shrines

²²⁴ *Tanzīh*, fo. 3^r. ²²⁵ *Ibid*.

²²⁶ See A. J. Wensinck, 'al-Khaḍīr', *EI*(2), 4. 902–5; J. W. Meri, 'Re-appropriating Sacred Space: Medieval Jews and Muslims Seeking Elijah and al-Khaḍīr', *Medieval Encounters: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue*, 5 (1999), 1–28.

²²⁷ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 46.

appear to have been established subsequent to the Crusader occupation of the Holy Land (1099–1187 CE).²²⁸ Greater Syria was the locus of the cult of al-Khaḍir. Shrines were found in Damascus, Aleppo, Manbij, Dārā,²²⁹ and Jerusalem. Ibn Shaddād mentions an Aleppan *mashhad*:

It is an ancient structure. It is said that it pre-dates the Islamic religious community. It is mentioned that a group of righteous individuals (*ṣāliḥūn*) of Aleppo encountered him (al-Khaḍir) there. This site is visited (*maqṣūd*).²³⁰

During the twelfth century, the Sufi saint and grandfather of Abū Bakr b. Fityān al-ʿArawdakī,²³¹ Maʿbad, encountered al-Khaḍir after performing an act of piety by safeguarding a shepherdless flock of sheep. The prophet appeared to him in a dream and instructed him to sell the flock and build a shrine on an excavated site. The Aleppan saint did so and with his own money purchased the building materials for the roof from the Byzantines. Ibn Ṭūlūn relates:

Among what we relate is what happened to Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Fityān's grandfather Maʿbad. That was the beginning of the esoteric inspiration of his offspring. He found a stray sheep and said, 'We shall look after it for its owner.' Five hundred head of sheep were born to it. He saw in his sleep Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Khaḍir . . .²³² Al-Khaḍir said: 'The deposit which we left with you,' and he mentioned the sheep and its offspring, 'build from their proceeds a shrine (*mashhad*) on Mt. Shahrā overlooking Ḥibbāniya.'²³³ 'What is the sign for that?' Al-Khaḍir replied: 'Tonight or the following night? This will be difficult.' He said, 'It is necessary to have a sign.' 'The sign for that is that you will find the foundation excavated.' He awoke the next morning and found the place excavated about a man's height. He built the shrine (*mashhad*) with the proceeds from the sale of the sheep. All that remained to be built was its roof and for that he purchased wood from the Byzantines from his own money. We attended this holy

²²⁸ Palestine down to the first half of the 20th cent. was perhaps the most important geographical centre for the Christian and Muslim shrines of al-Khaḍir–Ilyās–St George. The best survey of the Christian and Muslim shrines of al-Khaḍir and Elijah in Palestine is A. Augustinovič, 'El-Khadr' and the Prophet Elijah. An important study of the shrines, tombs, sanctuaries, and other sacred places in Palestine, see T. Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*.

²²⁹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 64.

²³⁰ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdell), 46.

²³¹ Abū Bakr died in 672/1273; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 543.

²³² Abū al-ʿAbbās is the nickname of al-Khaḍir.

²³³ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 543. Ibn Ṭūlūn mentions that it is a village from among Manbij's districts.

shrine, prayed there, and saw in the mountains the ruins of a fine building (*bunyān*) whose name, it was said, is Shahrā.²³⁴

The following account emphasizes the curative properties of al-Khaḍīr's shrine and the physical interaction of devotees with it. Soil from holy tombs was commonly used for treating eye disease. Ibn Ṭūlūn states:

And among what we relate from this Shaykh Abū Bakr is that he wrote in a composition: 'Whoever circumambulates the shrine seven times and takes from its soil, it is efficacious as kohl for eye disease.' We saw people taking away soil from inside the prayer niche. Nobody but an ignorant person who is against the Truth denies the like of that in regard to such a blessed shrine. Should he take from the soil and it does not benefit him, then let him know that something necessitated the prevention in this respect. There is much to be said about that. Some people who have not learned the religious sciences comprehensively and have no spiritual substance (alt. divine support), have gone astray in this.²³⁵

‘ABD ALLĀH AL-BAJANĪ—DAMASCUS
(6TH/12TH CENTURY)

It was fortuitous that al-Khaḍīr should appear during the Burid period, which was marked by great political instability, assassinations, continuous warfare with the Franks, and marauding groups of *aḥdāth* and Isma‘īlīs.²³⁶ Like Ma‘bad's encounter, that of ‘Abd Allāh al-Bajanī took place during the twelfth century and resulted in the construction of a shrine (*mashhad*) in southern Damascus.²³⁷ Other shrines of al-Khaḍīr existed in Damascus. Al-Harawī mentions a *mashhad* near the Paradise Gate, that is, in the northern part of the Old City.²³⁸ By the early sixteenth century, Ibn al-Ḥawrānī mentions a shrine of al-Khaḍīr in southern Damascus whose founding was attributed to a vision:

In the cemetery of Bāb Kaysān in southern Damascus, there is an oratory (*maqām*) of al-Khaḍīr. It is said that al-Khaḍīr was seen (*ru‘iya fīhi*) at the

²³⁴ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā'id*, 2. 545–6. ²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ R. Le Tourneau, 'Burids', *El(2)*, 1. 1332.

²³⁷ There is no longer any trace of this or any other shrine of al-Khaḍīr in Damascus.

²³⁸ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 14.

site. [There] people seek blessings (*yatabarrak bihi*) and make pilgrimages (*yazūrūnah*).²³⁹

The shrine referred to here is called a *maqām*.²⁴⁰ It was located in what had been a cemetery near Bāb Kaysān, immediately south-east of the city walls. Like the Khaḍīr shrine of Maʿbad in Aleppo, the shrine at Bāb Kaysān was situated near a Jewish quarter.

The shrine of al-Bajanī is called a *mashhad*, presumably because al-Khaḍīr directed al-Bajanī to build it in this location and the devout later witnessed al-Khaḍīr there. Al-Bajanī's *mashhad* was somewhere near Ṣuhayb's *mashhad* in Maydān al-Ḥaṣā—identified with the present-day Bāb al-Muṣallā or Masjid Ṣalāt al-ʿĪdayn south-west of the city.²⁴¹ A historical work concerning Damascene mosques from the late fifteenth century identifies a small unassuming mosque of al-Khaḍīr of simple design in the upper Maydān near Zuqāq Abū al-Ḥabl.²⁴² The *mashhad* was probably converted into a mosque during the Middle Ages.

ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajanī narrated his account to a contemporary, the famous Qurʾan memorizer (*ḥāfiẓ*) and traditionist Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī (475/1085–576/1180).²⁴³ Ibn al-ʿAdīm made use of a manuscript containing al-Bajanī's biographical entry which was transmitted by the poet and scholar Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn b. Rawāḥa²⁴⁴ (560/1165–646/1249) with licence from al-Silafī.

I read in the handwriting of the Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī and with licence (*ijāza*) from him: Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn b. Rawāḥa informed us about ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajanī.²⁴⁵

Al-Silafī met al-Bajanī while he was in Damascus at the time al-Bajanī encountered al-Khaḍīr. Al-Silafī's visit to Damascus, according to al-Dhahabī's *vita* of him, took place between 511/1117 and 513/1119.²⁴⁶ The *mashhad* was built at around this time since al-Silafī mentions, 'I heard Khumārtāsh b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajanī al-Turkī at the newly erected *mashhad* at the Damascus Gate.'

²³⁹ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 24.

²⁴⁰ For a discussion of this and other terms, see Ch. 4.

²⁴¹ A mosque stands over the site of the original shrine of Ṣuhayb today.

²⁴² Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *Thimār al-Maqāṣid fī Dhikr al-Masājid*, ed. M. A. Ṭalas (Beirut, 1943), 212.

²⁴³ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21. 539.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 23. 261–3.

²⁴⁵ Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7. 3381.

²⁴⁶ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21. 539.

Al-Bajānī's account was a means of legitimizing the veneration of al-Khaḍīr. This is indicated by his presence at the site of the shrine at the beginning of the account. 'I had repented and came to sit in this spot; perhaps God will forgive me my sins.'²⁴⁷ So important were these events that al-Silafi transmitted the account, and Ibn al-'Adīm included it in his voluminous *Bughyat al-Ṭalab* of famous Aleppans. Al-Bajānī's *mashhad* was abandoned by the early thirteenth century. None the less, at the beginning of the second decade of the twelfth century, the founding of the shrine was a momentous occasion for the residents of Damascus, since the Burid ruler Ṭughtakīn (r. 497/1104–522/1128), who is referred to as 'sāhib al-balad' (ruler of the land), had attended and 'all bore witness that things happened as they did and that al-Khaḍīr appeared on the site. They said that all the people of Damascus and the soldiers were in amazement.'

In his earlier life, 'Abd Allāh al-Bajānī had been a marauding Turkish soldier, but later he was tormented by his past deeds.²⁴⁸ After al-Khaḍīr had appeared to him in a night vision, he was at first terrified and doubted what he had experienced, so that he did not tell anyone,²⁴⁹ even though the saint had threatened him with physical harm if he did not convey the message. Al-Khaḍīr appeared a second time and instructed al-Bajānī to approach a certain unknown individual about constructing the shrine, but al-Bajānī was rebuffed when he tried to do this.

The subsequent appearance of al-Khaḍīr, the Prophet Muḥammad, and two anonymous Companions dressed in white in a scene with apocalyptic qualities brought about the fulfilment of al-Khaḍīr's message. The holy men drew water from one of three springs. Al-Bajānī convinced the ruler of Damascus to accompany him to the site, whereupon the latter eventually ordered the two sites (sic!) to be excavated. The ruler and his cohorts uncovered the spring in fulfilment of the dream and all drank from it. The symbols were intelligible to the recipients of 'Abd Allāh's account. Those present at the site of the spring might have conceived that they too would enjoy long life and good health. In ancient Near Eastern Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, al-Khaḍīr or a like character is often associated with the spring of life and resurrection. In Islamic tradition, it is believed that al-Khaḍīr achieved

247 Ibid.

248 Ibid.

249 Ibid.

immortality by drinking from or bathing in the spring of life.²⁵⁰ Ibn al-ʿAdīm narrates:

He (al-Bajānī) resided in Aleppo. It was mentioned that there he saw a night vision (*manām*) which was the reason behind erecting the newly established *mashhad* in Damascus in the vicinity of Ṣuhayb's *mashhad*. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī transmitted [the account] from him. I read in the handwriting of al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī and with licence (*ijāza*) from him: Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn b. Rawāḥa informed us about ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajānī: He said: I heard Khumārtāsh b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajānī al-Turkī at the newly erected *mashhad* at the Damascus Gate. I asked him about the reason for it being built. He replied, 'I used to be among the evil and profligate soldiers. One night whilst in Aleppo I saw in my sleep (*fī-mā yarā al-nā'im*) as if al-Khaḍīr, may peace be upon him, came to me and showed me this site. It was on the main road between two paths. Then he said, "This is a respectable site. Go and seek so and so, whom Khumārtāsh named, and tell him so that he may build [on this site] a *mashhad*. Look about and take heed, from here to *mashhad al-qadam* is like from here to the city [centre]. There will be on one side of you a grotto (*maghāra*) and on the other three trees so that you may not forget."

He disappeared from sight. Then I awoke terrified. I said to myself who am I to see such a vision. I remained silent [after that] and did not divulge anything [to anybody]. Some time had passed before I saw him again. Then I saw him in a nightly vision. He rebuked me [saying]: "Why have you not conveyed our message (*risāla*)?" When I awoke, I prepared myself for travel. I arrived in Damascus and told the man what he [al-Khaḍīr] said. He strongly rebuked me for it. I remained silent and never returned to him. I saw al-Khaḍīr a third time in another night vision and he said: "Convey the message and no harm will befall you. Tell them [*sic!*] right here are three springs profusely overflowing and graves of the righteous saints (*al-ṣāliḥūn*) which had been obliterated." He showed me signs. No sooner were we conversing than there suddenly appeared a man riding on a grey-coloured horse wearing white garments, and riding behind him were two men wearing the same. Al-Khaḍīr approached [them, lit. him], may peace be upon him and upon them. He drew some water from one of the springs and drank. They [did likewise]. When the man and his two companions approached, al-Khaḍīr asked: "Do you know

²⁵⁰ Concerning al-Khaḍīr in Islamic tradition, see Wensinck, 'al-Khaḍīr', *EI*(2), 4. 902–5. In Ibn ʿAsākir's biographical account of Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn (Alexander), Alexander journeys to the land of Gog and Magog in his quest for the spring of life. It is not Alexander, but his wazīr al-Khaḍīr, who bathes in the spring and unknowingly achieves immortality. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba*, 8 vols. (Cairo, 1905), I. 117–18.

who this is? This is the Seal of the Prophets Muḥammad, may peace be upon him, along with two of his companions.” When I awoke the [next] morning, I arose and said: After all this, there is no longer any doubt. I headed out to seek an audience with the ruler of Damascus (*ṣāhib al-balad*) and related to him the story. He rode out at the head of his troops and came along. I pointed out to him the [site of the] first spring. An amir of state broke out in laughter. The ruler then yelled at him and scolded him and ordered that the two spots be excavated. No sooner did they start digging than they hit a gigantic rock (lit. appeared). Then they pushed it away only to reveal the spring as was told me [by al-Khaḍir]. They then shouted out “Allāhu akbar”, drew some water, drank from it and built this *mashhad*. I had repented and came to sit in this spot; perhaps God will forgive me my sins. A crowd of people were there and all bore witness that things happened as they did and that al-Khaḍir appeared on the site. They said that all the people of Damascus and the soldiers were in amazement.²⁵¹

A VISION OF ʿALĪ

No less prolific in his appearance to the devout than al-Khaḍir was the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī, visions of whom contributed to the formation of cults throughout the Near East. In this instance the tomb of an unspecified descendant of ʿAlī led to the excavation of an ancient site. This prompted the Seljuk ruler of Ḥamā ʿImād al-Dīn Āq Sunqur (r. 517/1123) to establish a shrine.²⁵² That an ʿAlid was buried there was enough to attract crowds. According to Ibn Shaddād:

In the eastern part of [Aleppo] is Mashhad Qaranbiyā, which ʿImād al-Dīn Āq Sunqur Qasīm al-Dawla, the ruler of Ḥamā, established. This site was long ago known as the Station of the Prophets (*maqarr al-anbiyāʾ*). Then the common people corrupted [the name]. The reason for Qasīm al-Dawla’s building this *mashhad* is that a shaykh from the inhabitants of Manbij saw in Aleppo a number of times as if ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib . . . were praying there and that he said: ‘Tell Āq Sunqur to build a *mashhad*.’ Qaranbiyā is the name of the hill (*rabwa*). The Shaykh said to ʿAlī . . . ‘What is the sign?’ He said, ‘For you to lay bare the earth. For it is ground

²⁵¹ Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7. 3381–2.

²⁵² C. E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties* (Edinburgh, 1996), 186; C. Cahen, ‘Āḳ Sunqur al-Bursuḳī’, *EI*(2), 1. 314. He ruled over the northern region from 1125 CE.

made with panels of inlaid marble (*faṣṣ al-marmar*)²⁵³ and marble and a standing mihrab and a tomb beside the mihrab which contains one of my descendants.' When this vision reoccurred to the Shaykh, he consulted a group of his companions. They advised him to confront him [i.e. the ruler] [with this]. When he saw them, he dispatched his chamberlain to them and asked them their needs. They reported to him the Shaykh's vision (*ru'yā*) [whereupon] he ordered his wazīr to excavate the site. He exposed it and saw the signs (*amārāt*) [according to] what he told from the vision. Āq Sunqur built it, endowed it in perpetuity and used to frequent it. This is what Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭayyī' narrated in *Ta'riḫ Ḥalab*. Others mentioned that he repeatedly saw the Prophet . . . praying there and a group of other prophets. Qasīm al-Dawla rebuilt it.²⁵⁴

The narrators of such accounts were not always certain about the details of a vision. Whether the Prophet along with other prophets or 'Alī appeared may have been influenced by the transmitter. The appearance of 'Alī suggests a Shi'i account, narrated in this case by Ibn Abī Ṭayyī'.

AN EPILEPTIC MONGOL

The historian al-Yūnīnī quotes an account concerning the founding of a shrine in the name of an unspecified descendant of Ḥusayn, perhaps the legendary al-Muḥassin.²⁵⁵ On the 3rd of Ramaḍān 674/1276 the tomb of Muḥassin appeared in a night vision to one Muḥammadūn b. al-Aqfāṣī and subsequently to a village elder, and this led to construction of the shrine. As in al-Bajānī's account, a saint makes an appearance to the devotee, but here he is only referred to in the first instance as someone 'calling (*munādin*) from the bread oven and the drain of the bathhouse'. Muḥammadūn enjoyed favour after the construction of the tomb, but only after initially being rebuked by the people. The doubt which the inhabitants of a place experienced was a basis for the formation of cults of saints. To prove

²⁵³ 'Faṣṣ' is an element of marble marquetry: J. Sauvaget, *Les Trésors d'or de Sibṭ Ibn al-'Ajāmī* (Beirut, 1950), 185.

²⁵⁴ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdel), 46–7.

²⁵⁵ Al-Harawī, who lived long before this incident, mentions in Mosul a 'Mashhad al-Tirh', the place where Muḥassin was miscarried, Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 70. He is regarded as a third son of 'Alī and Fāṭima who was stillborn. Cf. Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar Ta'riḫ Dimashq*, 7. 116–17. Professor Wilferd Madelung informs me that the belief that Fāṭima and 'Alī had such a son is much older than such a belief in respect to Ḥusayn. See L. Massignon, 'al-Muḥassin b. 'Alī', *EI*(2), 7. 468.

the validity of Muḥammadūn's claims, God produced a miracle by manifesting the curative properties of the shrine's soil.

On the 3rd of Ramaḍān 674/1276, the tomb (*ḍarīḥ*) of a descendant of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī . . . appeared in Mosul in the quarter of Suwayqat Ibn Khalifa. The reason for its appearance was that a person called Muḥammadūn b. al-Aqfāṣī saw in a night vision a descendant of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (*shakḥṣ min wuld al-Ḥusayn*) . . . saying to him: 'Oh Muḥammadūn, I am a calling (*munādin*) from the bread oven and the drain of the small bathhouse.' When he awoke, he recounted the night vision to one of the elders (*ba'd al-akābir*) and consulted with him about excavating the tomb. The elder advised him against it. Muḥammadūn refrained.

The following night, the elder saw the vision (*ru'yā*) with his own eyes and was told, 'Dig my tomb (*ḍarīḥ*) and do not ignore it. I tell you that the earth of the tomb cures all pains and diseases (*yashfī min jamī' al-ālām wa-al-asqām*).' When he arose the next morning, he dug the place and the tomb appeared. The people began to denounce him, whereupon a blind man took some of the earth of the tomb and left it on his eye. He regained his eyesight and said, 'Allāhu akbar (God is great)' and praised Him. The people [then] saw the effect that tomb had and converged on it in crowds and Muḥammadūn enjoyed good grace on account of that. Many who were in pain and suffered from disabilities crowded around the tomb. All of those who took some of its earth and placed it on their pain, were instantly cured.²⁵⁶

A Mongol converted to Islam and was miraculously cured at the shrine:²⁵⁷

A Mongol man who was afflicted with epilepsy heard about it and came and requested to be cured. Those who were in the place made it conditional upon him forgoing drinking wine, eating pig flesh [and] killing Muslims. He committed himself to this and took from the soil of the tomb and was instantly cured. He was happy and set out on a journey passing by Tall Ziyār which contained a Christian monastery. He stayed with the [monks] and told them what had happened to him. The Christians said to him, 'You were cured with what you applied to yourself and not because of this tomb.'²⁵⁸ These words affected him and he once again became

²⁵⁶ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 3. 123–5.

²⁵⁷ Concerning the Mongol, particularly Timurid veneration of 'Alid saints, see D. M. Donaldson, *The Shi'ite Religion: A History of Islam in Persia and Iraq* (London, 1933), 61.

²⁵⁸ Ibn al-Zayyāt states: 'One ought not to seek blessings from the tomb's soil, nor kiss it, for that is the customary practice (*āda*) of the Christians. [Those practices] were not handed down by the ulema of the Muslims.' *Al-Kawākib al-Sayyāra fī Tartīb al-Ziyāra*, 16.

afflicted with epilepsy. He came to the tomb and requested some of its earth and was told, 'Did you not take [earth] from it and were cured?' He said, 'Indeed. But I passed by a Christian monastery. I told them and they told me such and such. That then affected me and I once again became afflicted with what I had.' He was told that time that its efficaciousness had ceased. 'Now nothing of this tomb will benefit you except if you become a Muslim and bear witness that the grandfather of this lord is the Messenger of God . . .'. He refused to do so and continued for a number of days in a state of epilepsy. Then it increased until he was prepared to accept (*abāba ilā*)²⁵⁹ Islam. Then he came to the *mashhad*, became a Muslim and took some of its soil, was cured and was never again afflicted. He became a devout Muslim. A large group of Mongols converted [as did the] native Christians for that reason.

'Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ustāhdārihi²⁶⁰ said: 'This is what Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. 'Ashā'ir b. Ḥusayn b. 'Ubayd, who is known as Ibn al-Layālī al-Mawṣilī, told me, and reliance is on him according to what he narrated.'²⁶¹

At the beginning of the account, individuals and groups seek the shrine not only because it was associated with a descendant of Ḥusayn, but also for its curative properties. People were well aware of false shrines and charlatans, but beholding the curative properties of the soil convinced them of its genuineness.²⁶² It was not merely the intercession of the saint, but also the intervention of the locals at the shrine which effected the cure. Devotees who experienced the tomb's graces were facilitators of the miracle because of the powerful effect that the Mongol's testimony had on those around him. Mention of the Christian monks and their belief in the efficaciousness of soil from holy shrines distances it from its 'Christian' origins, instead emphasizing the curative properties of the Islamic saint and not only the shrine.

ANOTHER ALEPPAN REPENTS

A similar incident of repentance involved 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who appeared to an inhabitant of Aleppo, perhaps a Shi'i, struck with fever in 522/1128. 'Alī instructed him to dig a spot, take soil

²⁵⁹ Lit. to honour or respect.

²⁶⁰ This name is possibly corrupt.

²⁶¹ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 3, 123-5.

²⁶² Soil from the shrine of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' was also known for its curative properties, see above, p. 164.

from it, apply it to himself, and instruct people to build a shrine. ‘Alī reluctantly produced the sign of a ‘boulder (*ṣakhra*) surrounded by soil smelling of musk’. A man identified as Shuqayr al-Sawādī who carried soil to orchards for a living attended and was moved by the holiness of the soil to repent of his evil acts. Ibn Shaddād states:

Among the pilgrimage sites outside Bāb al-Jinān adjoining it is an ancient *mashhad* known as Mashhad ‘Alī. . . . Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭayyī’ mentions that in the year 522 H., the *mashhad* of ‘Alī at Bāb al-Jinān appeared. He said, ‘It used to be a place where wine was sold. There is consensus that an inhabitant of Aleppo saw in [his] sleep whilst he was ill with fever for a long time as if he were in that place and as if a man were saying to him: “From what are you suffering?” The Aleppan said: “Fever.” [The man] extended his hand to some soil from that place and said: “Take it and affix it to yourself; for you shall be cured. Tell the people to erect on this very spot a *mashhad*.” The Aleppan said: “My Lord, they will not obey me.” The man said: “They will dig at this very spot and find a boulder surrounded entirely by soil smelling of musk.” Then the Aleppan said to him: “Who are you?” The man replied: “I am ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.” Then the Aleppan awoke and the fever had gone away. He told his family about it, arose the next morning and set out for that place. He stopped and told the people. In Aleppo there was a man known as Shuqayr al-Sawādī who used to carry soil to the orchards and was among those who attended. They dug the place; the soil came out as if it were musk. People perfumed themselves with it (*tattayabat bihi*) and Shuqayr repented of evil acts which he used to perpetrate and took charge of constructing the place.’²⁶³

NŪR AL-DĪN VERSUS KANZ AL-DĪN

In 894/1488 a Christian broadcloth-maker who was involved in a dispute with a Muslim master broadcloth- and robe-maker complained to the Christian dignitary who is referred to by Ibn Ṭūlūn disparagingly as ‘Treasure of the Infidels’. The latter in turn would have referred to the Sultan for the redress of his grievance. The Muslim repaired to the tomb of the Ayyubid ruler Nūr al-Dīn, vowing to repair the tomb’s cupola if God delivered him. During his lifetime, Nūr al-Dīn was vigilant in doing good, dispensed justice, and righted wrongs.²⁶⁴ Damascenes like Ibn Fiṭīn

²⁶³ Ibn Shaddād, *Aṭlāq* (Sourdel), 47–8.

²⁶⁴ Concerning his moral qualities, cf. Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 28.

believed that God would intercede and dispense justice for the sake of his righteous servants. Ibn Ṭūlūn states:

Muḥarram 894/1488: On the Day of ‘Āshūrā, Kanz al-Kufr²⁶⁵ left the Church of Maryam in al-Kharāb to al-Sikka. A beast collided with him and he fell down. Then another behind it trod upon him and he died. Our Master al-Muḥyawī al-Nu‘aymī said in his *Dhayl*: ‘It reached me that Ibn Fiṭīn, Shaykh of the market of the broadcloth and robe-makers, who was a young man and who had a number of years earlier presented the *Minhāj* and a number of other works to the Caliph²⁶⁶ and groups of people, rebuked one of the *dhimmī* broadcloth-makers on account of his swindling in selling broadcloth. The *dhimmī* would say that the broadcloth was wet, while it was only partially wet. The *dhimmī* then complained about him to al-Kanz, who desired to calumniate him before the Sultan.²⁶⁷ The aforementioned Shaykh went to the tomb of Nūr al-Dīn al-Shahīd and invoked God against [al-Kanz] before it and vowed for himself (*nadhara ‘alā nafsīhi*) that if God should rescue him from [al-Kanz], he would repair the tomb’s cupola (*qubba*). What befell [al-Kanz] befell him and he died.’²⁶⁸

ZAYNAB AND HER DEVOTEE SHAYKH ABŪ BAKR

Medieval Damascenes named the village of Rāwiya²⁶⁹ after Sitt Zaynab. Ibn Ṭūlūn mentions that ‘Qabr al-Sitt’ is ‘a town south of Damascus. It is said that ‘Alī’s daughter Zaynab is buried there. On certain days the people go out to it and make *ziyāra* (*yaḥtajjūna bi-al-ziyāra*) and retreat from the worldly life (*yatazabhadūna*) . . .’²⁷⁰ In the following account the saint appears in a dream and invokes the Prophet in support of *ziyāra* to her tomb.

Zaynab the Elder . . . the daughter of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib . . . whose mother was Fāṭima . . . the sister of our masters Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. . . . She is buried in the village of Rāwiya, near Ḥujjayrā²⁷¹ in the Damascus Oasis, which is referred to as Qabr al-Sitt.²⁷² ‘Abd Allāh b. Ja‘far married her and she gave birth to ‘Alī, Ja‘far, ‘Awn and ‘Abbās and she died while married to him. Nāji²⁷³ and others mention this.

²⁶⁵ ‘Kanz al-Kufr’, which literally means the treasure of infidelity is a distortion of the honorific Kanz al-Dīn, which was apparently given to Christians.

²⁶⁶ The reference is to an unspecified Abbasid caliph of Egypt.

²⁶⁷ Al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū al-Naṣr Qāyṭbāy (r. 872/1468).

²⁶⁸ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalā‘id*, 1. 100. ²⁶⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, 2. 743.

²⁷⁰ Ibn Ṭūlūn, ‘Darb al-Ḥūṭa’, 49. ²⁷¹ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, 2. 210.

²⁷² Ibn Ṭūlūn, ‘Darb al-Ḥūṭa’, 49.

²⁷³ He is Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Nāji, the shaykh of the historian al-Buṣrawī.

Ibn Ṭulūn mentions her in one of his works devoted to her, [recounting] her glorious traits (*manāqib*) and miracles (*karāmāt*).²⁷⁴ Her famous *mashhad* contains loftiness and hospitality as befitting one of such noble progeny . . .²⁷⁵

The Shaykh the gnostic, possessor of divine gnostic truths Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī said: ‘I visited her once, and with me was a group of my friends. I did not [dare] enter the area of the tomb, but rather I faced her and we turned our eyes down in accordance with what the ulema have laid down, namely that the visitor (*zāʾir*) should treat the dead with the same respect as he would if he were living. While I was in a state of weeping, humility and submissiveness, an image of a respectable and important woman suddenly appeared before me, of venerable appearance; the person is not able to fill his sight out of respect for her. So, I turned and lowered my head. And she said to me, “Oh my dear son! May God increase your respect and good manners (*adab*). Did you not know that my grandfather the Messenger of God and his Companions used to visit Umm Ayman since she was an honourable woman? Let the *umma* rejoice that my grandfather the Messenger of God . . . and all of his Companions and his *umma* and his progeny love this bondwoman, except for those who abandoned the road. They loathe her.” I was disquieted by her words, which caused me to become unconscious. When I came to, I did not find her. This prompted me to visit her down to this day.’²⁷⁶

A DYING MAN’S WISH

It was common practice for prominent individuals to be buried in or near the shrines of prominent saints. Abū al-Qāsim b. al-Maghribī, a Shiʿi from Mayyāfāriqīn in the north-eastern part of Diyār Bakr, willed that his friends bury him in the shrine (*mashhad*) of ʿAlī in Kufa. The journey was fraught with danger. According to Ibn al-Athīr:

he died during this year (318/930) in Mayyāfāriqīn at the age of 46. When he sensed that he was about to die, he personally wrote letters to all of the amirs and local leaders between there and Kufa whom he knew, making them aware that a concubine of his had died and that he had dispatched her coffin to the shrine (*mashhad*) of the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī . . . and addressed them to look after those accompanying it. He intended

²⁷⁴ *Al-Tawajjuhāt al-Sitt ilā Kaff al-Nisāʿ an Qabr al-Sitt*. See above, p. 153.

²⁷⁵ Qurʿan 55: 27.

²⁷⁶ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 133–6, esp. 135–6. Al-ʿAdawī gives a slightly different account: *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt bi-Dimashq*, 21–3.

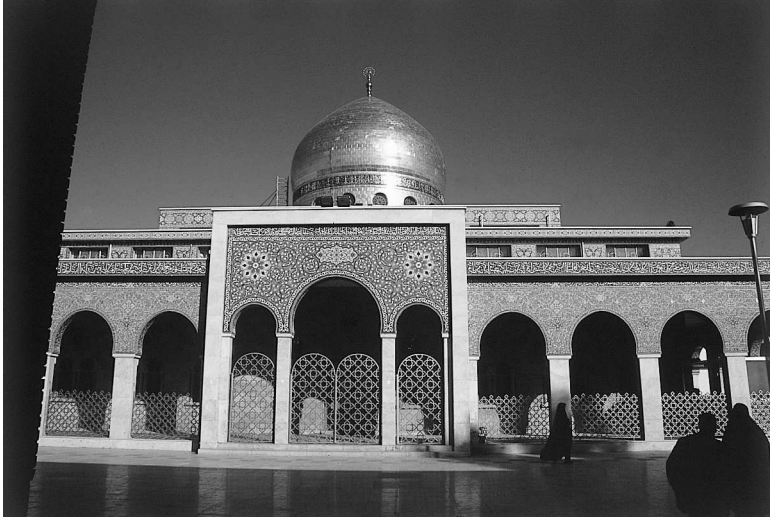


FIG. 4. Shrine of Sitt Zaynab, Damascus (exterior)



FIG. 5. Shrine of Sitt Zaynab, Damascus (interior)

that nobody should intercept his coffin and that word of it should be concealed. When he died, his companions travelled with him as he enjoined them and they produced letters of safe conduct and nobody attacked the coffin. He was buried in the shrine (*mashhad*). Nobody learned of his death until after his burial.²⁷⁷

ḤUSAYN B. ʿALĪ

The relocation of the saints' remains, albeit a relatively rare phenomenon in medieval Islam, occasionally became a necessity at times of war and political conflict. This will be illustrated in this discussion as well as in the later discussion concerning the cult of Yahyā b. Zakarīyā' (St. John the Baptist). Several accounts concerning Ḥusayn's head and the rituals associated with his veneration will be examined. One of the most important cults centred on a head was that of the Prophet's grandson al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī who was martyred at Karbalā' in 61/680.²⁷⁸ The mystery surrounding his burial place preoccupied Muslim historians from the first as it did writers of pilgrimage guides and theologians like Ibn Taymīya.²⁷⁹ As the head made its way westward it was set down at various locations which devotees transformed into pilgrimage sites. Al-Harawī mentions no fewer than seven shrines purporting to contain the head.²⁸⁰ During the thirteenth century various places claimed to harbour the martyr's head. According to al-Harawī, the body was buried in Karbalā' and the head in Egypt.²⁸¹ Two other locations in Mesopotamia claimed his head.

Mashhad al-Ra's in Sūq al-Nashshābīn. It is said that Ḥusayn's head . . . was hung up there when they brought the captives to al-Shām. It also

²⁷⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi-al-Ta'rikh*, 9. 255.

²⁷⁸ A summary of traditions concerning Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya's reaction to seeing the head, as well as other traditions concerning the battle in which Ḥusayn was martyred, can be found in L. Veccia Vaglieri, 'Al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī', *EI*(2), 3. 607-15. Concerning the possible circulation of the head, see D. De Smet, 'La Translation du ra's al-Ḥusayn au Caire fatimide', in U. Vermeulen and D. De Smet (eds.), *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras: Proceedings of the 4th and 5th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1995 and 1996* (Leuven, 1998), 29-44.

²⁷⁹ Ibn Taymīya provides a detailed exposition of the traditions concerning the head, *Majmūʿ*, 27. 467-90.

²⁸⁰ Al-Harawī, index, s.v. 'Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī'.

²⁸¹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 77.

contains Mashhad al-Nuqṭa. They say it was erected because of blood from the head there . . .²⁸²

The belief that a drop of Ḥusayn's blood remained in the rock was sufficient to establish and maintain the cult. Al-Harawī also mentions a *mashhad* in Mosul, where the head was set when the captives from Ḥusayn's party were transported to al-Shām.²⁸³ Al-Ṭabarī and others confirm that Sinān b. Anas b. 'Amr al-Nakha'ī cut off the martyr's head while Khawālī b. Yazīd al-Asbahī transported it from Karbalā' to Damascus, where he displayed it before the Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya (r. 64/683–65/684).²⁸⁴ Al-Bīrūnī (362/973–442/1050) reports that the head entered Damascus on the 1st of Ṣafar and that it was buried with the body in Karbalā' on the 20th of Ṣafar.²⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī also mentions that the body of Ḥusayn, along with those of the other martyrs, was buried by the Banū Asad in al-Ghādirīya after it was trampled by horses.²⁸⁶ The head was carried to Damascus, where it was publicly displayed for three days.²⁸⁷ A pro-Umayyad tradition mentions that the caliph Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 96/715–99/717) had the ossified head brought out from the weaponry chests and had it buried, after which the Abbasids carried it away:

He placed it in a basket, perfumed it (*ṭayyabahū*), enshrouded it (*kaf-fanahū*) and buried it in the Muslim cemetery (*maqābir al-Muslimīn*).²⁸⁸ When the Musawwida [i.e. the Abbasids] entered [Damascus], they inquired about the head's location and excavated it and took it.²⁸⁹

Al-'Umarī (700/1301–749/1349) believed that it remained in Damascus, where a shrine was constructed for it outside Bāb al-Farādīs.

The Shrine of al-Ḥusayn at Ascalon. His head was there, and when the Franks took the town the Muslims moved the head to Cairo and it was buried in the shrine called after it behind the two Fatimid palaces, according to what those who assert this declare. But it is more likely that it never

²⁸² Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 65–6.

²⁸³ Ibid. 70.

²⁸⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2. 368.

²⁸⁵ Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Āthār al-Bāqiya 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliya*, ed. C. E. Sachau (Leipzig, 1878), 331.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2. 368.

²⁸⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 3. 319. Al-Bīrūnī mentions this fact in *Āthār*, 331. He also mentions that the body was buried with the head and that the penitents (*tauwābūn*) made pilgrimage there on 20 Ṣafar and *ziyārat al-Arbā'in*.

²⁸⁸ The reference is to Bāb al-Ṣaghīr.

²⁸⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 3. 319.

went farther than Damascus, for it was brought thither to Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya, and Damascus was his capital and that of the Umayyad line, and it is highly improbable that a head dispatched to a ruler would travel farther than to his presence. Moreover, there is a shrine of his at Damascus within Bāb al-Farādīs, and outside of it is the place of the head according to report. In the history of the Abbasids, it is recorded that the bones of Ḥusayn and his head were brought to Medina and the head was buried there in the grave of his brother Ḥasan. The interval between the death of Ḥusayn and the building of the shrine of Ascalon was long.²⁹⁰

After being displayed in Damascus, the head was taken to Ascalon, and a shrine was probably erected there during the Fatimid era,²⁹¹ though Ibn Taymīya argues that the shrines in Ascalon and Cairo were merely Shi'i fabrications and that Ḥusayn was buried in Medina.²⁹² He convincingly argues that the head must have been taken to Ascalon before 549/1154,²⁹³ for when the Crusaders besieged the city that year the Fatimid commander abandoned it and fled to Cairo, carrying the martyr's head with him.²⁹⁴ Yet the ruin of a shrine remained. However, Ibn al-Nāsikh, the author of a pilgrimage guide, *Miṣbāḥ al-Dayājī*, denied that the shrine contained Ḥusayn's head, while al-Maqrīzī provides a report to the contrary.²⁹⁵ According to al-Maqrīzī,

In Sha'bān of 491/1098, al-Afdal one of the Amīr al-Juyūsh headed out to Jerusalem. He entered Ascalon and in it was a ruined place which contained the head of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.²⁹⁶

He claims that the Fatimid wazīr al-Ṣalāḥ Ṭalā'ī rescued it by paying a ransom to the Crusaders and personally put it in a green silken bag on a seat of ebony and spread beneath it musk and fragrances and built a shrine (*mashhad*) over it.²⁹⁷ From there, it was escorted to the Emerald Palace in Cairo, where it was sanctified. Ibn Muyassar's account of the founding of the shrine preserved

²⁹⁰ Al-'Umarī, *Masālik al-Absār* (A. Z. Bāshā edn.), 1. 219–20. Translation is from K. A. C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1959), 1. 247–53 (modified).

²⁹¹ Cf. O. Grabar, 'The Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures, Notes and Documents', *Ars Orientalis*, 6 (1966), 29–30.

²⁹² Ibn Taymīya, *Majmū'*, 27. 450–1.

²⁹³ Ibid. 27. 482.

²⁹⁴ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 32; The miracles associated with the shrine were numerous. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī mentions the rescue of Ḥusayn's head in 548 H., *Mirāt al-Zamān*, 8(1). 215.

²⁹⁵ Taylor, *Cult of the Saints*, 107.

²⁹⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz*, 2. 427–8.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

in Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* provides a description of the rituals in which devotees partook, namely kissing the ground before the tomb and the sacrifice of animals on 'Āshūrā'.²⁹⁸ This was not the only shrine of Ḥusayn in Cairo. Al-Harawī refers to two shrines at a single location, allegedly constructed after the head was deposited there:

Mashhad al-Zanbūr and Mashhad al-Tibr are two blessed sites (*mubārakān*). It is said that Ḥusayn b. 'Alī's head, when it was transported to Cairo, was set down at this place. In the Palace of the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz is a *mashhad* which contains Ḥusayn's head in a locked chest (*ṣandūq*).²⁹⁹

Commenting on the 10th of Muḥarram ('Āshūrā), the day on which Ḥusayn was killed, al-Bīrūnī mentions various associated rituals marking the event.

The Shi'i people, however, lament (*yanūḥūna*) and weep (*yabkūna*) on this day, mourning over the lord of the martyrs (*sayyid al-shuhadā'*) in public, as, e.g. in Baghdad and in other cities and villages; and they make a pilgrimage to the blessed soil [i.e. *al-turba al-mašūda*; i.e. the tomb of al-Ḥusayn] at Karbalā'. As this is a mourning-day, their common people have an aversion to renewing the vessels and utensils of the household on this day.³⁰⁰

The Shi'i practice of making pilgrimage to the tombs of their saints often coincided with their public display of mourning and weeping over Ḥusayn's death. Pilgrimage ritual was an important component of such rites.

Sulaymān b. Ṣurad and the *tawwābūn* (penitents) conducted the earliest pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb at Karbalā' in 65/684–5, where they spent a day and a night engaged in collective weeping, humbling themselves, screaming, and praying.³⁰¹ As Sulaymān and his companions encircled the grave and engaged in pious devotion, they thought of themselves as having been martyred with Ḥusayn and his companions at Karbalā'. In this way Sulaymān established a precedent for travellers to visit the tomb of Ḥusayn en route to their final destination.³⁰² Such rituals performed by Shi'is

²⁹⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz*, 2: 427–8.

²⁹⁹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 35.

³⁰⁰ Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations: An English version of the Arabic text of the Athār-ul-Bākīya of Al-Bīrūnī or 'Vestiges of the Past'*, trans. and ed. C. E. Sachau (London, 1879), 326 (modified); Al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, 329.

³⁰¹ The *tawwābūn* and Ḥusayn's tomb are mentioned in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, ed. S. D. Goitein *et al.*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1936–71), 1: 209.

³⁰² Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2: 545–8.

at the shrine at Karbalā' were also performed elsewhere, and shrines associated with Ḥusayn and his family were places of congregation especially on the 10th of Muḥarram and other holy days.³⁰³

During the ninth century Muḥammad b. Zayd, the Zaydī ruler of Jurjān, was the first to build a shrine over the tomb of Ḥusayn.³⁰⁴

Not all shrines of Ḥusayn contained his purported remains. As is the case with other multiple shrines, the original reason for their founding was seldom recorded. Consequently, stories connecting them to Ḥusayn's physical remains circulated. One such cult centre was established at Aleppo as a result of a shepherd's vision of a mysterious figure on the 20th of Dhū al-Qa'da 573/1178.³⁰⁵

THE VENERATION OF ABRAHAM

While Jews, Muslims, and Christians universally acknowledged Hebron (al-Khalīl)³⁰⁶ as the burial place of Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their descendants, other cult centres dedicated to Ibrāhīm existed in Palestine, Syria, and Iraq. Ibrāhīm was believed to have built the original structure over the black stone in Mecca. Several pilgrimage centres will be discussed herein.

Damascus

Traditions concerning the Damascene cult of Ibrāhīm reveal a cult characteristically different in its articulation, practice, and

³⁰³ Ibn Muyassar, *Akhhār Miṣr*, ed. H. Massé (Cairo, 1919), 38, mentions a congregation of common people near the shrine of Sayyida Nafīsa in 490 H., where they engaged in ritual cursing (*sabb*) of the Companions and destruction of the tombs of the righteous surrounding it. Such an act prompted the wazīr al-Afḍal to control them.

³⁰⁴ W. Madelung, 'Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī on the Alids of Ṭabaristān and Gīlān', *JNES* 26 (1967), 28.

³⁰⁵ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdel), 50-2.

³⁰⁶ Concerning the authenticity of the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and the renewal of *ziyāra* there in the Ayyubid period, see above, pp. 161-2. For various Islamic accounts concerning the Cave of the Patriarchs, cf. M. Sharon, 'al-Khalīl', *EI*(2), 4. 954-61; G. Le Strange (trans.), *Palestine under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500* (London, 1890), 309-27. For the early Islamic period, see H. Busse, 'Die Patriarchengräber in Hebron und der Islam', *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 114 (1998), 71-94; A. Elad, 'Pilgrims and Pilgrimage to Hebron (al-Khalīl) during the Early Muslim Period (638?-1099)', in B. F. Le Beau and M. Mor (eds.), *Pilgrims & Travelers to the Holy Land* (Omaha, 1996), 21-62.

patronage from other Syrian cults. In contrast with the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, which was a destination of pilgrims returning from Mecca and Medina and was established from at least the tenth century as a regional pilgrimage centre with an annual festival and hospitality institutions for both rich and poor visitors, the mosque of Ibrāhīm in the Damascene village of Barza on Mt. Qāsiyūn was primarily a local centre to which Damascenes made *ziyāra* for prayer and supplication. No evidence of celebrations or festivals at Barza or other Syrian centres exists. Among the most notable features of the Barza site is the absence of a cenotaph or talismanic objects, though a mosque referred to as *Masjid Ibrāhīm* existed on the site. Despite the absence of any other commemorative structures or peculiar cultic manifestations, this pilgrimage site occupied a central role in the communal and religious life of Damascenes from late Antiquity. The earliest known reference to Ibrāhīm's association with the village of Barza is by a Damascene Jew called Nicolas.³⁰⁷ The earliest Islamic traditions concerning Barza date from the eighth century and mention that Ibrāhīm was born in the Ghūṭa (Oasis) on the south side of Damascus in the village of Barza on Mt. Qāsiyūn. In *Rawḍ al-Mi'tār al-Ḥimyarī* mentions that Ibrāhīm saw the planet from a cave on Mt. Qāsiyūn in Damascus over which stood a mosque.³⁰⁸ In another tradition, Ibrāhīm saves Lūṭ and his family from the king of the Nabateans who launches an attack on them at their home on Mt. Qāsiyūn and captures them.³⁰⁹ He supposedly went to the spot where the mosque was built in Islamic times and prayed there.

Several generations of historians, theologians, traditionists, and Hadith scholars, most notably the traditionist al-Zuhrī (d. 121/739) and the theologian al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774), collected and reported traditions concerning this and a number of Damascus's other pilgrimage sites, several of which are attributed to Companions. Stories and reports narrated about a place's efficacy are the strongest evidence for the proliferation of a cult. The supposition that supplication would be fulfilled at a pilgrimage site is a common denominator among some of these traditions. Ibn 'Asākir reports:

³⁰⁷ See above, p. 33.

³⁰⁸ Al-Ḥimyarī, 'Waṣf', 282. The reference is to the planet Venus in Qur'an 6: 76 where God tests the Prophet Abraham's faith.

³⁰⁹ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 99–100.

Ibn ʿAbbās . . . said: ‘The station (*maqām*) of Ibrāhīm . . . is in the Oasis (Ghūṭa) of Damascus in a village called “Barza” on a mountain called “Qāsiyūn”.³¹⁰

According to al-Awzāʿī, the Friend (i.e. Ibrāhīm) prayed at this station (*maqām*) in Barza. He took it as a place of prayer.³¹¹

Al-Zuhrī said: ‘Masjid Ibrāhīm . . . is in a village called Barza. Whoever prays four *rakʿas* is forgiven his sins like the day his mother gave birth to him, and asks God the Exalted what he wishes; for He does not send him away disappointed.³¹²

Aḥmad b. Sulaymān al-Bayhaqī³¹³ said: ‘I heard our Damascene shaykhs long ago mention that the ruins (*athārāt*) at Damascus in Barza are near the Mosque of Ibrāhīm that is on the mountain near the crevice, the place [where] Ibrāhīm [was]. [They mentioned] that the place of the ruins (*athārāt*) above in the mountain is where Ibrāhīm saw the planet, which God the Exalted mentioned in Scripture: “When he saw the planet, he said this is my Lord.”³¹⁴ It is well known. Whoever seeks it and prays two *rakʿas* and supplicates there, God the Exalted will fulfil his supplication. [He also said] that the Prophet Lūṭ . . . and a group of prophets used to be on that mountain. Their vestiges (*athār*) are [located on the mountain near Masjid Ibrāhīm].³¹⁵

[Al-Bayhaqī] also said: ‘I heard from shaykhs who sought it, resided there and supplicated God the Exalted. It is efficacious for a sorrowful heart and many sins. A shaykh came from Mecca and prayed in the spot which is above the crevice [in the rock] where it is said that Ibrāhīm saw the planet.’ Al-Bayhaqī mentioned that he saw someone in his sleep [saying], “If you desire to see the spot where Ibrāhīm saw the planet, then seek Damascus and the spot called Barza at Masjid Ibrāhīm high on the mountain, pray there two *rakʿas* then supplicate with what you wish and it will be fulfilled . . .”. I sought the spot.³¹⁶

During the Middle Ages prominent theologians ascended to the shrine to supplicate God against injustice, such as the preacher and professor Tāj al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Subkī (d. after 769/1368), whose son the deputy of Damascus Tankiz threatened to harm.³¹⁷

Al-Buṣrawī says in *Faḍāʾil al-Shām*, ‘Our Shaykh Burhān al-Nājī says: The Qadi Abū Bakr b. al-Buṣrawī al-Shāfiʿī mentions in his work *Akḥbār*

³¹⁰ Ibid. 2(1). 99. ³¹¹ Ibid. ³¹² Ibid. 2(1). 100.

³¹³ Perhaps he is Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī Abū Bakr (384/994–458/1066): K. Zirikli, *al-ʿĀlam*, I. 116.

³¹⁴ Qurʾan 6: 76.

³¹⁵ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 100.

³¹⁶ Ibid. 2(1). 100–1.

³¹⁷ J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth, ‘al-Subkī’, *El*(2), 9. 744–5.

al-Awā'il that he attested to the correctness of that [belief] and reached this conclusion based upon what occurred to al-Subkī with Tankiz the deputy of Damascus. The latter resolved to strike the former's son the Qadi al-Ḥusayn. Al-Subkī headed out for the station (*maqām*) in the village of Barza. He stood in it, asking God the Exalted to protect him from his evil. No sooner had he descended than God the Exalted took Tankiz and fulfilled his supplication (*ajāba du'āhu*).³¹⁸

Aleppo and elsewhere

In contrast with the Damascene centre, which was created by theologians, an examination of the traditions concerning the Aleppan shrines of Ibrāhīm mentioned in historical works and pilgrimage guides reveals a cult of popular origin. However, such traditions were not treated as historical reports like the Damascene traditions which bore the names of individual transmitters. As he passed through Aleppo during the twelfth century, Petaḥiyah of Regensburg recorded a legend concerning Abraham:

From thence [Abraham went] to Ḥalab (Aleppo), that is, Aram Zōbah. Why is it called Ḥalab? Because on the mountain was the flock of Abraham our father. Steps led down from the mountain, whence he was accustomed to hand milk to the poor. From thence he went to Damascus. This is a large city over which the ruler of Egypt rules . . .³¹⁹

Al-Qazwīnī recounts a similar story concerning Ibrāhīm. 'The Friend . . . used to milk his sheep there and give its milk in charity on Friday.'³²⁰ He also mentions two shrines dedicated to him in the citadel. 'Both are visited (*yuzārān*) down to the present. It contains a cave in which the Friend used to gather his sheep.'³²¹ Another shrine existed in a cemetery outside the city.³²²

Ibn Shaddād mentions that the Aleppo citadel contained two oratories (*maqāms*) dedicated to Ibrāhīm. In a discussion of the naming of the city of Aleppo, Ibn Shaddād mentions a popular legend, one which was also connected with his shrines.

It was called Aleppo because Ibrāhīm used to graze his sheep [upon] a hill upon which the citadel currently stands. He used to milk his sheep at an appointed time and the people would come to him at that time. Then the people would say, 'Ibrāhīm milked; Ibrāhīm milked.' [That is how] it came to be called Ḥalab.³²³

³¹⁸ Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 120–1.

³¹⁹ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 50.

³²⁰ Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 122.

³²¹ Ibid. 123.

³²² Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 4.

³²³ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdel), 15.

Inside the citadel were two churches, one of which, before it was built, was a sacrificial altar (*madhbaḥ*) for Ibrāhīm the Friend. . . . It contained a rock (*ṣakhra*) upon which he sat for milking the livestock.

The citadel previously contained two churches, one of which [served as] an altar for sacrificial offering (*madhbaḥ*) by Ibrāhīm the Friend before a church was built. It contained a rock upon which he used to sit when he milked his livestock. Then it was built as a congregational mosque during the days of Banū Mirdās. It used to be known as the Upper Maqām of Ibrāhīm, in which the sermon would be held. It is a blessed spot and visited (*mawḍi' mubārak yuzār*). Ibn Buṭlān mentions in one of his letters that the citadel of Aleppo contained the altar (*madhbaḥ*) upon which Ibrāhīm the Friend made sacrificial offerings (*qarraba 'alayhi*). It was changed into a mosque after that in the days of the Banū Mirdās.³²⁴

Al-Harawī also mentions the oratory in the citadel as well as another shrine in the cemetery outside the city.³²⁵

The veneration of Ibrāhīm was widespread throughout other parts of Syria and Mesopotamia. Al-Harawī mentions a *mashhad* of Ibrāhīm in Ḥarrān:

It is known as Mashhad al-Ṣakhra. It is said that he used to sit upon it waiting for his sheep. It is said that Ibrāhīm's brother Hārān built Ḥarrān. . . . That is incorrect. [In fact,] the one who built it is Sām b. Nūḥ. . . . God knows best.³²⁶

Faddān, a village near Ḥarrān which contained the graves of many saints and righteous men, claimed to be Ibrāhīm's birthplace.³²⁷ Al-Harawī's testimony unequivocally confirms that not only urban centres but also villages served as local centres of saint veneration. Between Balṭ³²⁸ and Mosul³²⁹ was the house (*bayt*) of Ibrāhīm, where devotees believed he had lived.³³⁰ Kūthā Rabbā also contained a shrine (*mashhad*) to the prophet and, like Faddān, claimed to be the birthplace. Al-Harawī gives some credence to the belief, adding: 'This is the truth. God knows best.'³³¹ Apart from the shrine in Hebron and three in Aleppo, Minyat Abū Khaṣīb, al-Dhahābiya, Mosul, Rāma, and al-Lajjūn contained *maqāms* while Jerusalem, Ascalon, Nābulus, and Ḥarrān contained *mashhads*.³³²

³²⁴ Ibid. 39.

³²⁵ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 4; Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Sourdel), 46.

³²⁶ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 64. ³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, I. 721. ³²⁹ Ibid. 4. 682-4.

³³⁰ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 69. ³³¹ Ibid. 80.

³³² Ibid. 10, 23, 28, 29, 32, 41, 62, 64, 69, 94.

The veneration of the prophet Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā' (St. John the Baptist) among Muslims was a syncretic cult partly influenced by the Byzantine Christian cult of St. John the Baptist. According to al-Bīrūnī, the feast commemorating the beheading of John the Baptist was on the 29th of Āb.³³³ One of the most important shrines, which Muslims continue to visit down to this day, is the oratory (*maqām*) of Yaḥyā which is housed in the Congregational Mosque in Damascus which was previously a Byzantine church. Early traditions mention that the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik unearthed the head and ordered it placed in a pillar with a capital shaped like a basket of palm leaves.³³⁴ Damascus was not the only city to claim the head. Aleppo became a centre for its veneration after it was transferred there for an unknown reason during the rule of the Mirdasid Mu'izz al-Dawla Thimāl b. Ṣāliḥ (r. 433/1042–449/1057).³³⁵ Al-Harawī mentions a head of Yaḥyā in the Aleppo citadel which was transferred there in 435/1043 from Ba'labakk and then Ḥimṣ.³³⁶ Ibn al-'Adīm mentions that it was housed in the Upper Oratory (*maqām*) of the Aleppo citadel within a marble basin (*jurn*) in a cabinet (*khizāna*).³³⁷ Zayd b. al-Ḥasan al-Kindī, an Aleppan poet and scholar from Iraq (d. 613/1217), mentions the transfer of the head and says that it was kept in a hollowed rock (*ḥajar manqūr*).³³⁸ Al-Harawī mentions that a piece of the head was in a chest (*ṣandūq*).³³⁹ Ibn Shaddād mentions that the Mongols set fire to the Congregational Mosque in the citadel in 658/1260 and that the Upper Oratory was burned down. The head was evacuated by the *shilḥa* over the treasures, Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Īlbā, who along with one Sharaf al-Dīn Abū Ḥāmid

³³³ B. Carra de Vaux, 'Yaḥyā', *EI*(1), 4, 1148–9. Al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār* (Sachau trans.), 297 (modified): Decapitation of John. 'al-Ma'mūn b. Aḥmad al-Salamī al-Harawī relates that he saw in Jerusalem some heaps of stone at a gate, called *Gate of the Column*; they had been gathered so as to form something like hills and mountains. Now people said that those were thrown over the blood of Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā', but that the blood rose over them, boiling and bubbling. This went on until Nebuchednezer killed the people, and made their blood flow over it; then it was quiet . . .

³³⁴ Ibn al-Hawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 16–17.

³³⁵ Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughya*, 1, 459–60.

³³⁶ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 4; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughya*, 1, 460.

³³⁷ Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughya*, 1, 459–60.

³³⁸ *Ibid.* 1, 460.

³³⁹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 4.



FIG. 6. Shrine of Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā's Head (St. John the Baptist), Damascus

al-Najīb, 'repaired to the head of Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā' and transported it from the citadel to the congregational mosque in Aleppo and buried it west of the *minbar*. An oratory (*maqām*) was built for it. It is visited (*yuzār*).³⁴⁰ Unlike the cult of Ḥusayn, that of Yaḥyā's head might be regarded as a syncretic cult, since its Christian origins are apparent. Like other Syrians, Aleppans undoubtedly sought blessings from the cabinet or chest in which it was deposited by touching it, kissing it, and supplicating there. Moreover, the head served a talismanic function gracing the sanctuary with *baraka*.

A KURD'S VISIT TO KHĀLID B. AL-WALĪD

Khālīd b. al-Walīd (d. 21/642),³⁴¹ the renowned commander who conquered Damascus from the Byzantines, was buried outside

³⁴⁰ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdel), 41.

³⁴¹ P. Crone, 'Khālīd b. al-Walīd', *EI*(2), 4. 928–9.

Ḥimṣ.³⁴² Ibn Shaddād preserves the account of a Kurdish man's visit to Khālīd's tomb at the time of the Crusader siege of Ḥimṣ in 544/1149. The Kurd asked God for the valour of Khālīd, whereupon he engaged in battle against the Crusaders and took a number of them captive. The man returned to the tomb afterwards and wept over Khālīd's death. Ibn Kathīr reports:

I heard my uncle Abū Ghānim Muḥammad b. Hibat Allāh b. Abī Jarāda say: The ascetic Shaykh Rabī' b. Maḥmūd al-Mārādīnī told me: 'I once came to the tomb of Khālīd b. al-Walīd in Ḥimṣ to make a pious visitation (*azūrubu*). I saw there a Kurdish man weeping and wailing profusely raising his voice at that [tomb]. I said to him: "Why are you thus?" He replied: "I had an encounter with the tomb's patron which necessitated what you see." I further inquired. He said: "The Franks came besieging Ḥimṣ and surrounded the city. All of the gates were shut except for one. I went to this tomb and said: Oh God, by its sanctity, bestow upon me his valour now (at this moment). Then I went out not fearing anybody. The Franks were of no consequence [lit. value] to me [lit. in my eye]. I attacked them and killed two horsemen (knights) and took another two captive. I took them and both their horses. I entered with that to al-Malik al-'Ādil Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd. This is what caused me to be in the state in which you presently see me."³⁴³

THE RENUNCIATION OF OFFICE

In the year 600/1203-4, the ruler of Aleppo al-Malik al-Zāhir Ghāzī commissioned an Aleppan, Sadīd al-Dīn Muẓaffar b. Abī al-Ma'ālī b. al-Mukhayyakh(?), to undertake a survey of mountainous regions. While afflicted with fever Sadīd al-Dīn came to the village of Rūḥīn³⁴⁴ and an abandoned shrine (*mashhad*) which was near the graves of Quss b. Sā'ida al-Īyādī and two of his companions.³⁴⁵ While his illness intensified, the villagers warned him about residing there 'since it was a frightening ruin'.³⁴⁶ Upon his recovery, Sadīd al-Dīn vowed to construct a *mashhad*, which he did. He was so overcome by this experience that he 'became a fakir,

³⁴² His tomb is mentioned by al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 8; Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 148-9; al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 124.

³⁴³ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 7. 3172-3.

³⁴⁴ D. Sourdél, 'Rūḥīn: lieu pèlerinage musulman de Syrie du nord au xiiième siècle', *Syria*, 30 (1953), 89-107. Yāqūt reports that it is a village of Mt. Lebanon near Aleppo and that it possessed an endowment in perpetuity: *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 2. 829-30.

³⁴⁵ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 5.

³⁴⁶ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdél), 55.

wore a cloak, cut his hair, and offered for sale all of his possessions . . .³⁴⁷ He spent his remaining days at the *mashhad*.

After Sadīd al-Dīn's death, al-Malik al-Mu'azzam (r. 615/1218–624/1227) appointed an Egyptian keeper who was succeeded by his son who was in turn replaced with another keeper.³⁴⁸ Ibn Shaddād gives the following account:

This *mashhad* [near the tomb of Quss b. Sā'ida and his two companions] was abandoned and it was not possible for anybody to reside there. The second that visitors (*zuwwār*) came, they left because of the many thieves and criminals (*mutaharrimūn*). It so happened that al-Malik al-Zāhir Ghāzi, the son of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Ayyūb, the ruler of Aleppo at the time, in the year 600/1203–4 delegated Sadīd al-Dīn Muẓaffar b. Abī al-Ma'ālī b. al-Mukhayyakh(?), who was of Aleppan birth to take a cadastral survey of Mt. Banū 'Ulaym and other mountains. He had been afflicted with the flu (*ḥummā bārīda*) and paralysis (*fāliḥ*)³⁴⁹ for a while. When he arrived to undertake the survey of the *mashhad*, his fever intensified. When he experienced chills, he slept in [the *mashhad*]. The peasants of the hamlet went out to him and warned him about residing in the *mashhad* since it was a frightening ruin. He made a vow for himself that when he should be cured of his illness, he would reconstruct it [i.e. the *mashhad*]. He dwelt within it and slept the night there. During the night, he awoke and found strength within himself and when he arose in the morning, he perceived that the illness had entirely disappeared. From that moment, he became a fakir (*tafaqqara*), wore a cloak (*ābā'a*), cut his hair and offered for sale all of his possessions—horses, equipment (*udda*) and property (*milk*)—and constructed from [the proceeds] this *mashhad* and the public bath (*ḥammām*). He [planted] the orchard and released the spring after it was filled with dirt and blocked. There he resided until he passed away, may God have mercy upon him.

Al-Malik al-Zāhir attended this *mashhad* in the days it was being constructed and he was pleased with what the aforementioned Sadīd al-Dīn had undertaken. He provided him and his descendants with one-fifth of the revenues of the village of Rūḥīn. Upon [al-Zāhir's] death al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Fakhr al-Dīn Tūrān Shāh b. al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Ayyūb was the holder of the land grant in kind (*muqṭa'*) over the village of Rūḥīn. He was responsible for the affair of this *mashhad* and personally appointed a person known as al-Nafis from the inhabitants of Egypt who continued there until he passed away unto the mercy of God the Exalted. After his

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Concerning the Ayyubid patronage of the shrine and that of other prominent individuals, see Ch. 5.

³⁴⁹ A stroke.

death his son, who was known as al-Shams Muḥammad, took charge and continued there until he was removed from it and another, known as al-Shujā' al-ʿAjamī, took charge. He continued there until he died unto the mercy of God the Exalted. When al-Malik al-Zāhir glorified the affair of this *mashhad*, the people glorified it and built there constructions (*amā'ir*), including the fountain (*birka*) outside of the *mashhad* which one of the peasants known as Ḥājj 'Uthmān from the inhabitants of Tall Rummānayn built.

Dawlāt Khātūn, daughter of the amir 'Alam al-Dīn Sulaymān b. Jandar, built the caravanserai (*khān*) and dedicated it as guest quarters (*arṣadathu nuzulan*) for those seeking to visit the *mashhad*.³⁵⁰ The Ḥājj Āqṭughān b. Yārūq built a wall surrounding it and diverted the water from outside the *mashhad* to the inside. When the righteous Shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Kanjī al-Suhrawardī assumed charge of it, he built a bath (*ḥammām*) inside it from the endowment revenue.

The inhabitants of Aleppo adopted a festival (*mawsim*) to set out for this *mashhad* at an appointed time of the year which they call 'Rice Thursday' (*khamīs al-ruzz*), which is the festival (*mawsim*) called in Egypt 'Lentil Thursday' (*khamīs al-adas*). They converge upon it from all the regions of Aleppo, Ḥamā, Ḥarrān and Bālis to the extent that they are nearly uninhabited. There they partake in festivities which resemble the celebration of the hajj festival by the inhabitants of Mecca. Their appointed day of congregating there is on Saturday and they continue there until [the following] Friday. The daylight does not pass while anybody is left behind.³⁵¹ Among the historians are those who say that 'When the Christians (*naṣārā*)³⁵² and the Franks ruled the land, they used to make it on a par with (*musāwiyan*) glorifying Bayt al-Maqdis. At the conclusion of their fast, they would seek it from all around and celebrate the holy day there. Then the Muslims came to rule these lands; they sought it from all around and accorded it greater attention many times over than did the Christians. They collected votive offerings (*nudhūr*) for it and desired the *baraka* of those buried within. It is wondrous that when the Mongols ruled the lands, they did not kill anybody who took refuge there.'³⁵³

TALISMANIC OBJECTS

Talismanic objects are rarely mentioned in connection with *ziyāra*, yet when they are, they often appear alongside pilgrimage

³⁵⁰ Concerning the patronage of religious structures by women in Ayyubid times, cf. R. S. Humphreys, 'Women as Patrons of Religious Architecture in Ayyubid Damascus', *Muqarnas*, 11 (1994), 35–54.

³⁵¹ i.e. everybody attended. ³⁵² The Byzantines.

³⁵³ Ibn Shaddād, *Al'lāq* (Sourdel), 55–6.

sites.³⁵⁴ A talisman (*ṭilasm*, pl. *ṭalāsim*)³⁵⁵ was meant to be used only once and then discarded. Many of the objects generally referred to as *ṭilasm*³⁵⁶ served a therapeutic function by being employed to effect cures for a range of maladies from back pain to various stomach ailments, flu, barrenness, and blindness. Some talismanic objects, such as pillars, involved the performance of some ritual involving 'sensory markers for sanctity'—water, perfume, or soil.³⁵⁷ Modern studies have not yet explored immobile objects and monumental talismans, including paintings, idols, and stone pillars, and their role in what might be regarded as popular Islam. However, talismanic objects figure prominently in medieval historical and geographical works, travel itineraries, and pilgrimage guides, such as al-Harawī's *Ishārāt* and Ibn Shaddād's *al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīra*. In Ibn Shaddād's book a whole section is reserved for amulets and talismanic objects in Aleppo and its environs. Al-Harawī also devoted an entire work, now lost, to strange, efficacious, and wondrous objects, including talismans, which he called *Kitāb al-'Ajā'ib (The Book of Wondrous Things)*.³⁵⁸

Talismanic objects and designs can be grouped into six major categories: (1) Talismanic objects and designs of animals, rodents, reptiles, and insects were generally found on city gates, in citadels, and in mosques. (2) Footprints and handprints of prophets and saints, most notably the Prophet Muḥammad and 'Alī, were found in mosques, shrines, *madrasas*, and elsewhere. (3) Sacred rocks, which were at times associated with saints, were found everywhere, but most notably in mosques and at tombs and shrines. (4) Pillars which were often associated with saints were to be found everywhere, including on tombs. (5) Idols or statues used for healing are mentioned infrequently. (6) Paintings and figures of mythical or Christian figures were sought for their healing properties.

Animal designs and objects

Animal representations served to protect a city or an individual from harm and death. The Congregational Mosque of Damascus

³⁵⁴ One notable exception is Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya's account concerning the glorification of trees, pillars, idols, tombs, pieces of wood, and springs as pre-Islamic practices: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1. 237.

³⁵⁵ For other variations of *ṭilasm*, see Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1867.

³⁵⁶ E. Savage-Smith *et al.*, *Science, Tools and Magic*, 2 vols. (London, 1997), 2.

132-3.

³⁵⁷ See above, *Introd.*, n. 3.

³⁵⁸ Cf. al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 3.

possessed a number of talismanic objects suspended from the ceiling to ward off crows, snakes, mice, and scorpions until a fire destroyed them in 461/1069.³⁵⁹ Ibn Shaddād mentions a talismanic design of a snake in a tower (*burj*) in Aleppo which was supposed to prevent the detrimental effects of snake-bites and to protect the city's inhabitants, but did not require ritual interaction with it.³⁶⁰ Mayyāfāriqīn contained a talismanic object against dogs and a design of a two-headed serpent within a church, which may have been intended to ward off snakes. Al-Harawī reports:

Mayyāfāriqīn contained a talismanic object against dogs, who from the hour of the late afternoon prayer do not remain there but leave for a village called al-Kalbīya at the entrance to the town. It contains in the Church of Mart Dāris a talismanic design of serpents, which is an image of a two-headed serpent.³⁶¹

Al-Harawī also mentions a talismanic design of a scorpion in Aleppo with which the devotee interacted by taking soil from it:

Aleppo contains the talismanic design (*ṭilasm*) of the scorpion. If some of its earth is taken and applied to a scorpion bite, it is healed (*barī'a*). It is tried and proven (*mujarrab*) and carried throughout the lands.³⁶²

Footprints and handprints

Another type of talismanic object which was widespread throughout the Near East was the footprint of the Prophet Muḥammad, as well as those of the Prophet's Family and other prophets.³⁶³ Devotees touched and kissed footprints in order to obtain blessings. Masjid al-Nāranj, a mosque outside Damascus, was believed to contain a footprint of the Prophet. Ibn Taymīya's destruction of the relic in 704/1305 provoked the ire of the local inhabitants. Al-Harawī mentions that 'in the Madrasa of Mujāhid al-Dīn is the footprint (*qadam*) of the Prophet . . . in a black rock which was transported from Ḥawrān'.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁹ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1), 47–8.

³⁶⁰ Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Sourdel), 123. ³⁶¹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 65.

³⁶² Ibid. 9.

³⁶³ The prophet's sandal and other saints' relics are discussed in Ch. 2.

³⁶⁴ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 14; See further, Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Dahhān, 1956), 186; Memon (trans.), *Ibn Taymīya's Struggle against Popular Religion*, 362 n. 301; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Mārifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. M. M. Ziyāda (Cairo, 1934–58), 2. 8–9; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 14. 33–4; Al-Ālūsī, *Jalā' al-'Aynayn fi Muḥākamat al-Abmadayn* (Cairo, 1961), 8.

Shrines were constructed around relics such as footprints and often contained talismanic objects. Shi'is visited the shrine (*mashhad*) of 'Alī in Ḥims, where they also worshipped at a pillar. 'That was a result of a night vision (*manām*) which one of the righteous saw. There is a story behind it.'³⁶⁵

Sacred rocks

Al-Harawī reported seeing in southern Aleppo a rock which was the object of pilgrimage, not only for Muslims, but also for Jews and Christians. He states:

there is a rock present at Bāb al-Yahūd on a path in which votive offerings (*nudhūr*) are made and on which rosewater and fragrance are poured. Muslims, Jews and Christians hold it in regard. It is said that [it is among] the graves of a number of prophets . . . and saints. God knows best.³⁶⁶

Al-Qazwīnī reports that Franks visited a fountain in Aleppo for supplication on which they expended great sums of money without deriving any benefit. He states:

In Madrasat [al-Ḥalāwīya] is a stone at the edge of its fountain resembling a bed (*sarīr*). Its middle is hollowed a little. The Franks greatly believe in it. They expend great sums on it (i.e. the stone); however, their [supplication] goes unfulfilled.³⁶⁷

A rock jutting out an arm's length from the wall of the city of Dārā in Syria contained a talismanic design (*ṭīlasm*) which was reputedly efficacious against a lower facial paralysis (*rīḥ al-laqwa*).³⁶⁸

Pillars

Pillars in Damascus, Aleppo, and other cities were supposedly efficacious for back pain and curing the retention of urine. Some pillars, as in the first example, required the performance of ritual for effecting a cure, while others were efficacious for the fulfilment of supplication, as in the second and third examples. Ibn Shaddād reports that

Inside Aleppo is a pillar called 'the pillar [for] the retention of urine' (*'amūd al-usr*). A group of people from the inhabitants of Aleppo told me that this pillar is beneficial for the retention of urine. Should a person or animal be afflicted by it, [they] would be led around it and be cured.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 8.

³⁶⁶ Ibid. 4; al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 123.

³⁶⁷ Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 123.

³⁶⁸ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 64.

³⁶⁹ Ibn Shaddād, *Al-lāq* (Sourdel), 123.

Ibn Shaddād observed a pillar which Jews, Christians, and Muslims venerated:

North of Aleppo is a pillar (*amūd*) to which Muslims, Jews and Christians make votive offerings (*yandhiruhu*). It is said that beneath it is the grave of a prophet.³⁷⁰

Al-Harawī reports that beneath the palace of the Fatimid ruler al-Muʿizz (r. 341/953–365/975), which also contained the shrine of al-Ḥusayn, was ‘the pillar anointed with saffron (*rukṅ mukballaq*) to which votive offerings are made (*yundhar labu*)’.³⁷¹ This suggests that anointing a column was a Fatimid practice. This ritual practice, like perfuming and sprinkling rosewater on sacred places, designated sites as holy.

A broken idol

Ibn ʿAsākir mentions an unusual report narrated by one of Damascus’s shaykhs, ʿAbd Allāh al-Mazanī, concerning a broken idol to which some Damascenes made supplication.

I heard a group of shaykhs from among the inhabitants of Damascus say that the stone pillar which is located over the bridge between the Barley Market and Umm Ḥakīm’s Market which is in the foyer (*ḥaḍra*) of Masjid al-Ṭabbākhīn is a broken idol (*ṣanam maksūr*) for [fulfilling] needs (*ḥājāt*). If a person enters it to fulfil a need, it is not fulfilled (*lam tuqḍa*). [Al-Mazanī] said, ‘My father used to prohibit me from entering it, whenever I was in a state of need (*idhā kuntu fī ḥāja*)’.³⁷²

That theologians and scholars were narrating these traditions indicates their awareness that people commonly believed that such objects were efficacious for curing certain ailments. However, they were also aware that even supplicating there was idolatrous.

Paintings and figures

A painting (*ṣūra*)³⁷³ in northern Syria was sought by barren women, who would meet there to socialize as well as to physically interact

³⁷⁰ Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Sourdel), 54.

³⁷¹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 35. For an explanation of *takblīq* (the act of perfuming or spraying something), see above, n. 32.

³⁷² Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 48. Other idols and statues (*timthāl*) were associated with the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus: *ibid.* 2(1). 45–8.

³⁷³ *Ṣūra* generally means figure, form, or shape. It can also mean an icon, sculpture, statue, or engraving.

with the painting of a black slave in order to conceive. Ibn Shaddād comments:

Seven miles from Manbij is a spring (*ḥimma*) over which is a domed shrine (*qubba*) called ‘Al-Mudabbir’.³⁷⁴ At its edge is a painting (*ṣūra*) of a black slave; women allege that if a barren woman among them rubs her pudendum (*ḥakkat farjahā bi*) against the nose of that painting (*bi-anf tilka al-ṣūra*), she will conceive.³⁷⁵

The domed structure designated this a pilgrimage site. Al-Qazwīnī mentions a painting or figure (*ṣūra*) of a mythical figure, half-man and half-scorpion, on the gate of a mosque in Ḥimṣ next to a church (*bīra*) which was efficacious for curing stomach ailments. ‘Pure soil is taken and impressed upon the painting and is then put in water for one suffering from a stomach ailment to drink. He is instantly cured.’³⁷⁶

MUSLIMS, JEWS, CHRISTIANS, AND ZOROASTRIANS IN DAMASCUS

According to al-Ayyūbī’s (d. 1003/1594–5) biographical account of one of Damascus’s most important saints, Shaykh Arslān (d. c. 550/1155), the saint’s tomb was firmly established as a pilgrimage centre for Damascenes of all faiths by the early Ottoman period. Remarkable is the fact that Jews and Christians as well as Zoroastrians turned to the tomb of a medieval Muslim saint, which suggests that they may have had occasion to venerate certain Muslim saints for personal needs and supplication to God, particularly when the saint was a city’s patron saint. According to al-Ayyūbī, a rivalry of sorts developed there in which they competed to serve the shrine such that contenders obtained decrees from the Ottoman sultan:

The people of al-Shām believe in [Shaykh Arslān] greatly and allege that he possessed the power to manage nature (*walāyat al-taṣarruf*) after his death as he did in life, that his tomb is efficacious for the fulfilment of supplication (*qabruhu mustajāb*), that the four religious communities—Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians (*majūs*) believe in him (*yātaqidūnahu*) and go to him with votive offerings (*nadhr*), such as oil,

³⁷⁴ The editor alternatively suggests ‘al-Mudayyir’.

³⁷⁵ Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Sourdél), 125.

³⁷⁶ Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 123–4.

candles, dirhams and dinars for the sake of getting near [to God] (*‘alā sabīl al-qurba*), and whoever seeks him at an occasion of great importance (*mubimm*) or severe affliction (*nāzila*) and seeks the intercession (*tawas-sala*) of God the Exalted through him, his need is fulfilled (*quḍiyat hājatuhu*).

They compete among themselves in serving [his tomb], attaching themselves closely to his *turba* and seek honour through its upkeep (*al-tasharruf bi-maṣālihīhi*) and bring Sultanic decrees for taking charge of his tomb. One person is removed from office and another appointed who is in turn replaced by another person. Scarcely had one person settled in place for a whole year than he was removed and another appointed in his stead. This is an indication of the high value of Shaykh Arslān. May God requite us and the Muslims with his blessings in the world and the Hereafter.³⁷⁷

MUSLIM–CHRISTIAN RELATIONS CONSIDERED

Ṣaydanāyā,³⁷⁸ a village outside Damascus which housed the famed icon of the Virgin, was one of the most important pilgrimage places for the Christians of Damascus and Bilād al-Shām. Even Frankish rulers and their emissaries were occasionally permitted to visit the shrine.³⁷⁹ The Muslim traveller Shihāb al-Dīn al-‘Umarī alludes to the icon, though he does not mention it per se.³⁸⁰ According to al-‘Umarī:

The Christians allege that [Ṣaydanāyā] contains a fissure in a rock (*ṣud*) from which water drips. They take it for blessings (*ya’khubdhūnahu lil-tabarruk*) and put it in elegant vessels of glass over which they drape fine cloths. They possess many stories about the fissure. I heard a Christian woman who was well known among them for her learning say that if that water is taken in the name of a person and suspended in his house and its quantity increases, . . . that indicates his wealth and prestige will increase. If it decreases, that indicates his wealth and prestige will decrease and that the moment of his death has drawn near.³⁸¹

³⁷⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Ghāyat al-Bayān*, 99. Ibesch provides a photographic reproduction of biography no. 93 (Berlin MS 9887) from *al-Tadbkira al-Ayyūbiya*.

³⁷⁸ Yāqūt, *Muḡam al-Buldān*, 3. 441. It is referred to today as ‘Ṣaydnāyā’.

³⁷⁹ H. Zayyāt, *Khabāyā al-Zawāyā min Tarīkh Ṣaydnāyā* (Damascus, 1982), 89.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 144.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*; Al-‘Umarī (A. Z. Bāshā), 1. 356–7. He also mentions a fissure dripping water in the Damascene village of Ma’lūlā from which Christians ‘seek blessings’ (*ya’khubdhūnahu al-naṣārā lil-tabarruk*).

Burchard of Strasbourg, whom the emperor Frederick I sent in 1175 as his envoy to Saladin, observed that Christians and Muslims visited Ṣaydanāyā on the feasts of the Assumption and the Nativity of the Virgin in order to seek *baraka* and make votive offerings.³⁸² Christian and Muslim devotees also supplicated there. A European pilgrim Thetmar who visited Damascus in 1217 CE gives a popular account concerning an unspecified blind Atabekid ruler of Damascus visiting the shrine:

It so happened that one of the rulers of Damascus was blind in one eye and then lost sight in the other and became totally blind. It reached him about the miracles which God worked through [Christ's] mother the Virgin. He went there; his faith (*Islāmuḥu*) did not prevent him from visiting her shrine (*maqām*) because of his reliance on God and his hope of being cured. He prostrated himself before it and prayed. When he finished supplicating he raised his eyes to the sky. He saw the light of the lantern glowing before the icon. Then he gazed at those around him and praised God with those present. In view of the fact that his eyes first landed on the light of the candle, he made a vow to God to visit the shrine (*maqām*) annually and bring along nine measures of oil which were carried there . . . down to the days of Nūr al-Dīn.³⁸³

The Franciscan monk Niccolò di Poggibonsi, who visited Damascus in the mid-fourteenth century, observed of the image of the Virgin Mary that 'it is fleshlike, and from it much holy oil exudes which has virtue; and this oil in seven years becomes flesh; and I took some with me and it is good against every infirmity and every peril of the sea. And we have experienced it and have escaped many storms.'³⁸⁴ Another Italian traveller, Leonardo Frescobaldi, visited the icon in 1384 CE and noted that the wooden part of the icon changed into flesh on which appeared drops of perspiration.³⁸⁵

So controversial was this icon, presumably because it attracted some Muslims, that Ibn Taymīya sent one of his companions, Ismā'īl b. Nāḥiḍ b. Abī al-Waḥsh b. Ḥātīm al-Sayyid . . . 'Imād al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥassāb (d. 744/1343), to Ṣaydanāyā

³⁸² Zayyāt, *Khabāyā*, 76. ³⁸³ Ibid. 105. Translated from the Arabic.

³⁸⁴ Niccolò di Poggibonsi, *A Voyage Beyond the Seas (1346-1350)*, trans. T. Bellorini and E. Hoade (Jerusalem, 1945), 78.

³⁸⁵ Zayyāt, *Khabāyā*, 133. Zayyāt regards this as a 13th cent. tradition, 148. Other controversial traditions mention that the icon developed breasts which at times lactated and at others bled. Cf. Zayyāt, *Khabāyā*, 149.

with one of the priests (*qissīsūn*) ‘to pollute his filthy hand (*yullaw-ith yadahu al-‘adhira*) . . . and cut down the flesh (*lahma*) which they venerate (*yufazẓimūnahā*) over there. He greatly despised it (*abānahā*) because of his strong faith and courage.’³⁸⁶

According to Ibn al-Shiḥna, a shrine known for its healing attributes in the Aleppan village of Burāq was a pilgrimage site for Muslims and Christians, who made votive offerings and spent the night there.³⁸⁷

Some churches were as much pilgrimage sites for Muslims as they were for Christians. In the village of Ḥawrān, men on horseback travelled to the villages in the region collecting votive offerings (*nadhr*) for the church. Al-Qazwīnī reports:

Ḥawrān is a village from among Damascus’ districts, about which it is said is the village of Aṣḥāb al-Ukhdūd.³⁸⁸ It contains a giant church (*bī‘a*) still in use, of fine construction built upon marble pillars and ornamented with mosaics (*munaqqama bi-al-fusayfisā’*). It is called al-Najrān. Muslims and Christians make votive offerings (*yandhir labu*) to it. Tradition has it that votive offerings (*nadhr*) to it are tried and proven (*mujarrab*). A group travels throughout the lands on horseback to collect votive offerings to it, crying aloud: ‘Who will make a votive offering to Blessed Najrān.’ The Sultan has assigned a gift for it which they convey every year.³⁸⁹

The *ziyāra* in its diversity was not only a means of attaining spiritual fulfilment. For some, it provided an opportunity to discuss cures, to socialize, and engage in trade, while for others it was an opportunity to make illicit financial gain at the expense of devotees. As discussed in the following chapter, thieves and brigands seized the opportunity to rob pilgrims to the shrine of Ezekiel.

Muslims developed alternative pilgrimage centres in order to achieve a state of religious observance exemplified in canonical pilgrimage, though often such acts were controversial. Similarly, visiting the tombs of Muslim saints and, in the Shi‘i case, of Ḥusayn and ‘Alī far exceeded the temporal benefits accrued from performing the hajj. In the Sunni case, the tombs of renowned saints like Abū ‘Umar perhaps allowed devotees, particularly the poor and

³⁸⁶ Zayyāt, *Khabāyā*, 150.

³⁸⁷ Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Durr al-Muntakhab fī Ta’rīkh Mamlakat Ḥalab*, ed. K. Ohta (Tokyo, 1990), 83. Also see above, p. 164.

³⁸⁸ Referred to in Qur’an 35: 4; K. Paret, ‘Aṣḥāb al-Ukhdūd’, *EI*(2), 1. 692; commentators commonly identify them with the Christians of Najrān.

³⁸⁹ Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 124.

elderly, a means of participating more directly in the communal culture of the hajj and for some misguided individuals served as a substitute for the hajj. In Syria and Mesopotamia local traditions subsisted which equated the *ziyāra* with the hajj and which had no basis in the Sunna of the Prophet. Apart from Ibn Taymīya and his disciples, medieval theologians never commented on the popular association of the *ziyāra* with the hajj, because they did not equate commendable status with the fulfilment of the religious obligation.

In al-Shām as elsewhere, the founding of shrines was facilitated by devotees who approached rulers, or by rulers themselves, who experienced visions of saints like ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib and al-Khaḍir. Shiʿi and Sunni rulers realized the value of endowing shrines in order to maintain their good standing with the people.

The authenticity of a shrine was vouchsafed through dreams, cures, and miracles experienced at sacred places. Ibn Taymīya keenly observed that those who believed in the efficacy of pilgrimage sites did so on the basis of a night vision (*manām*) or a sign on the tomb indicating the righteousness of the tomb's inmate. Such a sign might be a pleasant odour (*rāʾiḥa ṭayyiba*), or a story from a person that that tomb was glorified.³⁹⁰ Publicly producing a sign or miracle was testament to a place's genuineness. Biographers and historians rarely questioned reports of such miracles, indicating general acceptance of their historicity. The founding of cult centres was associated first and foremost with the patronage of rulers of various dynasties and was not coterminous with the spiritual authority of the Abbasid caliph. Many centres existed which were formed through circulating local traditions and through individual acts of devotion stemming from individual reasons, such as personal tragedy, asceticism and renouncing the worldly life, or more generally, environmental factors, such as regional political instability, war with the Crusaders and schismatic groups, and Mongol invasions.

³⁹⁰ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿ*, 27. 457.

Jewish Pilgrimage

[T]he holy could be brought even closer through gestures of concord and gift giving which the men of late antiquity and the early middle ages treasured as the cement of their social world.

Peter Brown¹

‘*ALIYAH* is the religious commandment of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which Jewish men observed during the holy days of Passover (Pesach), the Festival of Weeks (Shavuoth), and the Feast of the Tabernacles (Succoth).² After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, ‘*aliyah*’ ceased to be incumbent upon Jews. Apart from the residents of Palestine, pilgrimage to Jerusalem was largely the province of wealthy merchants, theologians, and communal leaders and proved to be impractical for the vast majority of European and Near Eastern Jews, who hardly possessed the resources. Thus, Oriental Jews found it necessary to develop alternative pilgrimage centres, which although in terms of religious significance never surpassed Jerusalem, served to integrate them socially within their place of residence, as did the adoption of customs and rituals also practised by Muslims. Although holy days were the most important occasions for the performance of *ziyāra*, it was performed regularly.

The word *ziyāra* does not appear in any known Hebrew writings of medieval Jews. It is none the less attested to in the modern era in the Judaeo-Arabic liturgical poems which Iraqi Jews sang en route to the tomb of the Prophet Ezekiel.³ The Jews of Islamic lands regularly employed Arabic Islamic words, such as ‘Qur’an’ (Torah), *ṣalāt* (prayer), and *du‘ā* (supplication).⁴ It follows that ‘hajj’ was

¹ Brown, *Cult*, 90.

² Deut. 16: 16; Ex. 23: 17; *The Mishnah* (*Hagigah* 1: 1), trans. H. Danby (London, 1938), 211.

³ Avishur, ‘Shirei ha-‘Aliyah’, 157–85.

⁴ A. H. Freimann, ‘Mekhtav Preidah shel R. David ha-Nagid ha-Aḥaron me-Za’za’ei ha-Rambam el Qahal Mizrayim’, in S. Assaf and Y. Ben-Shmu’el (eds.), *Minḥah le-Yehudah Mugash le-Rav Yehudah Leib Žlotnik* (Jerusalem, 1950), 177.

used in the sense of pilgrimage to Jerusalem and *ziyāra* for pilgrimage to holy places. In a farewell letter addressed to the Egyptian community before his departure for Palestine and Syria, the exilarch David b. Avraham (d. 1386 CE), the last head of Egyptian Jewry from the line of Maimonides, refers to *mazārāt*, or pilgrimage places in Palestine:

we will not forget your almsgiving and your love at all. Even if you should forget us, we will not forget you in our supplications (*du'ā*) and requests (*ṭalab*) from the Truth, the Exalted, at the noble places (*al-amākin al-sharīfa*) and the great pilgrimage sites (*al-mazārāt al-ʿazīma*).⁵

Reiner maintains that individual *ziyāra* rituals in the Land of Israel were transformed into public rituals at the start of the Mamluk period, which was characterized by increasing accounts of groups of pilgrims visiting holy places.⁶ Did European Jews, including those who partook in certain *ziyāra* rituals, deem themselves as fulfilling a ritual obligation? Pilgrimage in the Talmudic sense referred to visiting cemeteries. In tractate *Tāʿanit* of the Babylonian Talmud, devotees visited tombs in order to seek the intercession of the ancestors on their behalf:

Why do they go to the cemetery?—With regard to this there is a difference of opinion between R. Levi Ḥama and R. Ḥanina. One says: [To signify thereby], we are as the dead before thee; and the other says: In order that the dead should intercede for mercy on our behalf. What is the difference between them?—The difference is with regard to going to the cemetery of Gentiles.⁷

Although a number of European Jewish travellers made pilgrimage to tombs, rituals, such as burning incense, occasionally

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Reiner, *ʿAliyah*, 218. European Jewish visits to the Holy Land also contributed to the institutionalization of *ziyāra* rituals, particularly during the 16th cent. with the growth of Kabbalistic movements. The bibliography concerning the relationship of Kabbalism to the veneration of saints in Galilee during the early Ottoman period and beyond is extensive. See, for instance, most recently P. B. Fenton, 'Influences Soufies sur le développement de la Qabbale à Safed: Le Cas de la visitation des tombes', P. B. Fenton and R. Goetschel (eds.), in *Expérience et écriture mystiques dans les religions du livre: Actes d'un colloque international tenu par le Centre d'études juives, Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1994* (Leiden, 2000), 163–90. Although the practice of *ziyāra* was popular among Kabbalists, the fundamental mystical experience bore an intellectual dimension uncharacteristic of the *ziyāra* practices of Oriental Jews.

⁷ *The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Tāʿanit* (16a) (London, 1938), 74 and n. 1. Only the Jewish cemetery is for intercession.

lying on tombs, and pronouncing certain formulas in Arabic were foreign to them.⁸ Oriental Jews regularly visited pilgrimage sites with the intention of receiving blessings and performing pilgrimage ritual above and beyond prayer and supplication, which all Jews perform in addition to reading from Scripture or commemorating a spot and its association with the sacred past.⁹ For the European Jew pilgrimage sites were both a novelty and a means of rediscovering the past, while for his Oriental co-religionist they were a means of securing blessings and cures and obtaining fulfilment of supplication. Pious visits often emphasized the urgency and the immediacy with which Jews sought these places and their desire to experience the miracles wrought there. The Palestinian population, unlike that of Iraq, Egypt, Damascus, or Aleppo, was constantly shifting.

Jews undertook pilgrimage for one of three reasons.¹⁰ While a few made pilgrimage to Jerusalem (*ʿaliyah*) for the purpose of permanently settling in the Land of Israel, others did so at the time of pilgrimage festivals for the sake of religious observance, such as the fulfilment of a vow for themselves or on somebody's behalf, after which they returned to their countries of origin. Meshullam, son of Rabbi Menahem of Volterra (1481 CE),¹¹ went on a pilgrimage for the purpose of fulfilling a vow which he made at a time of great need before returning to Italy.¹² Oriental Jews commonly fulfilled individual and collective vows on behalf of a community at pilgrimage sites, such as at the tomb of Ezekiel in Iraq or the tombs of the sages in Galilee.¹³ Others sought simply to venerate the tombs of prophets and saints.¹⁴ Petahiyah travelled from his native Germany to the Land of Israel, Syria, and Babylonia in order to prostrate himself (*lehishtateh*) on the tombs of the righteous saints (*zaddiqim*) and prophets.¹⁵ In Iraq, Petahiyah solicited a letter from the head of the Babylonian academy R. Samuel b. Eli ha-Levi in

⁸ European Jews may have had opportunities to witness Christian practices of saint veneration in their homelands. However, the culture and the mentality of the East were foreign to them.

⁹ Reiner briefly discusses this point, *ʿAliyah*, 220.

¹⁰ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣāʾot*, 9–30, esp. 9–13.

¹¹ His Italian name was Bonaventura di Manuelle da Volterra.

¹² Meshullam of Volterra, *Maṣṣā Meshullam me-Volterra be-Erez Yisra'el be-Sbenat 5241/1481*, ed. A. Ya'ari (Jerusalem, 1948), 19.

¹³ Concerning the cult of Ezekiel, see below, p. 229ff.

¹⁴ Reiner, *ʿAliyah*, 14. ¹⁵ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣāʾot*, 48–9.

order to gain assistance and safe conduct. The latter stated: 'In every place where he comes they should guide him and point out the site of the tombs of the scholars and the righteous (*zaddiqim*).'¹⁶ A wealthy Italian merchant R. Obadiah of Bertinoro (1488–90) had a similar goal.¹⁶ He states:

Henceforth, I record the location of every shrine of the most notable saints and prophets (*ziyyunei ha-zaddiqim ve-ha-nevi'im*) at which I prostrated myself (*hishtataḥti*) and prayed (*hitpalalti*) at their graves.¹⁷

Hishtataḥ is the act of prostrating oneself in prayer or supplication, before a saint's tomb.¹⁸

SOURCES FOR JEWISH PILGRIMAGE

Six types of sources,¹⁹ which do not represent literary or devotional genres, shed light on medieval Jewish pilgrimage: personal letters of European travellers addressed to family members and business associates, travel itineraries of European Jews, incidental poems, and from the Cairo Geniza, personal letters, merchant letters and inventories, and lists of tombs.²⁰ Arabic literary and historical works occasionally mention Jewish shrines.

Letters, itineraries, and lists

Letters of European Jewish travellers and merchants addressed to relatives, friends, and business associates provide sporadic yet significant details about tombs and shrines and devotional practices as do travel itineraries composed by European Jews for their co-religionists back home.²¹ All accounts emphasize the Jewishness of the holy places, while some mention Muslim places

¹⁶ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 98–144. For background, see pp. 98–103.

¹⁷ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣ'ot Erez Yisra'el* (Ben-Zevi, 1938), 44.

¹⁸ E. Ben-Yehudah, *Milon ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit*, vol. 2 (New York and London, 1959–60), 7052–3. For a recent study concerning prostration in the early modern context, as it relates to Kabbalah, see Y. S. Lichtenstein, 'Hishtataḥ 'al Qivrei zaddiqim be-Toratam shel Adonei Morei ve-Rabanei ha-Ḥaṣidut u-ve-Minhageihem', *Dáat*, 46 (2001), 81–97.

¹⁹ This discussion is adapted from Ya'ari's introduction in *Maṣṣ'ot*, esp. 10–14.

²⁰ The *maqāmāt* of Judah al-Ḥarizi which incidentally mention pilgrimage to Iraqi Jewish shrines are mentioned in Ch. 1.

²¹ A succinct introduction to the letters (*iggerot*) can be found in Ya'ari, *Maṣṣ'ot*, 10–14.

or common shrines.²² Visiting tombs and shrines was rarely the focus of letters.

Itineraries contain descriptions of pilgrimage sites regarded as holy through their association with Scripture and Exegesis, pilgrimage ritual, topographical descriptions, and population estimates of Jews and their communal leaders.²³ At times itineraries were written upon the traveller's return home or were published posthumously. Writers often describe the strange and wondrous sites, happenings, encounters with the holy, and the novel practices of other faiths in the Holy Land, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. Itineraries regularly include major centres of Galilean pilgrimage like Meron, Safed, and Tiberias. Pilgrimage routes did not have the ritual significance they did among Sunnis in Egypt and Shi'is as sometimes routes differed greatly. Itineraries do not give instructions on how to perform pilgrimage, which by contrast, is an important component of Islamic pilgrimage guides, nor do they suggest visiting shrines in a prescribed order or all the sites in a given region.

The Iberian Benjamin of Tudela (1165–73 CE), who travelled throughout the Near East, provides valuable information about the rituals of the cult of saints in the Holy Land, Egypt, and Iraq. Also writing during the twelfth century, Petahiyah of Regensburg, who travelled from Europe to Egypt and as far as Babylonia, pays particular attention to the tombs of the *ẓaddiqim* and the legends and rumours surrounding them.²⁴

Rabbi Jacob (1238–44 CE), the emissary of Rabbi Yehiel of Paris, who settled in Acre during the thirteenth century at a time of pogroms against French Jewry, composed a list of tombs in the form of a travel itinerary intended for European Jews who resided in Palestine, the first part of which concerns pilgrimage sites within Palestine.²⁵

These are the journeys (*meṣṣā'ei*) of the Children of Israel who wish to go and prostrate themselves (*lehishtate'ah*) and pray (*lehitpalel*) at the tombs

²² Prawer, *History*, 175.

²³ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 13. For a detailed discussion of the itineraries of the 12th and 13th cent., see Prawer, *History*, 169–250.

²⁴ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 50.

²⁵ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 115–29. Also see J. D. Eisenstein (ed.), *Oẓar Maṣṣā'ot: Qoveẓ Tiyurim shel Noṣṣim Yehudim be-Erez Yisra'el, Ṣurya, Mizrayim ve-Araẓot Aḥerot* (New York, 1926), 65–71; Prawer, *History*, 230–2.

of the ancestors (*avot*), the *zaddiqim* and the holy ones (*qedoshim*) who are [buried] in the Land of Israel . . .²⁶

The second part also relies on the oral traditions of Palestinian Jews, who were accustomed to making pilgrimage outside the Land of Israel.

These are the journeys which they make from the Land of Israel abroad and those who wish to go to pray in the holy synagogues which were built in the first generations and venerate (*lehishtateah*) the tombs of the *zaddiqim* who are buried abroad.²⁷

Jacob b. Nathanel ha-Kohen, an Ashkenazi Jew who lived during the second half of the twelfth century at the time of the Crusades, journeyed to the Holy Land for the purpose of recording the various holy places, especially the tombs of *zaddiqim*.²⁸ The account was written upon the author's return to Europe. In the sixteenth century Rabbi Moshe Baṣṣola mentions that on the first day of Passover he along with a group of men and women prayed at all the monuments of the *zaddiqim* in Tiberias (*lehitpalel 'al kol z'iyunei ha-zaddiqim*).²⁹ The presentation of European Jewish travel itineraries was influenced by the itineraries of Christian writers to the Holy Land.³⁰ Beginning in the sixteenth century lists of tombs and their locations were mass-produced in Italy, which had a centuries-old tradition of producing Christian pilgrimage guides.³¹

The Cairo Geniza as a source for Jewish pilgrimage

The Cairo Geniza contains two major types of accounts which concern pilgrimage either wholly or incidentally, private letters and merchants' inventories, and lists of tombs. The former generally were composed by Egyptian Jews in the India trade visiting the shrine of Ezekiel in Iraq. Pilgrimage lists do not constitute a literary genre, but served as a basis for later lists of pilgrimage sites published in Venice and elsewhere.³² Oriental Jews who travelled from Syria and Lebanon to Palestine rarely had need for

²⁶ Translation is Adler's, *Jewish Travellers*, 126; Eisenstein, *Ozar Maṣṣa'ot*, 70.

²⁷ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 126 (modified); Eisenstein, *Ozar Maṣṣa'ot*, 70.

²⁸ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣa'ot*, 56. ²⁹ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 156.

³⁰ J. K. Hyde, 'Italian Pilgrimage Literature in the Late Middle Ages', in D. Waley (ed.), *Literacy and its Uses* (Manchester, 1993), 136-61.

³¹ For a discussion of these works, see Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 72-84.

³² *Ibid.* 17-71.

pilgrimage lists as their guides knew the routes and local pilgrimage places.

Two recently published lists provide significant details about the locations of Jewish tombs. Ilan's list A, which dates to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, mentions 41 pilgrimage places, often giving biblical place-names.³³ The learned scribe was either a Palestinian Jewish immigrant to Egypt or an Egyptian visitor who copied the list in the Land of Israel.³⁴ Furthermore, the composer remarks concerning a number of sites, 'Thus, it is their custom to gather there on this day.'³⁵ The author also mentions several Muslim shrines at the Galilean villages of Kefar Kanna, Kabul, Kefar Manda, and elsewhere where he observed mosques over the tombs, and states that Muslims pray at the tomb of the Prophet Jonah in Kefar Kanna.³⁶ This list also includes descriptions of monuments.³⁷ The second list, Ilan G, whose composition dates to the eleventh or twelfth century and includes 33 pilgrimage sites, is less uniform in its descriptions of places and routes and gaps exist in the itinerary.³⁸ Although both lists consist of elements common to a travel itinerary, the first account has the hallmark of a personal pilgrimage experience as is indicated by the composer's description of Samuel's tomb, which is discussed later.³⁹

JEWISH CONDEMNATION OF THE ZIYĀRA

The polemical tract of a tenth-century resident of Jerusalem, the Karaite theologian Sahl b. Masliaḥ, against the Rabbanites is the earliest known account which attests to Jewish veneration of saints and a cult at the tomb of Rabbi Yossi the Galilean. No medieval Rabbanite responsa against the practice of saint veneration exist. Sahl writes:

How can I be silent while certain idolatrous practices are rampant among Israel? They pass the night among tombstones. They make requests of the dead (*dorshim el ha-metim*), entreating 'O Yossi the Galilean, cure me (*rapeini*), grant me a child (*hebtineni*).³ They light candles upon the graves of the righteous ones (*madliqim nerot 'al qivrei ha-ḡaddiqim*) and burn

³³ Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 94–9.

³⁴ This is Ilan's view, *ibid.* 85. ³⁵ *Ibid.* 95. ³⁶ *Ibid.* 96.

³⁷ For a detailed discussion of this list, see *ibid.* 85–93.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 126–8. ³⁹ *Ibid.* 98–9, lines 1–15.

incense before them (*maqṭirim lefaneihem ʿal ha-levanim*) and tie knots on the date palm of the saint (*qoṣhrim ʿaqadim ʿal tamar ha-zaddiq*) in order to cure a host of illnesses. They make pilgrimage (*ḥogegim*)⁴⁰ to the tombs of these dead saints and make votive offerings to them (*nodrim la-hem*), entreat them and request that they fulfil their wish (*mevaqshim me-hem latet lahem ḥefzam*) . . .⁴¹

Sahl is not concerned that Jews prayed to God for the fulfilment of supplication: the Rabbanites had erred in their belief by venerating the dead. Family members made pilgrimage together. This is one of the earliest references to Jewish women visiting tombs, though it was common for Jewish and Muslim women, in Galilee and elsewhere, to visit pilgrimage sites in order to conceive. With the exception of tying knots on date palms, these practices are also attested to in Muslim sources.

In his Arabic commentary to the Book of Exodus, Sahl again attacks the Rabbanites in a manner reminiscent of the Muʿtazila by cleverly employing Scripture to show that Jews throughout the Islamic world had erred in their ways. Invoking Isaiah 65: 4, he likens to unbelievers those who spend the night at tombs awaiting fulfilment of their supplication.

Down to this day amidst the *umma* exist the rest of the atheistic doctrines (*madhāhib dahrīya*) for which reason the *umma* was uprooted from the Homeland because they visit the graves (*yamurrū ilā*), perfume them with incense (*yubakkkhirū lahā*), believe in (*yaqūlūna bi-*) spirits (*shedim*) and request fulfilment of their needs (*yasalū ḥawāʾijahum*) from the dead and spend the night at the tomb (*yabitū māʾa al-qabr*) if their needs are not fulfilled during the day as Scripture says '[a people] who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places' (Isa. 65: 4). In Iraq, they repair to (*yamḏū ilā*) Shafūta⁴² and to the tombs of Ezekiel and Barukh where they perfume them with incense (*yubakkkhirūnahum*) and entreat them (*yasalū al-ḥawāʾij*) (alt. make requests) and in Syria to Dalata and ʿArāba and ask for their needs to be fulfilled (*yaṭlubū murādātihim*) at the tombs of R. Yossi and such-and-such Rabbi.⁴³

⁴⁰ L. Nemoy, 'The Epistle of Sahl Ben Masliaḥ,' *PAAJR*, 38–9 (1970–1), 154 n. 17. Nemoy regards *ḥongim* (to circumambulate) as more likely.

⁴¹ The entire Hebrew text of *Sefer Tokbaḥat Megullah* of R. Sahl ha-Kohen b. Masliaḥ can be found in S. Pinsker, *Liqutei Qadmoniot* (Vienna, 1860), 25–43. The passage in question is on pp. 31–2. Also see J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, 1931–5), 2. 56 n. 106. For an English translation, see L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology* (New Haven, 1952), 115–16, 350.

⁴² Mann suggests a possible corruption of Shafitūb (Nehardea), *Texts and Studies*, 1. 87 n. 105.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 1. 87–8.

The language of *ziyāra* belonged to a common base shared by Jews, Muslims, and Christians, as represented in the expressions *yasalū al-ḥawāyij*, *yatlubū murādātihim*, etc. However, Sahl employs *yamurrū* (they stop by) instead of the more common expression *yazūrūna* (they visit) for the act of visiting tombs.

THE SHRINE OF MOSES AT DAMMŪH

The synagogues of Moses and Elijah were among the holiest synagogues to Oriental Jews. The most important pilgrimage site for Egyptian Rabbanites and Karaites was the Synagogue of Moses (Kanīsat Mūsā) at Dammūh,⁴⁴ which they believed Moses founded.⁴⁵ Dammūh was a place of religious observance and social activity during Pentecost, when the Torah was revealed, and on the 7th of Adar, the day of Moses' birth and death.⁴⁶ Jews also believed that God spoke to the Prophet there. A seventeenth-century historian, Yoşef Şambari, mentions that at the time of the exilarchate the community sent out messengers to the Jewish communities of Egypt inviting them to fast and pray in the Synagogue on the 7th of Adar. Men and women from all over Egypt, including the exilarch and other prominent members of the community, gathered there on the seventh of the month for fasting and prayer and on the eighth for drinking and merrymaking.⁴⁷ Pilgrims risked their lives and belongings on roads infested with brigands and other

⁴⁴ For a discussion of the Geniza sources for the shrine of Moses, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 5. 20–4. Also see Joel Kraemer's insightful study of the cult, 'A Jewish Cult of Saints in Fātimid Egypt', in *L'Égypte Fatimide son art et son histoire* (Paris, 1999), 579–601.

⁴⁵ Goitein states that 'all flocked there for edification, or enjoyment, or both. Sometimes Muslims were invited by friends . . .', *Med. Soc.* 5. 20. For a detailed discussion of Jewish pilgrimage to Dammūh, see pp. 19–25 and for gifts made to it, see *Med. Soc.* 2. 111, 485. Also see E. Carmoly (trans.), *Itinéraires de la Terre Sainte des xiii^e, xiv^e, xv^e, xvi^e et xviii^e siècles* (Brussels, 1847), 488 n. 218. Carmoly remarks that the synagogue at Dammūh, 'est le principal objet de la vénération des israélites en Égypte'.

⁴⁶ S. Aşşaf, *Meqorot ve-Mehqarim be-Toledot Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 1946), 155. Aşşaf gives a number of other popular beliefs. A translated Geniza document concerning the Synagogue of Dammūh can be found in Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 5. 19–25. In 1173 CE Ibn Şālih, an Armenian traveller, mentions that the Rabbanites and Karaites fought over the issue of lighting candles there on the Sabbath.

⁴⁷ Yoşef Şambari, *Sefer Divre Yoşef: Elef u-Me'ah Shenot Toladah Yehudit be-Zel ha-Islam*, ed. S. Shtober (Jerusalem, 1994), 158–9; Aşşaf, *Meqorot*, 155.

dangers to travel to the Synagogue in order to celebrate the holy days.⁴⁸ This only made the goal all the more desirable. Meshullam of Volterra, who visited there in 1481 CE, observed that Moses 'used to pray and reside there when he went to speak with Pharaoh. Many Jews told me that wondrous things (*inyanim nora'im*) occur there every day.'⁴⁹ During the pogroms of 1301 CE the Synagogue was closed along with five others.⁵⁰ A fourteenth-century Geniza list of pilgrimage sites mentions that Jews from all over made pilgrimage, lit candles, and burned incense (*maqṭirin bah qateret*).⁵¹ According to the following account of the fifteenth-century Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī, who visited the Synagogue, pilgrimage to Dammūh was a substitute for pilgrimage to Jerusalem (*yaj'alūna dhālika badal ḥajjihim*):

The Synagogue of Dammūh. This synagogue is the greatest place of worship for the Jews in the Land of Egypt. They are unanimous that this is the place to which Moses b. 'Imrān . . . repaired when he used to deliver God the Sublime and Exalted's commandments to Pharaoh while he was resident in Egypt from the time after he came from Midyan to the time of the Exodus (lit. he led the Children of Israel out of Egypt). The Jews allege that the existing building was built after Titus' destruction of the Second Temple by forty years. That is, a little over five hundred years before the appearance of the Muslim religion. The synagogue contains a very large Anzalakht tree which they do not doubt is from the time of Moses. . . . They say that Moses . . . planted his walking stick in its place and then God caused this tree to grow there. . . . This synagogue has a holy day, on which Jews journey to it (*yarḥal*) with their families at Pentecost which is in the month of Sīwān. They make that in place of their pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to Jerusalem . . .⁵²

Unlike *'aliyah* to Jerusalem, which was almost exclusively the practice of males, *ziyāra* to Dammūh was a family affair. According to a decree issued by the Jewish communal authorities dating from c.1010 CE, Jews were to desist from merrymaking, beer-brewing, playing games and musical instruments, and dancing.⁵³

The Mamluk sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī ordered the Synagogue's destruction in 1498 CE.⁵⁴ Despite this, the Jews of Egypt continued

⁴⁸ Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 5. 23–4. Goitein refers to the dangerous journey of a man who visits for devotion, though not during the holy days.

⁴⁹ Meshullam of Volterra, *Maṣṣā'*, 54. ⁵⁰ Aṣṣaf, *Meqorot*, 155.

⁵¹ Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 136. ⁵² Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz*, 2. 464–5.

⁵³ Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 5. 21–2, 509 n. 52.

⁵⁴ E. Ashtor, *Toledot ha-Yehudim be-Miṣrayim ve-Šuryah Taḥat Shilṭon ha-Mamluqim*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1944–70), 2. 503.

to preserve legends concerning this Synagogue and the sacred tree which Moses planted.

THE CULT OF ELIJAH

Like their Muslim neighbours, Jews also venerated the Prophet al-Khaḍīr, whom they referred to in Hebrew as 'Eliyahu ha-Navi' (Prophet Elijah).⁵⁵ At the centre of the cult of the Prophet Elijah were sanctuaries or small rooms within synagogues referred to as *heder Eliyahu* (the room of Elijah), *me'arat ha-khevyah* (a hidden enclosure within a cave), or simply as *hevyah* (a hidden enclosure) and were unique to Palestine, Egypt, and especially Syria.⁵⁶ Such sanctuaries were to be found in caves beneath synagogues. Jewish travellers from the Iberian Peninsula, France, Italy, Germany, Bohemia, and the Crimea usually included these synagogues in their itineraries. One of the most important synagogues of Elijah mentioned in medieval travel accounts can still be found today in Jawbar, outside Damascus.⁵⁷ In addition to Jawbar, Rabbi Jacob of Paris visited other synagogues of Elijah in the Syrian towns of Baḥsītā, Lādhiqīya, Ḥamā, and Hims.⁵⁸ Around 1210 CE Samuel b. Samson visited the Synagogue of Elijah in Jawbar commenting: 'We prayed there in the synagogue which Elijah built. It is very beautiful and lies outside the city [of Damascus].'⁵⁹ During the late

⁵⁵ Concerning the identification of al-Khaḍīr with Elijah, see above, pp. 177ff. Concerning the cult of Elijah, see J. Braslavski, 'Me'arat Eliyahu ha-Navi mi-Qahir 'ad Ḥalab', *Yedot 'Am*, 7 (1961), 49–57. Concerning the cults of Elijah and al-Khaḍīr among Jews and Muslims, see J. W. Meri, 'Re-appropriating Sacred Space', 1–28.

⁵⁶ Ben-Yehudah gives the form *haviyah* defining it as a 'hiding place'. *Milon ha-Leshon ha-Ivrit*, 2, 14–20. No Iraqi Jewish shrines are attested to in medieval sources. However, during the 20th cent., E. S. Drower mentions seeing a domed shrine of Elijah at the shrine of Ezekiel in Iraq and mentions their existence at other Iraqi Jewish shrines, 'Evergreen Elijah: Ritual Scenes from Jewish Life in the Middle East', in J. Neusner and E. S. Freuchs (eds.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Studies in the Ethnography and Literature of Judaism*, vol. 6 (Atlanta, 1989), 61.

⁵⁷ The Aleppan Synagogue of Elijah was destroyed in the 1950s. A modern commemorative rock outside the Jawbar sanctuary bears in Hebrew, Arabic, and French, the following inscription: 'On this spot the Prophet Elisha ben Saffath was anointed by the Prophet Elijah, May he be remembered unto good, in the year 3043 of the Creation.' A picture of the rock can be found in Laurent d'Arvieux, *Wasf Dimashq fi-al-Qarn al-Sābī 'ashara (1660–1701 CE): Mudhakkirāt al-Raḥḥāla al-Faransī Laurent d'Arvieux*, ed. and trans. A. Ibesch (Damascus, 1986), 56.

⁵⁸ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 126–7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 110 (modified).

thirteenth century an anonymous pupil of Naḥmanides, who also visited the Synagogue, mentions that

Between the gardens is a synagogue of Elijah, may he be remembered unto good. It is awesome. There is no other like it. [Muslims] proclaim that this very building belongs to none other than the Messiah King . . .⁶⁰

This suggests that Muslims venerated the place because of its association with the Messiah. Taking this work as one of the bases for his pilgrimage guide, an anonymous Oriental Jew writing in the early fourteenth century mentions synagogues of Elijah in Ḥiṣṣ, Jubayl (near Beirut), and Lādhiqīya and a grotto (*me'arah*) in Ba'labakk.⁶¹ In 1481 CE Meshullam b. R. Menaḥem of Volterra mentions a synagogue of Elijah in Jerusalem. 'All the Jews testify that the smaller one was built by the Prophet Elijah and that he used to pray there.'⁶² He observed a *heikhal* (i.e. a chamber) within it which contained a chair of Elijah and eternal lights.⁶³ During a visit to Alexandria, Rabbi Meshullam mentions that Elijah built its synagogue, which contains the chair of Elijah and eternal lights.⁶⁴ In a letter to his father in 1488 CE Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro observed while passing through Alexandria en route to Jerusalem that

Most of the community prays in the smaller of the two synagogues because it is associated with the Prophet Elijah of blessed memory. . . . They say that Elijah appeared there to an old man. Blessed be He who knows the truth of the matter.⁶⁵

He also reports a Synagogue of Elijah in Fuṣṭāṭ, Egypt 'in which there are eternal lights (*kee sham madliqim ner tamid*)'.⁶⁶ Jews believed that Elijah had either appeared in these synagogues or had built them. During a visit to Jawbar in 1522 CE Rabbi Moshe Baṣṣola reports that

⁶⁰ Anonymous, *Toza'ot be-Ereẓ Yisra'el*, in Ya'ari, *Maṣṣa'ot*, 94. The reference is to 'Īsā in the Islamic context.

⁶¹ *Eleh ha-Maṣṣa'ot*, ed. L. Grünhut and M. N. Adler (Jerusalem, 1903), 158–64.

⁶² Ya'ari, *Maṣṣa'ot*, 142. An anonymous pupil of Naḥmanides writing during the late 13th cent. mentions the Synagogue of Elijah in Jerusalem, though there is no reference to a shrine: 'Jerusalem—The Synagogue of the Prophet Elijah. . . . It contains a ledge on the wall which is the place of the Torah. The tetragrammaton is engraved there in stone.' Ya'ari, *Maṣṣa'ot*, 87.

⁶³ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣa'ot*, 122.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 115–16. For a critical edition of Obadiah's letters, see *Mi-Italyah li-Yerushalayim: Iggrotav shel R. 'Ovadiyah mi-Bertinoro me-Ereẓ Yisra'el*, ed. A. David (Ramat Gan, 1997).

⁶⁶ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 115–16. Concerning *ner tamid*, cf. 'Nertamid', *EJ* 12. 966.

at the head of the Synagogue, there is a beautiful cave. They say that Elijah, may he be remembered unto good, hid himself and that this synagogue is here from the days of Elisha. It contains a rock about which they say that upon it [Elisha] anointed Ḥazael. Subsequently, R. Eliezar b. Arakh restored it.⁶⁷

The late thirteenth-century anonymous pupil of Naḥmanides mentioned that Elisha stood upon the rock, although according to Scripture, Ḥazael was never anointed king. Braslavski indicates another gigantic marble rock near the entrance to the synagogue.⁶⁸ There, Jews believed, the anointing took place. He also adds that at the entrance to the cave was a rock referred to as 'Elijah's Chair'. This second rock is not attested to in any of the medieval sources.

Writing at the end of the sixteenth century the Damascene native Rabbi Yisra'el Najjara mentions that

in the village of Jawbar is a holy synagogue (*mequdash*) magnificently constructed (S. of S. 4: 4). According to oral tradition, it was built by Elisha son of Shafat. Within there is a glorious and beautiful cave, said to be Elijah the Tishbite's. Mark how the radiance of this splendid place actually shines forth. All these things are true, as any who enter its precincts will attest (Isa. 4: 2).⁶⁹

Laurent d'Arvieux (1635–1702 CE), a French Christian traveller, provides further details about the Jawbar sanctuary:

The entrance to this cave is slightly less than average in width, where there is a descent down seven steps carved into the rock leading to the grotto whose surface area is approximately ten cubic feet. [It contains] three small hollow cavities like open chests in which Jews kept three lit candles. There is also another opening through which the ravens used to bring Elijah sustenance during the forty days which he spent there. The Jews have a synagogue adjoining this grotto.⁷⁰

So common were these sanctuaries of Elijah that one prominent Rabbanite, the Kabbalist Isaiah b. Abraham ha-Levi Horowitz of Prague (end of 1621 CE) wrote:

Among the aforementioned communities [i.e. Aleppo, Ḥamā, and Ḥimṣ] in every synagogue there is a sanctuary (lit. room) of Elijah of Blessed

⁶⁷ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 152–3.

⁶⁸ Braslavski, 'Me'arot Eliyahu', 53–4.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 53. The original composition is in Y. Najjara in an appendix to *Zemiroṭ Yisra'el*, entitled *Meimei Yisra'el* (Venice, 1599), 164.

⁷⁰ Laurent d'Arvieux, *Wasf Dimashq*, 59.

memory. In Damascus there is a room in the cave of the synagogue where the Prophet Elijah is and where the ravens bring him bread and meat. The room is still there . . .⁷¹

The room was 'still there' because Jews continued to believe in the efficacy of these sacred precincts and the miracles wrought by the Prophet. There is more to Isaiah's remarkable account. He adds that the room is always well lit, that there is always a quorum for prayer and that he himself had 'stuck his hand (*ve-henahti yadi*) through a deep hole with no beginning'.⁷² Isaiah, who had been up until this point a witness to the commemoration of Elijah, perhaps believed that he would make contact with the Prophet through this hole through which the ravens fed the Prophet.⁷³ The act of touching Elijah was a means of receiving *baraka*. Ashtor observes that Jews during the Mamluk and later periods used to make pilgrimage to the synagogue in order to be cured of illness.⁷⁴ Perhaps Elijah's resurrecting the widow of Sarepta's son (1 Kings 17: 21-3) may account for such pilgrimages.

MOSES B. SAMUEL (8TH/14TH CENTURY)

The autobiographical account of Moses b. Samuel, the fourteenth-century Karaite scribe to the ruler of Damascus, affords further insight into the veneration of the Prophet Elijah among Damascene Jews.⁷⁵ According to Moses' own testimony, he suffered greatly at a time of oppressive measures imposed by the Mamluk ruler of Damascus upon the Jews. This forced him to dissimulate and outwardly accept Islam.⁷⁶ On the occasion of the pilgrimage to

⁷¹ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 214.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Scholars of the Christian cult of saints like Patrick Geary employ *memoria* to refer to the obligations between living and dead and bringing the dead into this world through 'the manipulation of words (especially names) and objects'. P. J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), 18.

⁷⁴ Ashtor, *Toledot*, I. 267.

⁷⁵ Jacob Mann does not establish a connection between these shrines and the commemoration of Elijah, nor does he explain the ritual behaviour associated with the shrine depicted in Moses' account.

⁷⁶ For an introduction to the life of Moses b. Samuel see Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 2. 230 and Mann, 'Moses b. Samuel, a Jewish Katib in Damascus, and his Pilgrimage to Medinah and Mekkah', *JRAS* (1919), 155-84. This account is also translated in L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 168.

Mecca, sometime during the mid-fourteenth century, the ruler of Damascus compelled Moses to accompany him. Writing some years later, possibly after he left Damascus, Moses asserts his faithfulness to Judaism by composing this work.⁷⁷ At one point he reveals his longing for making pilgrimage to the Synagogue of Elijah in Jawbar:

On account of this my heart was sick and sad and I made pilgrimage (*ā'aleh*) to the Synagogue of the Prophet Elijah fasting, wearing a sackcloth and weeping. And I made a request before Him in the hidden enclosure. God, what will you give to me?⁷⁸

That this synagogue was an object of pilgrimage by Jews is indicated by the word *ā'aleh*, which is not ordinarily used in connection with visiting a synagogue for the purpose of prayer.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Moses invoked his pilgrimage to Jawbar as a Jewish parallel to the hajj: he did not merely approach the sanctuary for the purpose of praying there.⁸⁰ The *me'arah* or *khevyah* is supposedly where Elijah went to conceal himself *ve-neštarta* (1 Kings 17: 3) from Ahab and Jezebel. This passage is the only known reference to the sanctuary as a *ḥevyah* or 'hidden enclosure', and there is no explicit mention in 1 Kings 17: 3 of a cave-like structure. However, it is plausible that Elijah hid in a hillside cave in the Wadi Cherith before he reached Mt. Carmel.⁸¹

Moses sought to demonstrate his piety by describing his own behaviour at a shrine of a prophet who was at the heart of Judaism. His wearing sackcloth was an act of self-humiliation, atoning for his sins, and mourning for the destruction of the Temple. On this

⁷⁷ Mann conjectures that Moses may have fled Damascus and composed the *Dīwān* elsewhere. See Mann, 'Moses b. Samuel', *JRAS* (1919), 156.

⁷⁸ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 2. 230. In *JRAS* Mann translates *ve-efros baqashati lefanav* as 'I prayed before him [God]', 'Moses b. Samuel', 182. *Baqash* also refers to supplication, not merely prayer. The above translation follows the Berlin MS of the *Dīwān*. An alternate version is given by Mann: 'On account of this my heart was sick and sad and I made pilgrimage to the Synagogue of the Prophet Elijah and made a request before Him in the hidden enclosure of the cave. God, what will you give to me?'

⁷⁹ *Alah* is traditionally used in the context of pilgrimage to 'the Land of Israel'. Nemoy merely renders it as, 'I went. . .', *Karaite Anthology*, 168. For a further description of the Jawbar synagogue, see Ashtor, *Toledot*, 1. 266–7; A. von Kremer, *Mittelsyrien und Damascus* (Vienna, 1853), 170–1.

⁸⁰ Mann suggests, 'I entered before him (God) in the cave of hiding': Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 2. 230, and 'Moses b. Samuel', 182.

⁸¹ Also identified with Wadi al-Qalt. Cf. *JE* 5. 121.

basis, it would have been acceptable for Jews visiting such holy places to wear sackcloth in times of personal crisis. Like other Damascene Jews, he prayed, wept, and humbled himself in the presence of God and Elijah, believing that in this ecstatic state he would reach across the divide which separated his world from that of the Prophet, believing that God through Elijah would be there to fulfil his wishes. As he says, *ve-efros baqashati lefanav*.⁸² Jews made pilgrimage to these shrines for commemoration and for the purpose of seeking the intercession of the shrine's patron before God. On his visit to the shrine in 1641–2 CE the Karaite Samuel b. David observed that Jews were seeking the intercession of Elijah: 'Everybody made his own request [of Elijah] (*u-vaqashot kol ish le-'azmo*).' It is at this shrine that Moses turned to God in earnest to rid him of his evil master. Had he merely wished to pray before God, he might have done so in the presence of the ark. Yet he stood in front of the sanctuary of Elijah before he eventually ascended to deposit a petition to God in the ark: *ve-natati ha-iggeret be-beikhal*.⁸³ This was a specific ritual act in which Damascene and perhaps other Jews who visited there partook. Moses' prostrating and humbling himself before the shrine of Elijah and his depositing a petition to God in the ark had the desired effect. He was free; his evil master had died of a heart attack.

EZEKIEL

Ziyāra to the shrine of Ezekiel (Ḥizqīl)⁸⁴ in Iraq was a universal phenomenon. The earliest known account which mentions the shrine of Ezekiel is a letter written by the last Gaon of Sura, Rabbi Samuel b. Ḥofni, addressed to Rabbi Shemariah b. Elkhanan in Alexandria pleading for support for the Academy in the form of free-will offerings (*nidavot*).⁸⁵ In pleading his case, Samuel invoked Iraq's holy places, including the shrines of Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Barukh ben Neriah, and the rest of the Talmudic sages.⁸⁶ Ezra's

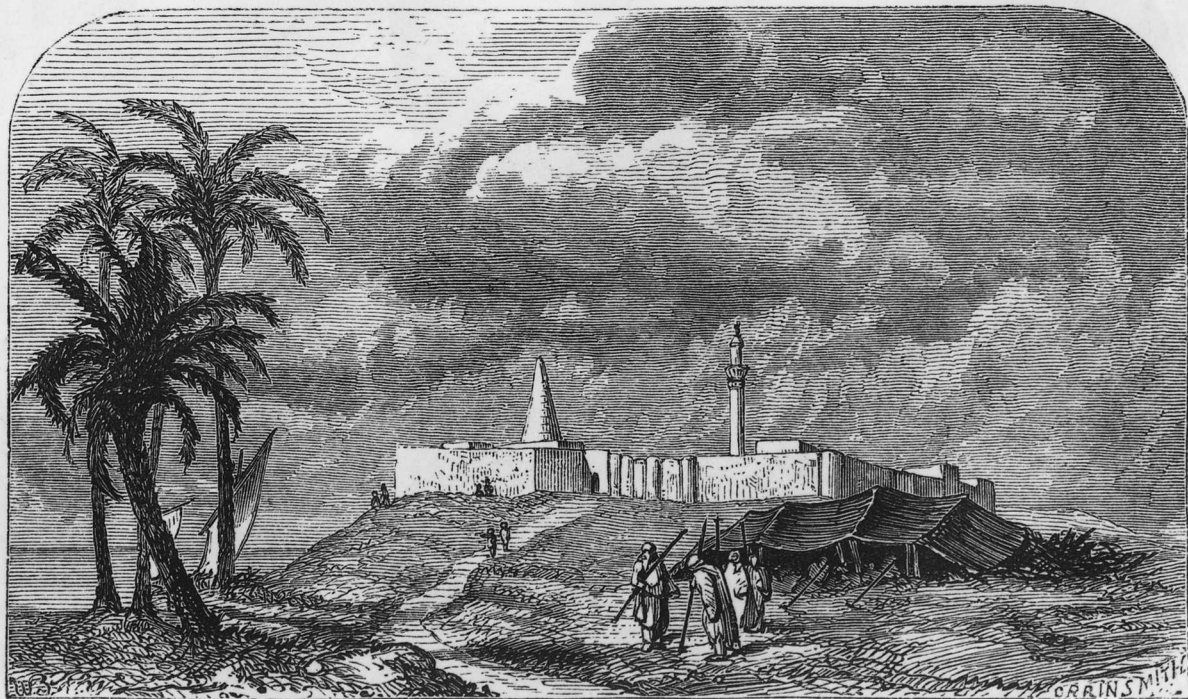
⁸² Nemoy translates this expression as 'supplicate'. *Karaite Anthology*, 168.

⁸³ Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 2. 231. For a description of the ark and the usage of the word *beikhal*, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 2. 145–7.

⁸⁴ The most complete study of Iraqi Jewish pilgrimage and pilgrimage sites is A. Ben-Yā'āqov, *Qevarim Qedoshim be-Bavel* (Jerusalem, 1973).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 38.

⁸⁶ S. Schechter (ed.), *Saadjana* (Cambridge, 1903), 123.



Keffil, and the Tomb of the Prophet Ezekiel.

FIG. 7. Shrine of the Prophet Ezekiel, Kifl, Iraq (exterior view) (19th cent. illustration)
(From W. K. Loftus, *Travels and Researches in Chaldæa and Susiana* (London, 1857), opposite p. 34)

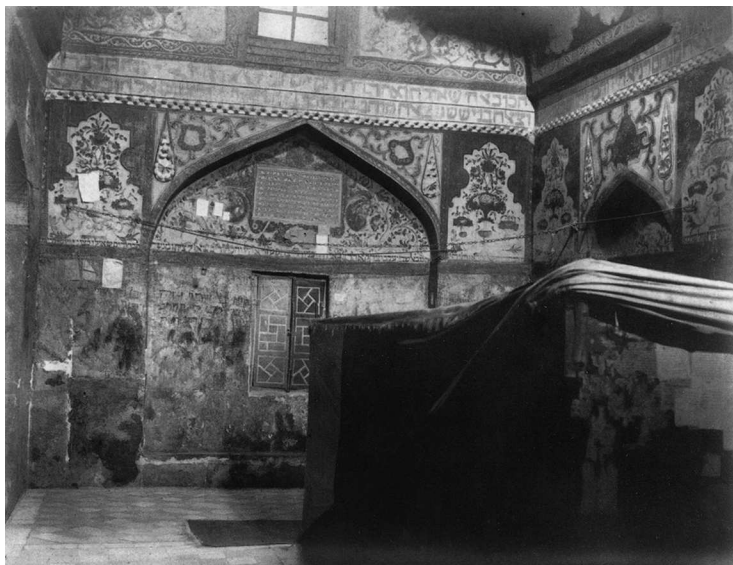


FIG. 8. Shrine of Ezekiel, Kifl, Iraq (interior view) (early 20th cent.)
(From D. S. Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad* (Letchworth, 1949 opposite p. 181))

shrine, the miraculous attributes of which were discussed in Chapter 1, was also visited by Muslims, who regarded it as the shrine of ‘Azra b. Hārūn b. ‘Imrān. Yāqūt mentions that Muslims and Jews visited it.⁸⁷ Al-Qazwīnī mentions that the village of Maysān housed ‘a shrine (*masbhad*) of the Prophet ‘Uzayr . . . famous, still standing (*māmūr*). Jews undertake serving it. It possesses endowments in perpetuity (*wuqūf*) and receives votive offerings (*nudhūr*).’⁸⁸

Of all the Jewish shrines in Iraq which attracted pilgrims from throughout the region, the most significant was the shrine of the Prophet Ezekiel, referred to by Jews and Muslims as Ḥizqīl and Dhū al-Kifl⁸⁹ (i.e. the guarantor, protector), and located in the town

⁸⁷ Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 2. 256.

⁸⁸ Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 311–12; Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 4. 714–15.

⁸⁹ G. Vajda, ‘Dhu ‘l-Kifl’, *El*(2), 2. 242.

of al-Kifl. Along with the tomb of Ezekiel, pilgrims visited the nearby shrines of Ḥananiah, Misha'el, and 'Azariah⁹⁰ or that of Ezra in Basra down to the early twentieth century. After the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, Jews went to reside in Babylonia. During the Middle Ages they owned extensive lands and properties around the shrine and lived side-by-side with their Muslim neighbours. The accounts concerning the shrine clearly demonstrate the state of peaceful coexistence between devotees. Jews and Muslims, and presumably Christians, made pilgrimage to the shrine of Ezekiel, which was near a synagogue, in order to pray, seek blessings, obtain cures, and to validate oaths.⁹¹ Legend has it that the synagogue was the site of Ezekiel's circumcision.⁹² Devotees did not regard the shrine sanctuary as exclusively either Jewish or Muslim, despite the fact that the cult was Jewish. The earliest travel account which mentions the shrine is to be found in the itinerary of the Iberian Benjamin of Tudela, who provides an extensive description of the rituals performed there.

Jews celebrated there from the New Year to the Day of Atonement, when there was great rejoicing.⁹³ They read from the Torah scroll believed to be in Ezekiel's handwriting on the Day of Atonement, while a lamp burned day and night over the tomb. Benjamin states: 'The light thereof has been kept burning from the day that he [lit] it himself, and they continually renew the wick thereof, and replenish the oil unto the present day.'⁹⁴ Regular vows of oil from Jews and Muslims ensured that the place would glow with the light of holiness. The shrine's holiness was further enhanced by Jews depositing books there from the time of the First and Second Temples.⁹⁵ They believed that those who consecrated books to the shrine would be blessed with sons.⁹⁶ Before setting out on a journey, devotees entrusted their valuables to the shrine, which they believed the saint would safeguard. Rabbi Petaḥiyah of Regensburg reports that

Whoever wishes to go to a distant land deposits his purse, or any valuables, with Ezekiel, saying: 'Our Lord Ezekiel, take charge of this valuable

⁹⁰ In Biblical tradition, the three companions of Daniel whom Nebuchadnezzar cast into a fiery furnace.

⁹¹ Modern-day sources refer to Christians visiting the shrine. Cf. D. S. Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad* (Letchworth, 1949).

⁹² Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 128.

⁹³ Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. and trans. M. N. Adler (London, 1907), 44 (Eng.), 66–7 (Heb.).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

for me until I return, and let nobody take it but its heir.' And many purses with money lie there rotting because they lay there many years. There were books there, and a worthless person wished to carry away one of the books, but could not, for pain and blindness seized him; therefore every-one fears Ezekiel.⁹⁷

Before entering Ezekiel's shrine, and quite possibly others, devotees removed their shoes, as was the custom up until the early twentieth century.⁹⁸ At Ezekiel's shrine as elsewhere, devotees pronounced formulas before depositing their possessions for safekeeping. The saint's presence was perceived by devotees and those who violated the sanctuary's sanctity. For every Jew, and it may be assumed Muslim, feared the saint. Petahiyah's itinerary emphasizes the Jewishness of the shrine for readers back home. Muslims constituted a nominal element. The reader was not interested in such details.

The shrine survived throughout the ages and Jews and Muslims flocked there to venerate the prophet and to obtain blessings. Nowhere else did pilgrimage to a Jewish shrine represent as dynamic and central a rite in the lives of devotees on such a scale. The shrine of Ezekiel was always an object of edification and continuous pilgrimage for the Jewish inhabitants of Iraq and Iran and their Muslim neighbours. The earliest mention of Muslims making pilgrimage there is from the twelfth century at least. Benjamin reports that prominent Muslims (*benei gedolei Yishma'el*) went there to pray because of their profound respect (*ḥiba*) for the Prophet Ezekiel. They also venerated Ezra the scribe and prayed at his tomb in Basra.⁹⁹ 'They love the Jews on that account.'¹⁰⁰ According to Petahiyah, the shrine was in the hands of brigands (*ḥaramīm*) during his visit there in the late twelfth century.¹⁰¹ Yet it may be assumed that Muslims visited the shrine centuries earlier.

Jews lived at peace with their Muslim neighbours and both Jewish and Muslim servants of the shrine, who were, according to

⁹⁷ Petahiyah (Benisch), *Travels*, 29 (modified).

⁹⁸ Avraham ben-Ya'aqov mentions the practice of Jews removing their shoes before entering Ezekiel's tomb, a ritual practice which Muslims observe upon entering mosques and shrines. See for instance, his brief article: 'Īd al-Ziyāra be-Baghdad', *Edut*, 1 (1946), 37.

⁹⁹ Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, 51 (Eng.), 73 (Heb.).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Petahiyah could be referring to a Bedouin tribe who exercised de facto authority in the area.

Benjamin, revered by the population, were protected from harm by the saint.¹⁰² Whereas neighbourhoods effectively segregated Muslims and Jews, shrines promoted interaction and mutual understanding. Jews and Muslims who visited Ezekiel had the same needs.

Although the tombs of Ezra and Rabbi Meir were also popular pilgrimage places, they were not as easily accessible to Jewish merchants, who regularly made pilgrimage to Ezekiel by sea. The shrine even attracted Egyptian pilgrims engaged in the India trade.¹⁰³ A number of Geniza documents preserve, although incidentally, accounts of the sea voyages of Jewish merchants to the shrines of Ezekiel, Ezra the scribe, and Rabbi Meir.¹⁰⁴ Merchants braved treacherous waters and pirates as they navigated from India up the straits of Hormuz or from Egypt around the horn of the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁰⁵ None the less, Jewish merchants journeyed from as far away as Morocco and Egypt to make votive offerings (*nedarim*) and free-will offerings (*nidavot*) on behalf of themselves and their communities. According to Benjamin, some even made pilgrimage from Persia and Media.¹⁰⁶ On the Day of Atonement they brought out the synagogue's most valuable relic, the Torah scroll which they believed Ezekiel had written:

A great gathering like a fair takes place, which is called Fera (i.e. fair), and they bring forth a scroll of the Law written on parchment by Ezekiel the Prophet, and read from it on the Day of Atonement. A lamp burns day and night over the sepulchre of Ezekiel; the light thereof has been kept burning from the day that he lighted it himself, and they continually renew the wick thereof, and replenish the oil unto the present day.¹⁰⁷

Like many Islamic and Christian shrines, and presumably other Jewish shrines, that of Ezekiel possessed its own endowments from the revenues of village and lands as well as individual vows, whereas in Galilee, and only with rare exception in Syria and Egypt, the shrines were not ordinarily part of complexes which could

¹⁰² Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, 45 (Eng.), 68 (Heb.).

¹⁰³ S. D. Goitein, 'be-Derekh le-Hishtahvut 'al Qever Yihezqel: Mikhtav men ha-'Ir Shamtuniyah she-be-Erez 'Iraq me-Tehilat ha-Me'ah ha-Ehat 'asreh,' in S. Moreh (ed.), *Meḥqarim be-Toledot Yehudei 'Iraq ve-Tarbutam*, 2 vols. (Or-Yehudah, 1981-2), 1. 12-18; *Med. Soc.* 5. 18. For an interesting study of the pilgrimage songs of Iraqi Jews in the modern era, see Avishur, 'Shirei ha-'Aliyah', 157-85.

¹⁰⁴ Goitein, 'be-Derekh', 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, 44 (Eng.), 67 (Heb.).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 44 (Eng.), 67 (Heb.).

accommodate pilgrimage traffic. The synagogue, mosque, or church complex was the most natural locus of communal religious activity to accommodate pilgrims. Benjamin further reports:

A large building belonging to the sanctuary is filled with books, some of them from the time of the First Temple, and some from the time of the Second Temple, and whoever has no sons consecrates his books to its use. The Jews that come there to pray from the land of Persia and Media bring the money which their countrymen have offered to the Synagogue of the [Prophet] Ezekiel. The synagogue owns property, lands and villages, which belonged to King Jeconiah, and when [the Caliph] Muhammad¹⁰⁸ came he confirmed all these rights to the Synagogue of Ezekiel. Distinguished [Muslims] also come hither to pray, so great is their love for the [Prophet] Ezekiel; and they call it Bar Malaḥa. All the [Muslims] come there to pray.¹⁰⁹

In a letter dated 1176 CE, a Jewish merchant resident in India wrote to his younger brother in Alexandria urging him not to postpone his wedding on his account. The merchant mentioned that he intended 'to visit (*azūr*) the tomb of al-Sayyid Yiḥezqel' and to continue his sea voyage.¹¹⁰ This is the earliest known Jewish account employing a form of the word *ziyāra*.¹¹¹ A merchant's register from about 1220 CE, from another Jewish merchant resident in India who intended to return to Cairo, details the sums of free-will offerings (*nidavot*) to 'Sayyid 'Ezra', to 'Sayyid Yiḥezqel', and to 'Rabbi Meir'. Benjamin also mentions the tombs of famous sages near the synagogue in Qusūnāt.¹¹² Oil and money (*mizumanim*) for the synagogue and the curtains of the ark of Law (*parokhet*) of a local synagogue in India were also enumerated.¹¹³ A letter which Goitein dates to the eleventh century at the latest mentions that its writer, who was a physician,¹¹⁴ made a personal vow (*alayya neder*) to visit the tomb of Ezekiel at the time when an epidemic was raging

¹⁰⁸ This same expression occurs in Petaḥiyah of Regensburg's account, concerning a Muḥammad whom he identifies as al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (r. 575/1180–622/1225). Benjamin's journey coincided with the reign of Muḥammad al-Muqtafi (r. 530/1136–555/1160).

¹⁰⁹ Translation is Adler's (modified), Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, 44 (Eng.), 67 (Heb.).

¹¹⁰ Goitein, 'be-Derekh', 13.

¹¹¹ From the 16th cent., *ziyāra* and *al-ziyāra* are specifically mentioned in Rabbinic literature, cf. Z. Vilnai, *Mazevot Qodesh be-Erez Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 1985), 40 and n. 38.

¹¹² Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, 45 (Eng.), 68 (Heb.).

¹¹³ Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 5. 508 n. 40.

¹¹⁴ Goitein, 'be-Derekh', 14.

throughout the city of Shamtuniah.¹¹⁵ The writer only incidentally mentions pilgrimage. A seriously ill child accompanied his father and the physician along the way in order to venerate the tomb of Ezekiel and be cured.¹¹⁶

So important was the shrine in the lives of the local Jewish inhabitants of the area that they commonly made vows there to permit, or refrain from, certain actions. In a legal query addressed to Maimonides (1135–1206 CE), a father inquires whether the vow he made is valid; namely, to pledge a certain sum of dinars to the Shrine of Ezekiel on the condition that he does not marry his daughter to Shim'on unless the latter agrees not to take her away to his place of residence. The petitioner further explains that the daughter whom he married off was of age at the time the vow of restriction was made and despite not receiving a dowry from him (i.e. her father), she desired to move away with her husband of her own accord. Maimonides rules that the vow must be fulfilled since it was made freely even if a dowry was not given to the daughter.¹¹⁷

Muslims also sought the saint's protection before undertaking long journeys. Petahiyah mentions that 'Every [Muslim] who makes Pilgrimage [and visits] the tomb of [Muḥammad] makes his way over to the tomb of Ezekiel on the River Sambation.'¹¹⁸ Al-Harawī mentions that the Jews of Iraq visited the tombs of other important saints. Yet he does not mention Muslims visiting Ezekiel:

Beneath al-Hilla is a village called Shūsha which contains the tomb of al-Qāsim b. Mūsā b. Ja'far. . . . Jewish pilgrimage places (*ziyārāt*) there include the tomb of Dhū al-Kifl who is the Prophet Ḥizqīl . . . in a place called Bīr Malāḥa¹¹⁹ east of a village called Qusūnāt. This village contains the tomb of Barūkh Ḥizqīl's master and teacher. It also contains the tomb of Yūsuf al-Rabbān to which they make pilgrimage (*yazūrūnahu*) as well as the

¹¹⁵ Goitein, 'be-Derekh', 14.

¹¹⁶ See Goitein's commentary, 'be-Derekh', 17.

¹¹⁷ Ben-Ya'aqov, *Qevarim*, 45. *Tshuvot ha-Rambam*, ed. A. H. Freimann (Jerusalem, 1934), 103.

¹¹⁸ The Prophet's tomb in Medina is ordinarily visited at the time of the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

¹¹⁹ Al-Mustawfī mentions 'Bīr Malāḥa, (i.e. brackish water)'. Ḥamd Allāh al-Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, ed. and trans. G. Le Strange, 2 pts. (Leiden, 1919), 2. 61. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa mentions that Bīr Malāḥa was a Shi'i town, *Rihla*, 1. 239 n. 1. (*Travels*, 2. 324). It is known at present as al-Kifl.

tombs of Yūsha' b. Nūn and 'Azrā—not the copyist and scribe of the Torah—God knows best.¹²⁰

The historian and geographer Ḥamdallāh Qazwīnī al-Mustawfī (c.680/1281–2–740/1339–40) mentions that the Mongol ruler Öljeitü (r. 703/1304–716/1316) erected a mosque complex on the site of Ezekiel's tomb and placed custodianship of the shrine in the hands of Muslims. The Ilkhānid ruler, who became a Shi'i later in his life, may have intended to show sympathy with the Shi'i population of the region.¹²¹ According to al-Mustawfī, Jews continued to make pilgrimage there:

The tomb of Ḥizqīl is located four miles from the northern side of Kufa near the village of Bayt Malāḥa.¹²² The Children of Israel make pilgrimage there like the Muslims do to the Kaaba. The Mongol ruler Öljeitü took control away from the Jews and gave it to the Muslims. He built a mosque and minaret there. On the eastern side of Kufa is located the tomb of the Prophet Yūnus (Jonah) and of Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān, who was a Companion of the Prophet.¹²³

Like al-Maqrīzī, who drew a parallel between the Synagogue of Moses and Jerusalem, al-Muṣṭawfī stresses the importance of the shrine to Iraqi Jewry, going so far as to regard pilgrimage to it as the Jewish equivalent to the hajj.

In a letter to his son from Jerusalem dated 1435 CE, Rabbi Yizḥaq Elfarra of Málaga reports hearing from a Basran Jew

that Ezra is located close to Baghdad at a distance of two days. Hosea b. Bari is buried there. Near by is Shoshan ha-Birah where Daniel and his friends [are buried]. In Babylonia itself are the tombs of Ezekiel and Barukh b. Neriah.¹²⁴

Ezekiel protected not only devotees' possessions from theft, but also the shrine's custodians from harm. Synagogues were built near holy tombs.

¹²⁰ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 76. Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 1. 594, mentions Jews visiting from a far.

¹²¹ D. O. Morgan, 'Öldjeitü', *EI*(2), 8. 168–9. Öljeitü desired to grace his own city of Sultaniya with the remains of 'Alī and Ḥusayn; Donaldson, *The Shi'ite Religion*, 59.

¹²² Most accounts render it as 'Bī'r (also Bīr) Malāḥa'. See above.

¹²³ Al-Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 2. 63; A. C. Quatremère, *Histoire des mongols de la Perse* (Paris, 1836), 24 ff.

¹²⁴ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 88; Ben-Ya'aqov, *Qevarim*, 46.

At a distance of about half a mile from the Synagogue are the sepulchres of Ḥananiah, Mishael, and ʿAzariah, and upon their sepulchres are large cupolas; and even at times of disturbance no man would dare touch the [Muslim] or Jewish servants who attend at the sepulchre of Ezekiel.¹²⁵

Petaḥiyah mentions several other tombs of saints to which *ziyāra* was made.

Thence it is three miles to the city of Qusūnāt, where there are 300 Jews. Here are the sepulchres of Rab Papa, Rab Huna, Joseph Sinai, and Rab Joseph ben Hamal and before each of them is a Synagogue where the Israelites pray every day. Thence it is three parasangs to Ain Siphtha, where there is the sepulchre of the prophet Naḥum the Elqoshite. Thence it is a day's journey to Kefar Al-Keram, where are the sepulchres of R. [Ḥisdai], R. ʿAzariah, R. ʿAqiba, and R. Doṣa. Thence it is a half-day's journey to a village in the desert, where there are buried R. David and R. Jehuda and Abaji, R. Kurdia, R. Sechora, and Rab Ada. Thence it is a day's journey to the river Raga, where there is the sepulchre of King Zedekiah surmounted by a large cupola. Thence it is a day's journey to the city of Kufa, where there is the sepulchre of King Jeconiah. Over it is a big structure, and in front thereof is a synagogue. There are about 7,000 Jews here. At this place is the [congregational mosque], for here is buried [ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib], Muhammad's son-in-law, and the Muslims come hither . . .¹²⁶

Sometimes the veneration of a saint led to conflict between devotees.¹²⁷ On one occasion, the veneration of the Prophet Daniel polarized the Jews of Sūsa (Shushan) into two opposing factions who vied for ownership of the tomb. This prompted the Seljuk ruler Sanjar b. Malik Shāh¹²⁸ (r. 512/1117–552/1157) to mediate between them. Benjamin observed:

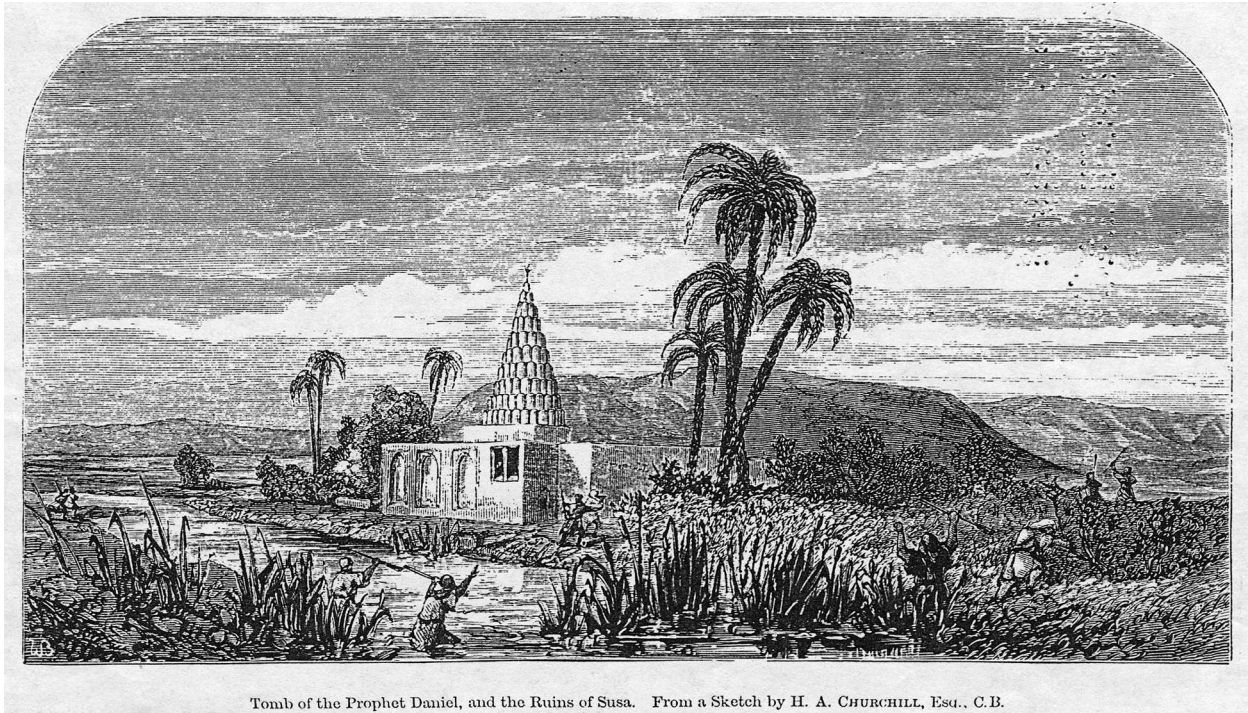
In front of one of the synagogues is the sepulchre of Daniel of blessed memory. The River Tigris divides the city, and the bridge connects the two parts. On the one side where the Jews dwell is the sepulchre of Daniel. Here the market places used to be. . . . On the other side of the bridge they were poor. . . . And they became jealous, and said: 'All this prosperity enjoyed by those on the other side is due to the merits of the Prophet Daniel who lies buried there.' Then the poor people asked those who dwelt on the other side to place the sepulchre of Daniel in their midst, but the others

¹²⁵ Translation is Adler's (modified), Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, 45 (Eng.), 68 (Heb.).

¹²⁶ See Petaḥiyah (Benisch), 13–16 (modified).

¹²⁷ Cf. Ch. 1.

¹²⁸ C. E. Bosworth, 'Sandjar', *EI*(2), 9. 15–17.



Tomb of the Prophet Daniel, and the Ruins of Susa. From a Sketch by H. A. CHURCHILL, Esq., C.B.

FIG. 9. Shrine of Daniel, Susa, Iran (19th-cent. illustration)
(From W. K. Loftus, *Travels and Researches in Chaldaea and Susiana* (London, 1857), opposite p. 322)

would not comply. So war prevailed between them for many days, and no one went forth or came in on account of the great strife between them. At length both parties growing tired of this state of things took a wise view of the matter, and made a compact, namely, that the coffin of Daniel should be taken for one year to the one side and for another year to the other side. This they did, and both sides became rich. In the course of time Sanjar Shah-ben-Shah, who ruled over the kingdom of Persia and had forty-five kings subject to his authority, came to this place.¹²⁹

Sanjar unsuccessfully mediated and chided Jews, Muslims, and Gentiles for their reprehensible behaviour. The coffin was placed within a crystal coffin and suspended from the middle of the bridge by a chain of iron. Sanjar eventually commanded that a place of worship be built for all to pray in, not just Jews, and he prohibited fishermen from fishing within a one-mile radius of the shrine.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE OTHER AT THE SHRINE OF SAMUEL

As early as the twelfth century Jews preserved records of their pilgrimage to the shrine of Samuel in the village of Ramah (Nabī Simwayl) outside Jerusalem, which was the residence of Samuel, his father Elqanah and his mother Ḥanah (I Sam. 1: 19). Samuel was buried in his house at Ramah (I Sam. 25: 1). A respondent solicited a ruling from Maimonides concerning, among other issues, the permissibility of taking an oath by the Sabbath or by the tomb of 'our Master Samuel' (i.e. the Prophet Samuel) to refrain for a said period from a certain action, such as drinking wine. Maimonides ruled that even where it is customary to drink wine, such as on the Sabbath, the respondent must refrain from doing so if he has taken an oath.¹³⁰ Rabbi Jacob of Paris comments that a mosque existed before the sepulchre (*beit*) of Samuel and his mother Ḥanah.¹³¹ An anonymous fourteenth-century pilgrimage list gives

¹²⁹ Translation is Adler's (modified), Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, 52–3 (Eng.), 74–6 (Heb.).

¹³⁰ Maimonides, *Tshuvot ha-Rambam*, ed. J. Blau, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1957–61), 2. 611.

¹³¹ Eisenstein, *Oẓar Maṣṣa'ot*, 68.

a valuable description of the shrine and its festivities and mentions that Jews from all over the Near East visited it:

In Ramah is Shmu'el ha-Ramati, . . . his father Elqanah and his mother Hanah. . . . Every year pilgrims (*olei le-regel*) alight there (*meraḳḳin*) . . . during the Festival of Weeks from every place and every city, from Petra, Shin'ar (Babylonia) and Ḥadrakh (Damascus). There they pray, bring votive offerings (*nedarim*) and free-will offerings (*nidavot*) . . .¹³²

Rabbi Yizḥaq Elfarra of Málaga (1441 CE) mentions that pilgrims came from all around to Jerusalem to prostrate themselves before the tomb of the Prophet Samuel.¹³³

Rabbi Yizḥaq b. R. Me'ir Latif (1480–5 CE), an Italian pilgrim from Ancona, mentions that relations between Jews and Muslims in the Holy Land were good, but that an incident occurred in which Muslims prevented Jews from entering the tomb of Samuel. This suggests that there may have been a mosque or prayer room there for Muslim villagers in the area.¹³⁴ He states:

Once the [Muslims] prevented the Jews from entering the anteroom (*tre-cilinun*) of the Prophet Samuel's tomb to pray. This righteous saint arose before them . . . and choked the throat of the one who prevented the Jews from entering to perform their prayer and said to him: Return the key to the Jews and they shall watch over my entrance (*yishḳodu 'al petaḥi*) because they are my children and not you (i.e. the Muslims). He immediately returned it. This I heard when I was there. Candles are always lit there (*ve-nerot ve dolqim*), and the [Muslims] make votive offerings (*mitnadvim*) and light candles (*dolqim*).¹³⁵

Meshullam of Volterra (1481 CE) observed that all the Jews who visited the shrine were accustomed to buying oil to give to the Synagogue of Samuel.¹³⁶ Not only did Meshullam observe this ritual, he partook in it. Obadiah of Bertinoro mentions that the shrine was in Jewish hands and that the 'the evil elders of Jerusalem had already sold the endowments (*haqdashot*)' of gold, silver, and the furnishings which the shrine possessed.¹³⁷ He also doubted the shrine's miraculous attributes, commenting that he never saw or heard of any miracles being produced there except barren women

¹³² Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 98–9. ¹³³ Petahiyah (Benisch), 109.

¹³⁴ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 94–8. ¹³⁵ Ibid. 96.

¹³⁶ Meshullam of Volterra, *Maṣṣā*, 74–5.

¹³⁷ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 139.

and the ill being cured by votive offerings or through the fulfilment of prayer. Even then, he expressed doubt.¹³⁸ An anonymous pupil of Obadiah's visited the shrine in 1495 CE and the adjoining synagogue to which the community sent a lamp to kindle the perpetual light every Sabbath.¹³⁹

During the Ottoman period, a tax was levied on pilgrims visiting Samuel and Muslims were responsible for the collection for three years.¹⁴⁰ The tomb was a source of conflict between Karaites and Rabbanites and the latter took control of the synagogue immediately after the Ottoman conquest.¹⁴¹ Occasional conflict erupted between Jews and Muslims because the former lit candles and, according to the account, prayed aloud in an offensive manner.¹⁴² A Muslim local resident of a neighbouring village mentions that Jews camped there and disturbed local residents with their tools, equipment, and animals.¹⁴³

GALILEAN PILGRIMAGE

The Galilean custom was to venerate the righteous sages of the Talmud and later generations at their tombs and shrines which dotted the landscape, at times of great need and to supplicate for rain. Not all Jews who settled in the Land of Israel visited the graves of the saints in the same manner as the inhabitants of Galilee. Apart from Kabbalists, who from the sixteenth-century played an active role in transforming the culture of *ziyāra* into an institution synonymous with their intellectual-spiritual pursuits, European travellers and those resident in the Holy Land participated at the margins of a popular devotional culture. The Seljuk conquest of Palestine, which forced the Academy to flee first to Sidon and then to Damascus, displaced Jews who resided in Galilee. In Tiberias, where an almost constant Jewish settlement existed throughout the Middle Ages, its inhabitants sustained the veneration of saints. An anonymous early fourteenth-century Geniza list mentions that

¹³⁸ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 139.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 160.

¹⁴⁰ A. Cohn, *Jewish Life under Islam: Jerusalem in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 102.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 102-3.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 103.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

Each year on the second day of Passover on the 15th of Adar, [Jews] come from every city and country and pray (*mitpalelim*), supplicate (*mithanenim*),¹⁴⁴ and prostrate themselves (*mishtathim*)¹⁴⁵ at the tombs of the same saints in the same village (i.e. Meron) or nearby villages. . . . Thus, it is their custom (*ve-kakh bi ha-massoret be-yadam*) to make pilgrimage (*la'alot*) and to gather there on this day.¹⁴⁶

‘*Aliyah* as it is described in this passage is synonymous with *ziyāra*. Oriental Jews and Muslims did not require a list in order to perform pilgrimage to local shrines, which they knew well. European travel accounts suggest possible pilgrimage routes followed by Oriental Jews. Yet the routes did not have ritual or historical significance for devotees. Eshtori ha-Parḥi, who suggested visiting the holy places, attributed holiness to pilgrimage sites in light of Scripture: ‘Whoever sees a place in which miracles (*niṣṣim*) were performed for Israel, says: “Blessed be He who produced miracles for our Fathers in this place.”’¹⁴⁷

Jews observing Muslims

Accounts of Jewish encounters with Muslims are relatively rare. The Oriental Jewish and Muslim inhabitants of Galilee regarded European Jewish travellers as a novelty. The Galilee and Lebanon as well as the tomb of the Prophet Samuel in Jerusalem were important devotional centres where Jews and Muslims interacted. Samuel b. Samson (1210/11 CE) mentions sites in Ṣafad, Kefar ‘Amuqa, ‘Alma, and Bar‘am where he observed Jews and Muslims venerating saints together. In Ṣafad, he visited the tomb of Rabbi Ḥanina b. Hyrkanus, where he observed its Muslim attendants:

(Tomb of) Rabbi Ḥanina b. Hyrkanus, in which there are sixteen recesses. We encircled them, weeping. [We built] there a wall for preventing the earth from falling in. Two [Muslims] remain there continually to attend to the light and supply oil in honour of the righteous man (*zaddiq*).¹⁴⁸

In Kefar ‘Amuqa,¹⁴⁹ we found the sepulchre of Jonathan, son of Uziel, over which there is a great tree. The [Muslims] bring oil to it and have a

¹⁴⁴ *Lebithanen* means to implore, entreat, or request a grace from someone for mercy. Ben-Yehudah, *Milon ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit*, 2. 1657.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 2. 7052–3.

¹⁴⁶ Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 95, lines 6–11.

¹⁴⁷ Eshtori ha-Parḥi, *Kaftor va-Perah* ed. A. M. Luncz (Jerusalem, 1897), 120.

¹⁴⁸ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 107 (modified); Ya‘ari, *Iggerot*, 80. The Hebrew text contains slight variations.

¹⁴⁹ Var. *Iggerot*, 80: ‘*aminu*’.

light burning there in his honour (*ve-madliqin ner le-khvodo*). They make their vows there, too, to his glory (*nodrim sham nedarim . . .*).

Alma. Before reaching that place we found the sepulchre of Rabbi Eliezer [ben Hyrkanus]. Two trees adorn his tomb; not a leaf may be removed from them by anyone. He is buried in a cave in the middle of the ground. A sort of hall (*olam*) is set up over his tomb. A stone having fallen from this monument (*maqom*), a root at once thrust out of the gap thus left and filled its place; and a branch pushing through another place encircled the sepulchre in such a fashion that it was no longer possible for a stone of it to fall down. [Muslims] bring oil to burn there. It is a great and marvellous wonder.¹⁵⁰

In a unique list of pilgrimage places, an Egyptian Rabbanite Jew who refers to himself as ‘Yitgadel the author of *She‘ar ha-Nesi’ut*’,¹⁵¹ preserves the Arabic names of pilgrimage places in Palestine and beyond the River Jordan. The list appears to have been composed at around the time of the Iraqi exilarch Sar Shalom’s visit to the Holy Land in 1371 CE.¹⁵² He mentions Aaron’s tomb in Petra (Hod ha-Har), which was a pilgrimage place for Jews and Muslims. Unlike other accounts, in which Jews polemicize against Muslims who prevent them from entering certain places or point out oppressive measures, the writer goes so far as to pray for the fulfilment of Jewish and Muslim prayers there:

In Petra inside the cave of Aaron the Priest the Holy of the Lord . . . the inner cave is sealed. Great miracles (*nišsei nišsim*) were produced many times. Many come to bow down (*lehishtahvot*) and prostrate themselves (*lehishtateah*). The Gentiles [i.e. the Muslims] maintain the place in great purity and for the honour of the Prophet (Aaron). . . . They respect and conduct the Jews and allow them to enter and prostrate themselves and pray there. May the Lord answer their prayers and our prayers and those of His nation Israel. Amen.¹⁵³

Moshe Baṣṣola visited several places in Lebanon where Jews, Muslims, and others came together for the purpose of worship, making vows, and seeking cures. He reports:

A quarter-mile outside of the city [of Sidon], I saw the tomb of Zebulon. Originally, it stood between two large pillars and a carob tree. The lord of the Muslims¹⁵⁴ built upon it a sepulchre (*beit*) surmounted by a cupola

¹⁵⁰ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 107 (modified); Ya‘ari, *Iggerot*, 81–2.

¹⁵¹ Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 135, line 41, and p. 142.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 131–44. ¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 135.

¹⁵⁴ Perhaps, the reference is to the governor of Sidon.

(*agol*). On the site (*maqom*) of the grave is a stone bench (*istabah*)¹⁵⁵ with a black cloth (*bagad shahor*) draped over it and lights before it out of reverence. Both pillars are still there, one inside built from within it and visible through the window and the other outside the sepulchre (*beit*). Adjoining the same sepulchre (*ziyyun*) is a large ancient building whose arches (*volte*) are still standing. They say that it was Solomon's *beit midrash*.¹⁵⁶ Before it is a well of running water from which they extract water with a water wheel with buckets.¹⁵⁷

The anonymous Oriental Jewish author of *Eleh ha-Maṣṣā'ot* (*These are the Journeys*) who augmented *Toṣa'ot Erez Yisra'el*, a pilgrimage itinerary of an anonymous pupil of Naḥmanides, recasts this work in the form of a travel itinerary and pilgrimage guide, perhaps to be used by his Oriental co-religionists.¹⁵⁸ The fact that he mentions Muslim sites, especially those not mentioned in any other Jewish source, suggests that he was aware of Jews venerating these sites, or that he at least regarded them as Jewish pilgrimage places. No evidence exists to suggest a Jewish community existed at Karak Nūḥ, the site of Noah's tomb for which he supplies its dimensions. The author opens the work by saying:

These are the journeys which one undertakes from the Land of Israel abroad in order to pray in the holy synagogues which were built in the earlier generations and to prostrate oneself (*lehishtateah*) at the tombs of the righteous saints (*ṣaddiqim*) who are buried there.¹⁵⁹

The itinerary contains elements in which only an Oriental Jew would be interested. Some of the pilgrimage sites are not regarded in other sources as Jewish pilgrimage sites and are only mentioned by Muslim authors. The shrine inventory includes the synagogues of Elijah in Jubayl (Lebanon), Ludkia (Lādhiqīya), and Aleppo, as well as three synagogues dedicated to Moses. The author also mentions the tombs of four anonymous saints (*ṣaddiqim*) in Aleppo, the Synagogue of Elijah in Ḥimṣ, the tower of David, a synagogue of Rabbi Eleazar ben Arakh, and a cave of Elijah in Ba'alath

¹⁵⁵ From Greek, *stibadion*.

¹⁵⁶ Beit Midrash is often translated as a rabbinic school, which is anachronistic in this particular context. Perhaps the author meant a Beit Midrash named after Solomon?

¹⁵⁷ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣā'ot Erez Yisra'el* (Ben-Zevi, 1938), 40.

¹⁵⁸ *Eleh ha-Maṣṣā'ot*, ed. Grünhut and Adler. For a detailed discussion of this work, see Prawer, *History*, 233–50.

¹⁵⁹ *Eleh ha-Maṣṣā'ot*, 158.

(Ba'labakk). In Karak he mentions the tomb of Noah, which is twenty-four cubits in length, and the tombs of Cain and Abel at the top of the mountains a day's journey from Ba'labakk. In Nebi Zaru'a he mentions the tomb of Eldad and Medad.

At a number of shrines in Galilee it was common practice for Jews and Muslims to visit each other's shrines and Muslim attendants allowed Jews to enter shrines. While passing through Temnat Seraḥ in 1441 CE, Rabbi Yizḥaq Elfarra of Málaga observed:

In Temnat Seraḥ, called in Arabic Kefar Ḥanūn [are the graves] of Nūn, father of Hosea and his son Joshua and Kaleb b. Yefuneh. A large sepulchre (*binyan*) [stands] on each of them. The attendants are Muslims. They kindle lights over them and let in the Jews. They sing songs of praise (*shiroṭ*) and say penitential prayers (*ṣliḥot*).¹⁶⁰

In a letter to his brother in 1489 CE, a wealthy Italian Jewish merchant, Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro, describes the state of co-existence between Jews and Muslims in the Galilean town of Safed:

I can only tell you by hearsay of the environs of the Holy City and the other adjoining districts. It is said that the Jews live quietly and peaceably with the [Muslims] in Safed, in the village of Cana, and in all Galilee, yet most of them are poor and maintain themselves by peddling, and many go about the villages seeking scanty means of subsistence.¹⁶¹

Writing at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Rabbi Jacob of Paris mentions a tradition concerning the efficacy of prayer at the Cave of Hillel and Shammai and their disciples in Meron:

The Israelites meet there on the second day of Passover, pray and say hymns (*mizmorim*) and when they find water in the cave, they all rejoice, for it is a sign that the year will be blessed. Many times they find no water, but when they pray the water comes at the wink of an eye.¹⁶²

During the late fourteenth century a Muslim chief qadi, Muḥammad al-'Uthmānī, recorded a similar tradition concerning the cave which undoubtedly circulated among the region's Muslim inhabitants. Although he does not mention the tomb of Shim'on bar Yoḥai, it is understood that it is the focus of celebration. Jewish

¹⁶⁰ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 109.

¹⁶¹ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 245.

¹⁶² Eisenstein, *Oẓar Maṣṣā'ot*, 68, Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 122. Translation is Adler's (modified). An anonymous pupil of Naḥmanides records a similar tradition which he borrowed from R. Jacob, Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 90.

pilgrims took holy water away with them from which they derived blessings. Al-ʿUthmānī reports:

Mirūn contains waterwheels and pools in a cave from which water trickles. On an appointed day of the year on the fifteenth of the month of Ayyār of the Jews (Passover) a great gathering of Jews would congregate there from near and faraway lands. They dug their canal around that place. Water flows out into that canal more than is customary. Jews take that water to distant lands.¹⁶³

Rabbi Yiẓḥaq b. R. Meʿir Latif of Jerusalem (1485 CE) commented that at times of great need men and women would go and pray inside the grotto (of Hillel and Shammai) and God would hear their prayer and bless them with rain.¹⁶⁴

Moshe Baṣṣola visited a number of Galilean shrines in 1521 CE, recounting:

I entered a sepulchre (*beit*) over the tomb (*qevurah*) of Hosea b. Beeri which is among the very last of the tombs of Israel in Safed. Muʿallim Zedaqah the Karaite, who resides in Damascus, built a splendid and ornate structure (*beit*) upon it. A lamp is always lit there from the alms (*me-nidvat*) of those who go there to prostrate themselves (in prayer). Opposite it is another sealed grotto where they say his father Beeri was buried.¹⁶⁵

The Muslim woman and the almond tree

European Jews who visited the Holy Land cultivated lore about the region, its wonders, and its inhabitants. The Kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Baṣṣola (1480–1560 CE) heard the story of an old Muslim woman who visited the tomb of the Tanna Rabbi Judah bar Ilʿai for the purpose of picking almonds sixty years prior to his own visit. He narrates:

Within a bowshot distance of the village [i.e. ʿAyn Zaytun] is the sepulchre (*ziyyun*) of R. Judah b. Ilʿai and R. Yossi, his son. Atop the sepulchre (*ziyyun*) is an almond tree which withered three years ago. Located there is a great field of olive trees and they are dedicated to the saint (*ḥaṣid*) [i.e. R. Judah bar Ilʿai] of blessed memory. They say that a Muslim woman climbed the tree on the grave to pick almonds. The other women told her

¹⁶³ B. Lewis, 'An Arabic Account of the Province of Safed—I', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 15 (1953), 480.

¹⁶⁴ Yaʿari, *Iggerot*, 96. This is the earliest known account of women worshipping at this shrine.

¹⁶⁵ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣaʿot*, 45.

first to obtain the permission of the saint (*ḥašid*) [whereupon] she cursed on her knees (2 Chr. 6: 13).¹⁶⁶ [Consequently,] she fell from the tree and broke all her limbs until in the end she offered up the gold bracelets on her hands to the *zaddiq*. Olive trees were purchased with them and afterward others were dedicated to the saint until at present he has some four hundred olive trees. The incident with the woman happened some sixty years ago.¹⁶⁷

Medieval Jews believed that dead saints or *zaddiqim* (righteous men) and *ḥašidim* (pious men) would bring them blessings and work miracles. Though inconspicuous in Jewish accounts, there are reports that Muslims even visited the graves of Jewish saints, but they may not have regarded them as Jewish.

An Italian Jew who studied Torah with Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro in Jerusalem in 1495 CE recounts the incident, but alleges that he personally interviewed the woman.

Over the tomb [of the Tanna Judah bar Il'ai in 'Ayn Zaytūn] is a fine sepulchre (*ziyyun*) [where] they light candles. I went there, prostrated myself (*nishtataḥti*) and lit lights over it. I saw and spoke with the Muslim woman who fell down from the almond tree over the tomb of the aforementioned *ḥašid*. That woman spoke ill of him. . . . The woman told me how she saw with her very eyes youths who pushed her and cast her forty cubits away from it and [how] the bones in her body broke. She also said that the pious man (*ḥašid*) came to her in a night vision. Consequently she renounced her evil and lit candles over his tomb and was healed (*nitrape'lah*). Muslims honour (*mekhabdim*) this place. Many [Muslims] light candles there.¹⁶⁸

It would have been acceptable for the young student to interview the old woman through an intermediary, if indeed the incident took place. Yet it seems that Moshe Baṣṣola was his disciple's source. Though not factual in nature, both accounts clearly betray insularity in their depiction of the other while emphasizing the Jewishness of the saint and the pilgrimage site. The Muslim woman, who is symbolic of all Muslims, is depicted as the outsider.

¹⁶⁶ 'Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court; and he stood upon it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven. . . . Solomon built a house for keeping the Ark of the Covenant.

¹⁶⁷ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 45.

¹⁶⁸ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 152.

Celebration in Meron

In 1473 CE Daniel, a Jewish resident of Palestine, informed an anonymous traveller from Kandia in Crete of Jews and Muslims gathering at the tomb of Rabbi Shim'on b. Yoḥai on holy days in order to pray for rain. Down to this day Jews continue to celebrate there.¹⁶⁹

Another cave, in which R. Shim'on b. Yoḥai is buried, contains no running water such that people cannot live there from its paucity. However, the Jews (Ivrim) go there on the three festivals (*shalosh regalim*) (i.e. Pesach, Shavuoth, and Succoth) to see the tombs of the important aforementioned *zaddiqim* (*qevurot ha-zaddiqim*), especially that of R. Shim'on b. Yoḥai. They supplicate (*yitḥanenu*) with penitential prayers (*tefilot ṣliḥot*)¹⁷⁰ and prayers of supplication (*taḥanunim*) to God, Blessed be He, that He grant them water so that they may be able to remain there and another source of water. The rains then immediately fall and the Muslims fill their wells and vessels. Then the Muslims give the Jews food and drink, all the delicacies befitting a king.¹⁷¹

Jews who journeyed to the Holy Land honoured their righteous ancestors by praying and prostrating themselves at their graves. Among the most prominent pilgrimage sites were those outside the Holy Land, such as the tombs of Ezekiel and Ezra and the shrines of Elijah and Moses. The shrines of Elijah, the Synagogue of Moses at Dammūh, and the tomb of Ezekiel in particular suggest that devotees developed alternative pilgrimage sites to Jerusalem which they believed contained sacred objects such as rocks from Jerusalem as well as venerable Torah scrolls attributed to revered holy persons. Despite the paucity of surviving texts composed by Oriental Jews themselves, the accounts of their European co-religionists preserve details of vibrant *ziyāra* cultures, which came to be characterized by ritual aspects shared with the local *ziyāra* cultures of which they were a part.

Jewish religious authorities in Babylonia and elsewhere never denounced making *ziyāra*, nor did they rule on what constituted acceptable pilgrimage etiquette on the scale Muslim theologians did, indicating general acceptance of *ziyāra* practice. Except for Sahl b. Masliaḥ and later Karaites, theologians, including

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 113.

¹⁷⁰ Prayers recited on days of fast or trouble—especially during Elul and the first days of Tishri, until the Day of Atonement.

¹⁷¹ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣa'ot*, 113.

Maimonides, condoned making pilgrimage to shrines. However, communal leaders interceded when immoral or improper behaviour took place as in celebrations at Dammūh. Elijah was the focus of a regional cult whose origins pre-dated the rise of Islam, yet the proliferation of synagogues containing shrines dedicated to the prophet was a medieval phenomenon. Occasional conflicts erupted in Palestine, particularly from the early sixteenth century, due to migrations from outside the Holy Land. The *ziyāra* to Jewish and Muslim shrines represented the closest contact among devotees of all faiths.

Pilgrimage Places

Seldom do we find a more pathetic avowal that man cannot live without a sacred center, which permits him to 'cosmicize' space and to communicate with the transhuman world of heaven.

Mircea Eliade¹

ALTHOUGH shrines were located in and near cemeteries, especially in some of the most important pilgrimage centres, including Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad, Najaf, and Karbalā, they also graced city gates, mosques, tomb complexes, citadels, caves, mountains, and other places where saints and other holy persons were buried or believed once to have resided or to have passed by. Walls and rocks, caves, trees and springs were also *ziyāra* places. Concentrations of Jewish shrines existed in Jerusalem, Ramah, and the towns and villages of Galilee, especially in Tiberias, Meron, Gush Ḥalay, and Kefar Bar'am. The synagogues of Elijah and Moses to which Jews made pilgrimage were numerous in al-Shām and Egypt. The domed shrine of Ezekiel in Iraq became a regional pilgrimage centre. Multiple shrines dedicated to a holy person existed throughout the Near East, sometimes in the same region or city, as with the shrines of al-Khaḍir and Elijah, Ibrāhīm, 'Alī, and Ḥusayn. Compilers of pilgrimage lists and guides and critics of the construction and glorification of monuments over tombs sometimes questioned the genuineness of the tombs of the prophets, the Prophet's Family, and the Companions: for instance, the Prophet's wife Ḥafṣa was venerated at Ba'labakk by the inhabitants, but was known to be buried in Medina. Ibn Shaddād observed, 'The truth is that she is Umm Ḥafṣ, Mu'ādh b. Jabal's sister.'² When in doubt, writers like al-Harawī and Ibn Shaddād suggest a number of plausible places, but routinely comment, 'God knows best.' A

¹ M. Eliade, *Religions: An Introduction* (Ithaca, NY, 1967), 41.

² Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Dahhān, 1962), 269.

tombstone or an inscription affirmed the identity of the shrine's inmate and was sufficient proof of the shrine's authenticity as in the case of the tombstone of a descendant of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, which bore the names of theologians who attested to the tomb's efficacy.³ Historians and theologians occupied themselves from the first with the burial places of the prophets, Companions, and Followers, for which they searched historical works and collections of traditions. For Damascene and Aleppan historians, pilgrimage guides like al-Harawī's *Ishārāt* served as an important source for the authenticity of pilgrimage sites. This discussion explores the genesis and proliferation of Islamic and Jewish shrines, the problematic of defining funerary monuments based upon literary and historical descriptions, the relationship between ritual performance and architecture, Sunni and Shi'i shrine patronage, and the varieties of funerary monuments to which devotees made *ziyāra*.

Irrespective of the memorial type, whether natural or man-made, the pilgrimage site 'invited' devotees to make pilgrimage. Just as group activities invite participation, so too do edifices.⁴ Pilgrimage places bore intrinsic characteristics, such as domes, cenotaphs, and inscriptions which naturally complemented devotional activities and attracted devotees to them. Grave markers, cenotaphs, and inscriptions served the twofold purpose of legitimizing sites while commemorating their patrons. The dome, which graced mosques and mausoleums, was a symbol of sanctity and sacred space. Such 'persuasive features' serve to confirm a tomb's sanctity and suggest to the visitor appropriate behaviour.⁵ A shrine did not teach proper veneration, it only provided a ritual setting. Moreover, it projected an aspect of sacred history enhanced by its antiquity, functionality, and the oral traditions and legends surrounding it. Conversely, the performance of ritual at tombs and shrines led to the creation of architecture.⁶ Devotees prostrated themselves before shrines and kissed the thresholds before entering. Such acts may have led to the construction of a special doorstep or the enlarging of an entrance.

³ See above, pp. 137–8.

⁴ Gerardus van der Leeuw, a phenomenologist of religion, argues that sacred places 'attract the faithful to themselves in the literal sense'. *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, trans. J. E. Turner, 2 vols. (Gloucester, Mass., 1967), 2. 401. Also see Lindsay Jones's discussion in *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), 75.

⁵ Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing', 1081.

⁶ Grabar, 'The Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 12.

Circumambulation of a tomb may have led to the construction of an outer ambulatory around the tomb.⁷ In the case of the *ziyāra* to ʿAlī and Ḥusayn, visitors started with facing the tomb, and then walked to the head and after that to the feet in a number of stages as attested to in various *ziyāra* traditions.⁸ Dreams and the fulfilment of vows commonly led to the erection of a cupola or domed shrine marking the spot of a saint's appearance, and the discovery of a spring or well to its incorporation into a shrine, as in al-Bajānī's vision of al-Khaḍir.⁹ When Selim I erected a dome over the shrine of Ibn al-ʿArabī, it stood as a symbol of his political and religious authority.¹⁰

GENESIS OF ISLAMIC SHRINES

The Prophet Muḥammad did not urge companions and followers to build monuments over the tombs of his Companions and the martyrs. In fact, he condemned the building of raised structures over tombs as is discussed below. Did the construction of mausoleums and shrines contradict the Prophet's prohibition against building on graves despite the fact that certain Islamic features, such as the *mihrab*, the minaret, and inscriptions accorded them some legitimacy?¹¹ The possibility that mausoleums and shrines would grace Muslim tombs and become pilgrimage places did not confront the Prophet and the *umma* in Arabia. Yet the Prophet feared that Muslims would imitate Jews and Christians in venerating the dead.¹² Various traditions which lend additional support

⁷ For a discussion of the ambulatory, cf. Creswell, *EMA* 1(2), 283–5. See also D. Kuban, *Muslim Religious Architecture* (pt. II) (Leiden, 1985), 28 and n. 10.

⁸ Herzfeld mentions that the ambulatory is a common feature of ʿAlid shrines, 'Damascus: Studies in Architecture', *ARIS* 9 (1942), 31.

⁹ See above, pp. 179–83. For a vow to repair the cupola over the tomb of Nūr al-Dīn, see above, p. 188.

¹⁰ See above, p. 172 n. 209.

¹¹ R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (Edinburgh, 1994), 258.

¹² Leisten argues that the Prophetic traditions concerning the prohibition of visiting the tombs of prophets originate from Jewish material, though no concrete evidence exists to substantiate this claim, T. Leisten, *Architektur für Tote: Bestattung in Architektonischem Kontext in den Kernländern der Islamischen Welt zwischen 3./9. und 6./12. Jahrhundert, Materialien zur Iranischen Archäologie* (Berlin, 1998), 16 and n. 127. For a brief discussion of the legality of funerary architecture,

to a prohibition indicate that he ordered tombs to be levelled out of fear that they would become places of idolatry.¹³ Ibn Taymīya states:

From Jundab b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī who said: ‘I heard the Messenger of God . . . fifty days before he died say, “I am free of reproach before God that I would have a friend from among you. God has taken us as a Friend as He took Ibrāhīm. I would have taken Abū Bakr as a Friend, except that those who came before you used to take the tombs of their prophets as places of worship.”’¹⁴

‘May God curse the Jews and the Christians: They have taken the graves of their prophets as places of worship (*masājid*).’¹⁵

Ibn ʿAbbās as reported in al-Nasāʾī, Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, ‘The Messenger of God . . . cursed the women visitors to graves (*zāʾirāt al-qubūr*) and those who erect places of worship (*masājid*) and kindle lamps over them (*suruj*).’¹⁶

Further traditions mention that building places of prayer (*masjids*) over tombs was a Jewish practice. According to a Hadith quoted by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet said: ‘When a pious man dies, [Jews] build a *masjid* over his tomb.’¹⁷ Were Muslims aware that Jews built monuments over their tombs? Muslim theologians like Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya regarded shrine-building as a Christian and Jewish practice by suggesting that the word *mashhad* was employed by them.

The Prophet prohibited taking them (i.e. graves) as *masjids*. Those [people] (i.e. the Christians and Jews) build places of prostration (*masājid*) which they call *mashāhid* resembling the Houses of God the Exalted.¹⁸

Despite the fact that buildings were erected over the tombs of the Companions, as in the case of Abū Baṣīr in 628–9 CE, insufficient evidence exists to conclude that their deaths resulted in the performance of pilgrimage rituals near their graves.¹⁹ Rāghib

see T. Leisten, ‘Between Orthodoxy and Exegesis: Some Aspects of Attitudes in the Shariʿa Toward Funerary Architecture’, *Muqarnas*, 7 (1990), 12–22.

¹³ Cf. a tradition of the Prophet reported by ʿAlī in which Muḥammad enjoins Muslims not to leave a statue (*timthāl*) over a tomb and to level the tomb. Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, I, 221.

¹⁴ Ibn Taymīya, *Iqtidāʾ*, 329.

¹⁵ Ibid. 330.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Bāb al-Ṣalāt*, Ch. 48, no. 51, pp. 275–7.

¹⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, I, 222.

¹⁹ One view is that Abū Baṣīr’s companions who buried him were recent converts to Islam and were unaware of the prohibition of building monuments over his tomb,

accepts al-Wāqidi's report of a mosque over Abū Baṣīr's grave erected immediately after his death, while Pedersen regards it as a later construction.²⁰ The building of mosques over the tombs of Companions did not lead to the construction of monuments over tombs of other revered persons.

With the conquests, Muslims also came into contact with Jewish and Christian mausoleums, including the shrines of the prophets and patriarchs, and may have adapted local traditions of shrine construction.²¹ However, Islamic shrines were not simply appropriated from older civilizations.²² For medieval theologians the issue of constructing mosques over tombs had implications for funerary and devotional practices. Ibn Taymīya reasons that building over graves results in desecration, since the bones of the deceased may be exposed.²³ He also criticizes turning graves into mosques (*masājid*). Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya similarly criticizes those who contradict the Prophet's prohibitions and 'raise the graves above the ground like a house (*bayt*) and erect upon them cupolas (*qibāb*)'.²⁴ During the thirteenth century Rabbi Jacob of Paris attested to the prevalence of mosques over tombs in Palestine, as in the case of the mosque over a tomb of Jethro in Ḥiṭṭīn, noting that 'Muslims made it into a mosque. [They] are accustomed to building their mosques over saints' tombs.'²⁵ But not all pilgrimage sites or tombs were raised above ground.²⁶

POPULAR SHRINES?

The existence of shrines was not a marginal matter in medieval Islam as illustrated by the previous discussion. Interpreting the absence of an ecclesiastical hierarchy in Islam and perceiving a

Y. Rāghib, 'Les Premiers Monuments funéraires de l'Islam', *AI* 9 (1970), 22-3. The death of Ḥusayn and the earliest monuments on his tomb are a notable exception which cannot be properly addressed here.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; Pedersen, 'Masdjid', 651.

²¹ Cf. Ch. 4 concerning the tomb of Daniel.

²² Grabar, 'The Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 7-9.

²³ Ibn Taymīya, *Iqtidā'*, 331.

²⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, I, 223.

²⁵ Eisenstein, *Oẓar Maṣṣā'ot*, 70; Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 125.

²⁶ A detailed exposition of the permissibility and legality of using certain kinds of building materials to erect diverse memorial structures over graves can be found in Leisten, 'Between Orthodoxy and Exegesis', 12-22.

vitality of saint veneration only at the periphery of the Islamic world, Peter Brown observed that the Christian experience provided a more natural symbiosis of religious authority and the shrine.²⁷ In fact, diversity in patronage fostered diversity and variety in the construction of shrines to the extent that they were an integral part of devotional life throughout the medieval Near East and North Africa. Islamic rulers and their families, villagers and city dwellers patronized shrines. This informal and universal form of patronage precluded the need for a religious hierarchy or centralized control.²⁸ Rulers and dynasties constructed mausoleums and shrines in urban areas which were centres of their authority. Notable exceptions existed, such as Mashhad al-Dakka outside Aleppo, which Sayf al-Dawla built. The collective nature of shrine construction suggests that shrines were incorporated into daily life despite the absence of a religious hierarchy and centralized control as in the Christian context.²⁹ Pilgrimage guides and other sources suggest that some ulema, common people, and rulers were active in the propagation and construction of Shi'i and Sunni shrines. During the rule of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ b. Nūr al-Dīn (r. 569/1174–577/1181), the construction of Mashhad al-Ḥusayn on the slope of Mt. Jawshan outside Aleppo, which took over a decade to complete, was a collaborative enterprise under the supervision of a pious man who was responsible for its planning, determining the appropriate astrological sign for its construction, and supervising workers.³⁰ Pious individuals donated property to construct various portions of the shrine, including the *iwān*, or chamber at its centre. In fact, the city's population was involved in its construction, including the artisans who volunteered a day's labour to work on the shrine and merchants who provided provisions for workers and contributed to the construction expenses.³¹

²⁷ Brown, *Cult*, 9–10.

²⁸ Grabar and Peter Brown argue that the absence of a religious hierarchy in Islam precluded the integration of shrines and by extension the cult of saints into Islam in the way it happened with Christianity in Antiquity or in medieval Europe. Grabar, 'The Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 43 n. 60.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdel), 50–2. See further Ibn al-Shihna, *al-Durr al-Muntakhab* (Darwish), 87–9; *Les Perles Choisies d'Ibn Ach-Čihna*, trans. J. Sauvaget (Beirut, 1933), 88–91; Sauvaget, 'Deux sanctuaires chiites d'Alep', 224–37, 320–7.

³¹ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdel), 50–2.

Another such instance is the construction of Mashhad ʿAlī at Aleppo. Yāqūt mentions: 'It is a finely constructed *mashhad* which the Aleppans came together [to] build well and for which they expended great sums. They allege that they saw ʿAlī in a night vision at that place.'³²

GROWTH

Since Muslims from all walks of life patronized and contributed to the construction of shrines, they were not a peripheral phenomenon. In addition to being an act of religious devotion, the patronage of shrines by rulers and other powerful patrons may be regarded as a concession to folk religiosity, which was promoted through telling stories about the founding of shrines and the saints and other holy persons associated with them. It has been suggested that the construction of shrines was initially a popular reaction against the prohibition of building mosques over tombs and that the community sought to devise a stratagem to legitimize their construction.³³ Although the burial of the Prophet in his mosque at Medina seems to suggest a model for the construction of funerary structures for his Household and Companions, insufficient historical and epigraphic evidence exists to regard shrine-building as merely a popular reaction against the Prophet's stricture against building on tombs. Pedersen suggests that the genesis of various funerary types, most notably the *mashhad*, began with the Prophet and his Family.³⁴ Such a supposition assumes a tenuous link to their commemoration at tombs. Did shrine construction then represent an incidental practice or one instituted by particular individuals or groups? Does it suggest a popular effort to preserve the memory of the Household, Companions, and martyrs? Whatever the political and religious motives of the earliest founders and restorers of shrines may have been, the memory of the deeds and exemplary qualities often had a more profound effect on the perpetuation of their memory than did the construction of funerary monuments.

³² Ibn Shaddād provides a fascinating account of the founding of this shrine outside Bāb al-Jinān: *Alāq* (Sourdell), 47–8. Harawī mentions the shrine: *Ishārāt*, 4.

³³ Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 260–1.

³⁴ Pedersen, 'Masjid', 652.

Devotees forgot about saints and neglected their shrines and confusion resulted in the close proximity of names as attested to in pilgrimage guides. Earthquakes and other natural disasters, plunder and desecration occurred, which necessitated the restoration of shrines or resulted in their abandonment.

The proliferation of pilgrimage sites and shrine complexes from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries can be explained by a number of historical, political, and religious factors. The waning of Abbasid influence both in Baghdad and in the provinces led to a power vacuum which was quickly filled by the various Shi'i and Sunni dynasties—the Fatimids in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, the Buyids and Seljuks in Iraq and the east, the Hamdanids in Aleppo, and the Zankids, Ayyubids, and Mamluks in Syria and Egypt. As endowing and erecting monuments which would be incorporated into the devotional culture was an effective means of establishing one's presence and legacy, the Abbasid caliphate's weakened control spurred competitiveness in the patronage of shrines. Ibn Taymiya argues that the Abbasids at first did not patronize shrines (*mashhad*) because of the strength of their faith.³⁵ Even Nūr al-Dīn contributed to the upkeep of Shi'i shrines in Aleppo.³⁶ His successors the Ayyubids and Mamluks did likewise in Aleppo and elsewhere.³⁷ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn expended the sum of 10,000 dirhams on a *mashhad* of Ḥusayn outside Aleppo.³⁸ His son and successor, the ruler of Aleppo al-Malik al-Zāhir Ghāzī (r. 579/1183, 582/1186–613/1216), contributed to the upkeep and construction of several shrines including the *mashhad* of Ḥusayn, for which he endowed in perpetuity a mill known as al-Kāmiliya whose annual revenues of 6,000 dirhams were used to purchase pastries and sweets on Friday nights for visitors. He charged a Shi'ite, the Syndic of the Nobles Shams al-Dīn Abī 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Zuhra al-Ḥusaynī, with supervision of the endowment along with the Qadi Bahā' al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Khashshāb al-Ḥalabī (d. 648/1250–1).³⁹ Al-Malik al-Zāhir also constructed a *mashhad* over the tomb of the semi-historical figure of Quss b.

³⁵ Ibn Taymiya, *Majmū'*, 27. 465–6.

³⁶ Concerning his ordering the construction of a cistern and ablution fountains for Mashhad al-Dakka, see Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdell), 49.

³⁷ The Ayyubids contributed to the upkeep of Mashhad al-Dakka: *ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.* 51. Discussed above.

³⁹ For a number of instances of Ayyubid patronage of shrines, *ibid.* 50–1.

Sā'ida al-Īyādī, endowed it with part of the Aleppan village of Rūhīn, built a number of structures, and appointed an Egyptian keeper who was succeeded by his son.⁴⁰ Consequently, the people contributed to the effort by adding to the complex (*amā'ir*).⁴¹ The account mentions a pious peasant paying for the construction of a fountain. A prominent woman patron, Dawlāt Khātūn, daughter of the amir 'Alam al-Dīn Sulaymān b. Jandar, at some point constructed a caravanserai (*khān*) for visitors to the shrine and other local amirs contributed to its growth.⁴² Such efforts contributed in no small measure to promoting Sunni Islam. The long-established cults of Ḥusayn and other 'Alids at Aleppo, Cairo, and elsewhere were given de facto acknowledgement as Sunni *ziyārāt*, though many such places were already frequented by both Sunnis and Shi'is. In Syria the construction of Sunni pilgrimage places during the Nurid and Ayyubid periods served as a counterbalance to the existing Shi'i shrines of their predecessors, though no significant historical evidence exists to suggest a systematic effort by Nūr al-Dīn or the Ayyubids to counter Shi'i influences by building shrines.⁴³

After his victory over the Franks, the Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars (r. 658/1260–676/1277) undertook a campaign of restoring and repairing the shrines of Bilād al-Shām, Egypt, and the Ḥijāz. Among his undertakings was the restoration of the mosque over the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and the tombs of Joseph at Nablus, Moses at Jericho,⁴⁴ and Abū Hurayra at Yabneh.⁴⁵ In

⁴⁰ Ibid. 54. For his identity see C. Pellat, 'Ḳuss b. Sā'ida', *EI*(2), 5. 528–9.

⁴¹ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdél), 55. ⁴² Ibid. 56.

⁴³ Sauvaget regards the construction of a shrine in the Aleppo citadel as such an attempt. J. Sauvaget, *Alep* (Paris, 1941), 124 ff.; Grabar, 'The Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 39.

⁴⁴ Concerning Baybars' endowments, cf. Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sirat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. 'A. 'A. Khuwaytir (Riyadh, 1976), 89–90, 287, 294; concerning Nabī Mūsā, see K. al-'Asalī, *Mawsim al-Nabī Mūsā fī Filastīn: Tārīkh al-Mawsim wa-al-Maqām* (Amman, 1990), and *Wathā'iq Muqaddasiya Tārīkhīya*, 3 vols. (Amman, 1983), 1. 176–80, 3. 119–21; S. Tamari, 'Maqām Nabī Mūsā shel-yad Yeriḥo', *Katedra le-Toledot Erez Yisra'el ve-Yishuvah*, 11 (1979), 153–80.

⁴⁵ Hana Taragan argues that constructing a shrine over Abū Hurayra's tomb was part of a larger propagandistic campaign undertaken by Baybars, 'Ha-Koah she-be-Even: Baybars ve-Qever Abū Hurayra/Rabban Gamliel be-Yavneh', *Katedra: le-Toledot Erez Yisra'el ve-Yishuvah*, 97 (2000), 65–84; 'Politics and Aesthetics: Sultan Baybars and the Abu Hurayra/Rabbi Gamliel Building in Yavne', in A. Ovadia (ed.), *Milestones in the Art and Culture of Egypt* (Tel Aviv, 2000), 117–43.

676/1277 Baybars built a *mashhad* over the shrine of the Companion Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ and endowed it in perpetuity.⁴⁶ He also restored the Mashhad of Zayn al-'Ābidīn in the Congregational Mosque of Damascus.⁴⁷ Baybars' activities cannot simply be interpreted as a victory of Islam over Christianity, or as the 'islamicization' of the sacred topography of Bilād al-Shām. Baybars was clearly sending a message that he was the patron of the holy places of the Holy Land, the Ḥijāz, and elsewhere. He was also reviving the veneration of the prophets, companions, and other holy persons to whose shrines *ziyāra* was to become an established custom among the ruling elite and the common people alike. The Syrian town of Karak Nūḥ contained the shrine of the Prophet Noah which had fallen into a state of disrepair to the extent that a road divided it in two. Baybars restored the tomb, repaired the mosque beside the shrine, and built accommodation for the notables who made *ziyāra* to the site.⁴⁸

In the Islamic east, the tenuous relationship between the various dynasties and the Abbasids created a situation in which Sunni rulers patronized Shi'i shrines. The Seljuk ruler Malik Shāh (r. 465/1072–485/1092) ordered the renovation of the wall of Ḥusayn's shrine at Karbalā' in 479/1086.⁴⁹ The Ilkhānid Uways b. al-Ḥasan al-Jalā'irī (r. 759/1358–775–6/1374) built the internal cupola and surrounded the *mashhad* with a walled courtyard.⁵⁰ The Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (r. 575/1180–622/1225), who reconciled Sunnis and Shi'is, built a cenotaph (*ḍarīḥ*) over the tomb of Ḥusayn on the 4th of Shubāt 620/1223, indicating that Sunni rulers occasionally patronized important Shi'i shrines.⁵¹ In the west, the Fatimids, such as the wazīr Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'iḥī, were active in patronizing shrines.⁵² Ibn Muyassar mentions:

⁴⁶ Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 3. 259; Ibn Shaddād mentions the endowment over his tomb: *Tārikh al-Malik al-Zābir*, ed. A. Ḥuṭayṭ (Wiesbaden, 1983), 302.

⁴⁷ Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 3. 260.

⁴⁸ Ibn Shaddād, *Tārikh al-Malik al-Zābir*, 356–7.

⁴⁹ S. H. Āl-Ṭu'mah, *Tārikh Marqad al-Ḥusayn wa-al-'Abbās* (Beirut, n.d.), 89.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid. His predecessor al-Qādir used to visit the shrines of Baghdad in disguise. A. Mez, *Renaissance of Islam*, 12.

⁵² A succinct discussion summarizing the debate concerning the Fatimid patronage of shrines can be found in C. S. Taylor, 'Reevaluating the Shi'i Role in the Development of Monumental Islamic Funerary Architecture: The Case of Egypt', *Muqarnas*, 9 (1992), 3–10.

On Rabīʿ I 515/1121, al-Maʿmūn ordered his representative Shaykh Abū al-Barakāt Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān to head out to the Seven Mosques (*al-masājid al-sabʿa*) which are between the mountain [i.e. Jabal al-Muqaṭṭam] and the Qarāfa, the first of which is Mashhad al-Sayyida Zaynab and the last is Mashhad al-Sayyida Umm Kulthūm, and restore them and repair what was destroyed and to put on every *mashhad* a marble slab (*lawḥ*) with its name and date. The poets praised him in a number of poems at the conclusion of the restoration (*imāra*).⁵³

The spread of Sufism also contributed widely to the founding and rapid growth of shrines of venerable Sufis as exemplified with the proliferation of the *ribāt* and *zāwiya* in Cairo and late Mamluk Damascus. Both types, which sometimes contained tombs, combined the functions of hospice with that of religious institution and retreat, particularly for mystics.⁵⁴

The emergence of centres of learning in the Islamic world in the form of *madrasas* (teaching colleges)⁵⁵ brought to prominence under Seljuk patronage in the eleventh and twelfth centuries contributed to the growth of pilgrimage centres.⁵⁶ Although they were never considered pilgrimage sites, and are only incidentally mentioned in Egyptian pilgrimage guides, such structures in the East housed students of theology and pilgrims. By the early fourteenth century the shrine of the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī at Najaf contained a *madrasa* where Shiʿi students and Sufis resided and which provided provisions for pilgrims for three days.⁵⁷ A domed shrine resembling the shrines (*mashhads*) of the ʿAlids was constructed over the tomb of Abū Ḥanīfa, the founder of the Hanafi

⁵³ Ibn Muyassar, *Akbbār Miṣr*, 62.

⁵⁴ J. Chabbi and N. Rabbat, 'Ribāt,' *EI(2)*, 8. 493–506; Amīn and Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Mīmāriyya*, 52. The relationship between Sufism and the development of funerary architecture warrants further examination. For a brief study of Sufi shrine architecture in the Muslim west, see Sheila Blair's 'Sufi Saints and Shrine Architecture in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Muqarnas*, 7 (1990), 35–47. Ibn al-Zayyāt's *Kawākib al-Sayyāra* and al-Sakhāwī's *Tuhfat al-Aḥbāb* contain many examples of *zāwiyas* and *ribāṭs* which were pilgrimage sites.

⁵⁵ Also translated as religious colleges, collegiate mosques. The latter is Dickie's translation, 'Allah and Eternity: Mosques, Madrasas and Tombs,' in E. J. Grube and G. Michell (eds.), *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning* (London, 1978), 24.

⁵⁶ Cf. R. Hillenbrand, 'Madrasa', *EI(2)*, 5. 1136–54, and 'Saldjuḳids', *EI(2)*, 8. 936–64.

⁵⁷ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla*, 198.

madhhab. Among the structures associated with it was a *madrasa*, which was not in itself a pilgrimage site.⁵⁸ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī states:

The ‘Amīd [Abū Sa‘d al-Mustawfī] resolved to return to Bāb al-Sultān. He set out on Monday, 27 Jumādā II 459/1067. During this period, he was resident in Baghdad, and built over the tomb of Abū Ḥanīfa . . . a great high domed mausoleum (*qubba*) and expended great sums. He made it out of brick (*mulabban*) and built it high on the example of the tombs of the family of Abū Ṭālib in the *mashāhid*. He built before it a portico (*riwāq*)⁵⁹ and a courtyard and made it into a large *mashhad*. Opposite it, he made a *madrasa* for the Hanafis, salaried for them a professor (*mudarris*), established for them a hamlet in an endowment whose revenue is expended on them. By that he did a good deed and the ‘Amīd was granted the honorific of ‘Sharaf al-Mulk’. When [the mausoleum] was finished, the poet Ibn al-Bayāḏī entered to visit the *mashhad* and said:

Thus, this land was dead . . . The grace of the ‘Amīd Abū Sa‘d reclaimed it.⁶⁰

This passage suggests a competition of sorts between Sunnis and Shi‘is. Finally, increasing numbers of devotees who visited and sometimes resided at shrines or in their vicinity contributed to their natural growth. The growth in pilgrimage traffic is impossible to quantify as numbers of visitors are never mentioned.

TYPES OF SHRINES

Many varieties of shrines⁶¹ existed throughout the Islamic world, ranging from cairns to elaborate mausoleums, tomb complexes, and domed shrines (*qubba*). Although the cult of shrines has become invariably associated with the cupola or domed mausoleum as exemplified by the many surviving specimens in modern times,

⁵⁸ Cf. Grabar, ‘Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures’, 25.

⁵⁹ Amīn and Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Mīmāriyya*, 57–8.

⁶⁰ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir‘āt al-Zamān fī Tārīkh al-A‘yān: al-Hawādith al-Khāssa bi-Tārīkh al-Salājiqa Bayna al-Sanawāt 1085–1086*, ed. A. Sevīm (Ankara, 1968),

134.

⁶¹ A brief discussion of other types of funerary architecture outside the scope of the present study can be found in Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*; Leisten, *Architektur*. For a brief general overview of Jewish shrines, cf. Z. Vilnai, *Mazevot Kodesh*, 49–53.

the dome graced many religious and non-religious establishments. The dome was a sign of a place of veneration.⁶² Similarly, the mihrab or prayer niche which was aligned with the direction of Mecca was often a symbol for the burial of a prophet or saint. A village near Ḥamā contained the Seven Mihrabs beneath which were the tombs of seven Followers.⁶³

The vast majority of tombs and mausoleums regarded as *ziyārāt* in Cairo and elsewhere belonged to scholars, mystics, rulers and others, including the custodians of shrines. Such individuals were not necessarily regarded as saints, nor did they ever work miracles in their lifetime, yet their tombs gained a sanctity of their own. Muslim writers did not always clearly delineate between types of shrines. What constituted a pilgrimage place depended upon established local traditions.

The various designations for shrines in Jewish and Islamic traditions do not precisely reflect their manner of construction or their function and were often impressionistic rather than functional, even in the Jewish case where such terms were generally rooted in Scripture and the Talmud.

Muslim writers generally referred to pilgrimage sites as *mazār* (pl. *mazārāt*)—literally a place which is visited.⁶⁴ In late Mamluk times a *mazār* was a structure built over a tomb designated as a pilgrimage site.⁶⁵ Such places are also referred to as *ziyārāt*—literally pilgrimages or visitations.⁶⁶ The latter is commonly attested to in the titles of pilgrimage works as well as in regional histories, such as Ibn Shaddād's *al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīra*. A survey of pilgrimage guides, travel itineraries, and geographical and historical works reveals the following monument types to which *ziyāra* was performed.

⁶² Grabar, 'Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 44.

⁶³ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 8. Concerning the Seven Sleepers, see L. Massignon, 'Les Sept Dormants d'Ephèse en Islam et en Chrétienté', *REI* 22-5 (1955-7).

⁶⁴ It is often used interchangeably with *ziyārāt*, which may generally refer to pilgrimage places and not to the shrine itself. Cf. J. W. Meri, 'A Late Medieval Syrian Pilgrimage Guide', introd., n. 1.

⁶⁵ For the tomb of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Muwallah, see above, p. 97.

⁶⁶ Cf. al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 71, where he enumerates Jewish pilgrimage sites in Kufa: 'Among the *ziyārāt* of the Jews which it contains is the tomb (*qabr*) of Dhū al-Kifl who is the Prophet Ḥizqīl . . . '.

Qubba

The domed shrine or mausoleum (*qubba*, pl. *qibāb*, *qubab*)⁶⁷ has been regarded as a symbol of popular Islamic piety without appreciating the intrinsic features which make it popular.⁶⁸ Domed shrines were not a distinct type of shrine nor were they merely popular. Domes existed on buildings from Antiquity.⁶⁹ The domed mausoleum is as much a sign of sanctity as a symbol of popular piety.

Qubba, which originally meant a tent of hides,⁷⁰ in an extended sense refers to a dome or cupola of a structure. Lane defines it as 'a dome or cupola, of stone or bricks: and a building covered with a dome or cupola'.⁷¹ In the Egyptian context one particular type of *qubba* is a domed cubical chamber.⁷² It commonly appears in the names of domed structures, not necessarily associated with tombs of saints or other holy persons, most notably the Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Ṣakhra) in Jerusalem.

The word *qubba* as it appears in pilgrimage literature and historical sources came to refer to a pilgrimage place often in the generic sense. Harawī mentions a ruined domed mausoleum (*al-qubba al-khariba*) which purportedly contained the remains of a Sharīf or descendant of the Prophet.⁷³ Domed shrines marked three kinds of pilgrimage places. In the first instance, they are mentioned in connection with the tomb of any person, ruler, saint, or other holy person as in the above example. The shrine itself may or may not be designated as the *qubba* of a specific holy person. Yāqūt mentions a *qubba* between Fuṣṭāṭ and Cairo 'about which it is said that it is the tomb of al-Sayyida Nafīsa bt. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib'.⁷⁴ *Qubba* most commonly appears in the extended description of a place and not in the name given it, for example: *wa 'alayhi qubba* (over it is a dome). The second kind

⁶⁷ Amīn and Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Mīmārīya*, 88–9. For a thorough art historical discussion of the *qubba* and its evolution throughout the Islamic world, see E. Diez, 'Qubba', *EI*(2), 5. 289–96.

⁶⁸ Grabar, 'Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 43 n. 60.

⁶⁹ E. B. Smith, *The Dome: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Princeton, 1950).

⁷⁰ Ibn al-Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 5. 3507.

⁷¹ Lane, *Lexicon*, 2478.

⁷² Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 257; Taylor, *Cult of the Saints*, 69.

⁷³ Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 14.

⁷⁴ Yāqūt, *Muġam al-Buldān*, 4. 554.

commemorates an event. The shrine may be referred to as the 'Qubba' of the event as in the following example:

Şaft in which is a domed shrine (*qubba*) where the calf which God the Exalted and Sublime commanded the Children of Israel to offer in sacrifice was sold. It is known as Qubbat al-Baqara (Dome of the Calf) (Qur'an 2: 63, 67–9, 74) down to this day.⁷⁵

A third category marks the spot where a holy person appeared in a vision. Unlike the first instance, no holy person is buried there. Harawī mentions that the Palestinian village of Lajjūn near Nablus contained an oratory (*maqām*) of Ibrāhīm.⁷⁶ Al-Qazwīnī designates this shrine as *qubbat mazār* (a visitational domed shrine). 'At its centre is a large round rock (*şakhra*) over which is a visitational domed shrine (*qubbat mazār*) from which they (i.e. people) seek blessings (*yatabbarakūna bi-hā*).'⁷⁷

Qabr

The tomb (*qabr*, pl. *qubūr*) is often synonymous with *ḍarīḥ* (tomb, cenotaph) and *turba* (mausoleum, plot; see below) and is the most frequently recurring type of pilgrimage site. *Qabr* also denotes the building over a grave.⁷⁸ It sometimes possessed a dome or was contained within a domed mausoleum (*qubba*) or other monument.⁷⁹ Tombs (*qubūr*) comprise roughly 63 per cent of pilgrimage sites in thirteenth-century Cairo, while in Aleppo they represented nearly a third.⁸⁰ Ibn al-Zayyāt⁸¹ lists twelve other names for tombs: *rams*,⁸² *jadath*,⁸³ *jadaḥ*,⁸⁴ *bayt*,⁸⁵ *ḍarīḥ*,⁸⁶

⁷⁵ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 34.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 17.

⁷⁷ Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 172.

⁷⁸ Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 257. Lane, *Lexicon*, 1784: *Ḍarīḥ* is 'a trench, or an oblong excavation, in the middle of a grave'. Synonymous with 'lahd'. Ibn al-Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 2. 524: the whole tomb or a tomb without *lahd*.

⁷⁹ Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq* (Sourdel), 57.

⁸⁰ The Cairene figure is based on a survey of over 500 pilgrimage shrine types in Ibn ʿUthmān, which only encompasses the most important monuments. The Aleppan figure is based on Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Ibn Shaddād.

⁸¹ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib al-Sayyāra fī Tartīb al-Ziyāra*, 7.

⁸² Lane, *Lexicon*, 1155: the dust of the earth, of a grave. A grave made even with the surface of the ground.

⁸³ Ibid. 388–9: a grave or sepulchre. Shaykh al-Mufīd mentions the *jadath* of Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, cf. pp. 94, 95.

⁸⁴ Lane, *Lexicon*, 388–9.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 280: a structure of clay, or tough or cohesive clay or earth; a grave.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 1784; Amīn and Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Mīmāriya*, 74.

rimam,⁸⁷ *rajma*,⁸⁸ *balad*,⁸⁹ *jibāb*,⁹⁰ *ḥāmūṣad*,⁹¹ *dims*,⁹² and *mihād*.⁹³

Mashhad

A *mashhad* (pl. *mashāhid*)⁹⁴ is a place of assembly or witnessing, or where a saint was believed to have been martyred.⁹⁵ Indeed, it referred to a sacred place without a construction over it, but later came to refer to a memorial structure constructed over such a place.⁹⁶ It was commonly associated with dreams and visions which devotees experienced, usually at a pilgrimage site, or before its discovery. The *mashhad* did not always contain a tomb or physical remains.

Grabar's analysis of the earliest Islamic commemorative structures illustrates the ambiguity in the usage of *mashhad*. He restricts his analysis of *mashhad* to a structure erected during Islamic times solely for the purpose of commemorating a person or event.⁹⁷ As Grabar indicates, *masjids* known as *mashhads* did not always have a clear memorial connotation 'when first erected' and were not initially 'built by Muslims over sacred places and tombs'. He adds that *mashhad* subsequently came to refer to a site with a dome, mihrab, or other structure over it.⁹⁸

From a functional perspective, the historiography is replete with descriptions of *mashhads* which were either *masjids* or contained

⁸⁷ Lane, *Lexicon*, 1151. Perhaps, *rumam*? Decaying bones, cadaver sarcophagus.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 1048: stones that are placed upon a grave.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 247: grave, sepulchre.

⁹⁰ This form is not attested to. Lane gives only *jabūb*, meaning 'earth'. Ibid. 371.

⁹¹ Possibly Turk. *Khāmūshān* (pl.). 'A cemetery, especially a special burial ground for dervishes who hold that death is merely deep': J. W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon* (Constantinople, 1890), 826.

⁹² Perhaps *dimth* or *damth*. Lane, *Lexicon*, 911. A soft and sandy place.

⁹³ Ibid. 2739–40. *Muhd* is elevated ground or land, a final place of rest.

⁹⁴ Also see Olesen, *Culte des saints*, 32–4; Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 258; Grabar, 'Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', esp. p. 11; C. E. Bosworth, 'Mashhad', *EI*(2), 6. 713; Leisten, *Architektur*, 68–70.

⁹⁵ Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 258; Lane, *Lexicon*, 4. 1611: 'A funeral assembly or procession. A place where a martyr has died or is buried'; Bosworth, 'Mashhad', *EI*(2), 6. 713.

⁹⁶ Grabar, 'Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 11. For instance, certain areas of mosques, such as the Umayyad Mosque at Damascus contained *mashhads* within them for which imams were appointed, but where no shrine or memorial structure existed.

⁹⁷ Ibid. pp. 9–13.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 11–12.

prayer rooms and were called *mashhads*. As already mentioned, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya was struck by the existence of *mashhads* over tombs, which he regarded as resembling mosques.⁹⁹ The father of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī was martyred and buried in the village of Qahjāwarsān near Isfahan and a *mashhad* with a minaret was erected upon his grave.¹⁰⁰ It may be assumed that the shrine was also a mosque. *Mashhads* were often erected over hand- or footprints or other sacred relics, such as in the town of Qarqīsiyā in northern Syria, which contained a *mashhad* over the handprint of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.¹⁰¹ Yāqūt's list of the tombs in Fustāṭ and Cairo contains *mashhads* with tombs and a number without.¹⁰² Ibn al-Zayyāt further distinguishes between vision mausoleums (*mashāhid ruʿyā*) and those which contain decapitated heads (*mashāhid ruʿūs*): 'In Egypt is . . . *mashhad raʿs* Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr.'¹⁰³ The best-known example is the *mashhad raʿs* containing Ḥusayn's head. For Ibn Taymīya, the *mashhad* was a heretical structure which had no basis in Islam:

[God] the Exalted said: 'The places of worship belong to God; do not supplicate to other than God.'¹⁰⁴ He did not say that *mashhads* belong to God, but rather those who frequent *mashhads* (*ahl al-mashāhid*) supplicate to other than God.¹⁰⁵

In thirteenth-century Aleppo *mashhads* constituted between 30 and 35 per cent of pilgrimage sites whereas in Cairo for the same period, they only constituted 4 per cent.¹⁰⁶ Al-Harawī designates Khālīd b. al-Walīd's place of residence (*dār*) outside Ḥimṣ as a *mashhad*.¹⁰⁷ *Mashhads* were also built over springs and other natural formations, such as at ʿAyn al-Baqar near Acre, which Muslims, Christians, and Jews visited. Over it was a *mashhad* which Muslims attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.¹⁰⁸

⁹⁹ Quoted above: see n. 18 and text.

¹⁰⁰ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 4. 208.

¹⁰¹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 66.

¹⁰² Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 4. 554.

¹⁰³ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib al-Sayyāra fī Tartīb al-Ziyāra*, 185.

¹⁰⁴ Qur'an 72: 18.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿ*, 27. 169.

¹⁰⁶ The Aleppan figure is based on Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Ibn Shaddād. The Cairene figure is based on Ibn ʿUthmān. Such estimates are at best tentative as they are not representative of all shrines.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 8.

¹⁰⁸ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 3. 758–9; al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 149.

Masjid (*mosque*) and *jāmi'* (*congregational mosque*)

Mosques (*masjid*, pl. *masājid*) and congregational mosques (*jāmi'*, pl. *jawāmi'*)¹⁰⁹ do not represent a distinct category of pilgrimage place as their primary purpose is for worship. Those that contained or adjoined shrines were visited after the performance of prayer. Ibn 'Uthmān, Ibn al-Nāsikh, Ibn al-Zayyāt, and al-Sakhāwī frequently mention mosques as places of *ziyāra*, such as Masjid al-Juyūshī in Cairo, which in 387 H. was named after the Fatimid Amīr al-Juyūsh (Badr al-Jamālī), and Masjid Ibn Ṭūlūn. Such mosques were known for the fulfilment of supplication.¹¹⁰ A priority for future research will be to explore the fundamental architectural differences between shrines which were cult places from the first, mosques which were constructed at or within shrines, and mosques which later became cult centres, such as the shrine of John the Baptist which was in Ba'labakk and Ḥimṣ before being relocated to the Upper Maqām congregational mosque in the Aleppo citadel. This mosque was associated with Ibrāhīm. Mosques were built over the tombs of some Companions from the very first.¹¹¹ In Syrian sources, congregational mosques are often associated with prophets, as is the case with the Congregational Mosque of Damascus which contained the shrine of John the Baptist and is often mentioned in connection with 'Isā's descent at the eastern minaret. Mosques represented 15 per cent of pilgrimage sites for thirteenth-century Cairo,¹¹² but mosques do not figure as prominently in Syrian as in Egyptian pilgrimage accounts. Ibn 'Asākir mentions a mosque over the tomb of Umm Kulthūm.¹¹³ He also mentions a Masjid of Ḥusayn's daughter Sukayna 'amidst the cemetery near the tomb of Bilāl'.¹¹⁴ Ibn al-'Adīm and Ibn Shaddād mention three mosques in Aleppo. Ibn 'Uthmān lists thirty mosques in Cairo which constitute approximately 6 per cent of all

¹⁰⁹ Pedersen, 'Masjdīd', 644–77.

¹¹⁰ Concerning Masjid al-Juyūshī, cf. Ibn 'Uthmān, *Murshid al-Zuwwār*, 19–24; Grabar, 'Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 27–9.

¹¹¹ Pedersen, 'Masjdīd', 651.

¹¹² Ibn al-Shihna includes a number of places in 15th-cent. Aleppo which were also referred to as *mashhads*.

¹¹³ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 2(1). 80. He identifies her as a woman from Ahl al-Bayt and not the daughter of the Prophet or Fāṭima's daughter. The mosque was built by an Aleppan from the village of Qarqūbā.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 2(1). 80. In general, Ibn 'Asākir does regard *masjids* as *ziyārāt*.

pilgrimage sites and Ibn al-Zayyāt lists fifty-five, which represent 14 per cent. They also list a number of congregational mosques as *ziyārāt*.

Maqām

The *maqām*,¹¹⁵ which is often rendered as ‘oratory’¹¹⁶ or ‘station’, is a place which does not ordinarily contain a tomb (*qabr*), but is invariably associated with a saint or some other holy person, usually a prophet. A *maqām* may also refer to a place or construction which contains a sacred trace (*athar*), footprint, or other imprint left by a prophet or holy person or his mount, a place through which he passed, or where he sat or prayed. It is often surmounted by a cupola. Al-Harawī mentions a wall (*ḥāʾiṭ*) in Tābūk associated with the Prophet.¹¹⁷ Although he does not identify the wall as a *maqām*, it none the less was a pilgrimage site. This designation appears in pilgrimage guides from the first. Al-Harawī mentions without giving any descriptions, six *maqāms* associated with Ibrāhīm, four of which were in al-Shām. He lists additional *maqāms*, three of which are associated with early Islamic figures. Two of a further eleven *maqāms*, those of Shuʿayb in Tābūk and of Rābīʿa al-ʿAdawīya in Jerusalem specifically contained a tomb (*qabr*). Of approximately 150 structures he mentions in the *Aʿlāq*, Ibn Shaddād lists only ten *maqāms*, seven of which were in Syria and three in Palestine. Herzfeld argues that ‘none of the Muhammadan *maqām* is a truly Muhammadan sanctuary, all have a pre-Muhammadan background, many referring to Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl.’¹¹⁸ *Maqām* is often used interchangeably with *mashhad* and also with *masjid* as in the following passage from Ibn al-ʿAdīm’s *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab*, which illustrates the occasional interchangeability of both words.¹¹⁹

ʿAḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Maqdisī al-Ṣūfī the attendant of the Aqṣā Mosque. . . . He died in Aleppo in . . . 639

¹¹⁵ Ibn ʿUthmān refers to only two structures as *maqām*. For Aleppo, six structures represent 11 or 12 per cent of pilgrimage sites.

¹¹⁶ Herzfeld, ‘Damascus: Studies in Architecture—II,’ *ARIS* 10 (1943), 47–8 for a discussion of the etymology and possible origins of the *maqām*.

¹¹⁷ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 96.

¹¹⁸ Herzfeld, ‘Damascus: Studies in Architecture—II,’ 47. Leisten does not include this designation in his discussion of funerary architecture categories.

¹¹⁹ Regarding the former, cf. Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq* (Sourdel), 57.

н. and was buried in the Cemetery of Maqām Ibrāhīm . . . outside Bāb al-‘Irāq opposite the *mashhad* which is known as ‘al-Maqām’ to the north-west.¹²⁰

In the Egyptian context *maqām* appears, for instance, in Ibn ‘Uthmān’s *Murshid al-Zuwwār*, though not in Maqrīzī’s *Khiṭaṭ*. A *maqām* to the Prophet’s daughter Fāṭima was dedicated in the congregational mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn in Cairo after a worshipper saw her in a night vision. It had its own mihrab and was known for the fulfilment of supplication.¹²¹

Turba

A *turba* (pl. *turab*) is a tomb complex which often contained the tombs of descendants of a family or dynasty, such as Turbat al-Za‘farān, the burial place of the Fatimid caliphs in Cairo. Dozy defines *turba* as a mosque or mausoleum built over a tomb.¹²² Grabar defines it as a ‘a large plot in a cemetery in which one or more people were buried, and which could at times be separated from other similar plots by a fence, wall, or even portico’.¹²³ *Turbas* usually contained several tombs (*qubūr*) and occasionally resembled *mashāhid* with respect to ancillary structures, such as a prayer hall, portico, kitchen, etc.¹²⁴ Sometimes they contained unique structures, such as efficacious pillars or talismans. Like *mashhads*, *turbas* were gathering places on holy days. Al-Sakhāwī, Ibn ‘Uthmān, and other Egyptian writers of pilgrimage guides regarded such places as pilgrimage sites generally without giving elaborate descriptions of either the sites or the rituals performed there. Ibn ‘Uthmān lists thirty-four places (7 per cent) in Cairo as *turba* while Ibn al-‘Adīm mentions only two places in Syria, one of which belonged to his family, the Banū al-‘Adīm, and Ibn al-Shiḥna mentions twelve *turbas*.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 2. 969. *Maqām* refers to the entire tomb complex, including the mosque.

¹²¹ Ibn ‘Uthmān, *Murshid al-Zuwwār*, 204.

¹²² Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 1. 143.

¹²³ Grabar, ‘Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures’, 12. Also see T. Leisten, ‘Turba’, *EI*(2), 10. 673–5; Leisten, *Architektur*, 72–3.

¹²⁴ Amin and Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Mīmāriya*, 26.

¹²⁵ Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 1. 462, 463; Ibn al-Shiḥna, *Les Perles Choiesies*, 93–5.

Jawsaq

The *jawsaq* (pl. *jawāsiq*),¹²⁶ or rest house, a structure primarily found in the cemeteries of Cairo, was ordinarily a gathering place for the elite for devotional purposes. Maqrīzī mentions eight of these structures in his *Khitāt*.¹²⁷ Al-Sakhāwī mentions one such structure, which was built in the shape of the Kaaba:

The notables used to meet there also on the night of the 15th of Sha'bān desiring the bounty and *baraka* contained by that place. A mosque (*masjid*) was built inside this mosque (*masjid*) and supplication there is fulfilled.¹²⁸

Here the *jawsaq* is referred to as a 'mosque'. Yet it also contained a mosque.

Secondary structures

Secondary structures such as the *madrasa*,¹²⁹ *iwān* (hall, chamber), *riwāq* (portico), or *ṣihriḥ* (cistern) were often associated with certain types of shrines, or, as in the case of the *madrasas* in medieval Cairo, Baghdad, and Damascus, were also pilgrimage sites and constituted an essential part of shrine complexes. Certain *madrasas* were pilgrimage places because of the objects contained within them, as in the case of the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafīya and the Damāghīya in Damascus which were discussed in Chapter 2. Just as the *madrasa* was a place for the instruction of Islamic law and the religious sciences where students and sometimes mystics were accommodated, so too did it accommodate devotees who visited the neighbouring shrine.¹³⁰ The tomb of Nūr al-Dīn, which was subsequently relocated to his *madrasa* in Damascus, was a pilgrimage place, particularly among scholars.¹³¹ Similarly, the *iwān* within a *mashhad* was at times used for instruction. The shrine complex wedded the worlds of learning and *ziyāra*. Many such places, particularly in the Shi'i context, were mosques or contained them. As attested to particularly in Cairene pilgrimage

¹²⁶ A lofty building, a palace; a villa, a kiosk: F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London, 1892), 378.

¹²⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz*, 2. 452-3.

¹²⁸ Al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat al-Aḥbāb*, 274.

¹²⁹ For a discussion of the *madrasa* as a funerary type, see Leisten, *Architektur*, 41-4.

¹³⁰ J. Pedersen and G. Makdisi, 'Madrasa', *EI*(2), 5. 1123-34.

¹³¹ Al-Harawī, *Ishārāt*, 16; Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Ishārāt*, 27-32.

guides, saints were commonly buried within the confines of mosques.¹³²

Some places, such as the shrine of Ibrāhīm in Hebron, had mills (*ṭawāhīm*) for grinding flour, kitchens where women would bake bread and prepare meals for visitors, and a guest hall (*maḍyafa*). According to Nāsir-i Khusraw, five hundred devotees went there on certain days.¹³³ With the increase in pilgrimage traffic, rulers provided accordingly for the needs of visitors. Such a shrine complex is atypical because it was visited throughout the year and because of its relative self-sufficiency made possible by a substantial endowment.

Ibn Shaddād mentions a Mashhad of Ḥusayn at the base of Mt. Jawshan outside Aleppo for which a Shi'i qadi received permission from Al-Malik al-ʿAzīz (r. 612/1216–634/1237) to establish alongside it a *ḥaram*¹³⁴ (sanctuary) which contained lodgings (*buyūt*) for those who secluded themselves there. Before it was completed, the Mongols destroyed both it and the adjoining shrine.¹³⁵

FOUNDATION MYTHS

As emphasized earlier, the saint in practical terms was responsible for the founding of a shrine either through his physical presence or association or through his appearance in dreams and visions to devotees. Chapter 3 looked at several such accounts in the *ziyāra* context. One Syrian account in particular typifies the popular beliefs which arose around ʿAlī and the founding of a shrine in al-Raqqā. ʿAlī appeared to Nūr al-Dīn's fever-stricken father Atabek Zankī and instructed him to visit a rock upon which he wrote something. The villagers informed him that ʿAlī had placed a rock outside al-Raqqā in order to ward off lions. Zankī built a mosque on the spot to which a camel had transported the rock, and it was

¹³² For a detailed discussion of mosques containing tombs, see Pedersen, 'Masjid', 644–77; Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 678–88.

¹³³ For other early accounts, see Elad, 'Pilgrims and Pilgrimage to Hebron (al-Khalil)', 29–30. Elad appropriately uses the term 'hospitality institutions' to refer to the extended structure and facilities at the Cave of the Patriarchs, pp. 40–1. For a description at the time of the Crusades, cf. ʿA. A. al-Sayyid, *al-Khalil wa-al-Haram al-Ibrāhīmī ʿAṣr al-Hurūb al-Ṣalībīya* 496/1099–583/1187 (Cairo, 1998), 286–9.

¹³⁴ See above, Ch. 1, n. 16.

¹³⁵ Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Aṭāq* (Sourdél), 51–2.

housed there in a special room or chamber (*bayt*). The pilgrimage site served a dual function: it warded off predatory attacks and produced cures.¹³⁶

SHI'Ī PATRONAGE OF SHRINES

It has been argued elsewhere that Shi'īs provided the impetus for the development of the cult of saints in Egypt. Bloom, Williams, and Hillenbrand support this claim, while Taylor rejects it.¹³⁷ Fatimids did not construct shrines to buy Sunni allegiance, counter hostility, and ensure political hegemony.¹³⁸ They left Sunni shrines intact when they came to power, most notably that of the jurist al-Shāfi'ī, which enjoyed the patronage of the largely Sunni population. The cult of Ḥusayn provides a clear example of joint Sunni and Shi'ī patronage of a cult. The cult, which was briefly discussed in Chapter three, was established in Egypt by the Fatimids first in Ascalon and then in Cairo. While the Fatimids were the primary patrons of this shrine, tombs of the members of the Prophet's Family were Fatimid in inspiration and inception, yet universal in their appeal.¹³⁹ Despite the fact that Sunni rulers also patronized and built shrines, Ibn Taymīya attributed shrine-building activities, which he regarded as heretical innovation and a transgression of orthodox belief, to the Shi'ī Buyids (339/945–447/1055). He states:

In the golden age of Islam (*al-ʿuṣūr al-mufaḍḍala*), there were not any shrines (*mashāhid*) on tombs. It is only under the reign of the Buyids that they appeared and proliferated; when the Qarmatians emerged to the east and the west among whom were heretical infidels whose goal was to change (*tabdīl*) the Muslim religion, and as the Buyids agreed with them as to the heretical innovations (*bidāʿ*) committed by Jahmites, Muʿtazilites and Rafidites,¹⁴⁰ that are known to those who possess learning, they built false mausoleums (*al-mashāhid al-makdhūba*), such as Mashhad ʿAlī . . .

¹³⁶ Ibn Shaddād, *ʿAlāq* (Sourdel), 42. Such a topos is similar to the incident concerning the founding of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

¹³⁷ The arguments are summed up in Taylor, 'Reevaluating the Shi'ī Role'.

¹³⁸ Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 312.

¹³⁹ Rāghib mentions a number of Umayyad and Abbasid *mashhads* of ʿAlid saints in Cairo, 'Les Premiers Monuments funéraires de l'islam', 27, 29, 32.

¹⁴⁰ This refers to the Shi'īs.



FIG. 10. Tomb of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin), an important Damascus pilgrimage site. To the right is a nineteenth-century white marble cenotaph, a gift of Kaiser Wilhelm II

as well as others. And liars (*ahl al-fīrya*) invented traditions concerning visiting *mashāhid* (*ziyārat al-mashāhid*), performing there canonical prayer (*ṣalāt*) and supplication (*duʿā*) and the likes of that. Then those heretics and innovators that followed them, began to glorify (*tāʿzīm*) *mashāhid* and to despise mosques (*masājīd*). . . . That is against the religion of Muslims, since they hide behind partisanship for the Family of the Prophet (*yasta-tirūna bi-al-tashayyū*).¹⁴¹

Ibn Taymīya attacks the Shiʿi Buyids, though not the Ayyubids and Mamluk rulers, who were themselves patrons of shrines and who made *ziyāra* to them. He also assumes that shrines did not exist during the first three centuries.

Although it has been demonstrated that the origins of a cult of the Family of the Prophet pre-date the Fatimid period, the purported burial places of Ruqayya and Ḥusayn's daughter Sukayna and Ḥusayn's head were established as pilgrimage places under the Fatimids. The growth of these structures into complexes is a measure of their popularity and the extent to which the veneration of ʿAlid saints was pervasive during Fatimid rule in Egypt.

¹⁴¹ Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿ*, 27. 151, 393.

JEWISH SHRINES

In a rare description quoted earlier, the exilarch David b. Avraham (d. 1386 CE), referred to making pilgrimage to *mazārāt*,¹⁴² or pilgrimage places in Palestine.¹⁴³ On this basis, it may be assumed that Jews employed Arabic words to refer to their holy places in certain instances. Yet most descriptions of Jewish tombs and shrines come from the travel itineraries and lists earlier discussed. The burial places of Biblical and Talmudic saints are generally preserved in Scripture and the Talmud.

The permissibility of erecting certain types of monuments over saints' tombs was contentious in the formative period of Judaism. One of the bases for a prohibition is expressed in Scripture where God does not disclose Moses' tomb to Israel out of fear they would turn it into a place of idolatry (Lekah Deut. 34: 6).¹⁴⁴ The Palestinian Talmud states, 'One erects no grave monuments to the dead; their lives perpetuate their memory' (Palestinian Talmud, Sheqalim 47a). The construction of a *nefesh* (pl. *nefashot*), which was a solid structure over the grave without any entrance or with an entrance to a chamber for a watchman, was prohibited by the sages.¹⁴⁵ Rabbi Simeon b. Gamaliel observed that 'one does not erect *nefashot* to the righteous, for their words are their memorial'.¹⁴⁶ Medieval theologians never prohibited the construction or restoration of monuments over tombs. In fact, prominent Rabbanite and Karaite theologians endowed monuments over tombs as attested to in two unique examples. According to a Geniza pilgrimage list from the first half of the fourteenth century, the Kabbalist Sephardic Rabbi Shem Tov (d. 1330 CE) endowed a mausoleum (*ziyyun*) in c.1315 CE in the Galilean town of 'Amuqah over the tomb of Rabbi Yonathan, the author of the *Targum Yerushalmi*.¹⁴⁷ In 1521 CE, Rabbi Moshe Baṣṣola mentions that the Damascene Karaite Mu'allim Zedaqah endowed a 'splendid and ornate structure (*beit*) over the tomb of Hosea b. Beerī'.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² For a general introduction to the literature concerning saints' tombs down to the modern era, see Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 17–71.

¹⁴³ See above, p. 215. ¹⁴⁴ Ginzburg, *Legends*, 6, 164.

¹⁴⁵ 'Tombs and tombstones', *EJ* 15, 1218–22.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 15, 1221–2.

¹⁴⁷ Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 85. The dating of the mausoleum's construction is suggested by Ilan on p. 87.

¹⁴⁸ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣā'ot* (Ben-Zevi edn.), 45.

Moreover, the fact that Jews made pilgrimage to these places refutes the notion that they were considered heretical.

Most Jewish pilgrimage places containing tombs were of pre-Islamic origin, particularly the Palestinian cave tombs, such as those of Hillel and Shammai in Meron, and sepulchres which date from the Roman period. Apart from a number of surviving monuments, most of the evidence concerning Jewish tombs and shrines comes from the travel itineraries and pilgrimage lists of European Jewish travellers. For these Jews, who to be sure never encountered Jewish shrines in their countries of origin, these places were marvels to behold and a part of their sacred history which they sought to reclaim and describe to their co-religionists in their native lands. In Jewish as in the Islamic sources, the most common word for pilgrimage sites is *q-b-r* (Arab. *qabr*, Heb. *qever*). *Qever* is often used interchangeably with *ziyyun* (mausoleum). But in contrast to the Islamic case, the names of types of monuments have their origins in Scripture and exegesis: in the Biblical context, *ziyyun* refers to a monument of some sort erected over a grave.¹⁴⁹ In addition, there was no growth in Jewish shrines prior to the sixteenth century. The fact that leading theologians like Maimonides or several *ge'onim*¹⁵⁰ were buried in the Land of Israel did not render their tombs places of active veneration. This suggests that travellers' descriptions were partly impressionistic rather than being firmly rooted in a devotional culture. Apart from *qever*, words which travellers use to describe tombs are less indicative of the nature of the structure than Islamic terms. In Babylonia, the tomb of Daniel at Sūsa and those of Ezekiel and Ezra were domed shrines. Rabbi Jacob of Paris (1238–44 CE) mentions a domed mausoleum over the tomb of Nittai ha-Arbeli in Arbela and over the tomb of Rabban Gamaliel in Yabneh 'which Muslims regard as that of Abū Hurayra'.¹⁵¹ Benjamin of Tudela mentions large cupolas over the sepulchres of Daniel, Ḥananiah, Mishael, and Azaria in Babylonia.¹⁵² Shmu'el b. Shimshon noted a cupola of white marble over the tomb of Hillel and Shammai in

¹⁴⁹ *EJ* 15. 1215–33, esp. pp. 1218–22; 2 Kings 23: 17 concerning 'a tomb (*ziyyun*) of a man of God from Judah . . . '.

¹⁵⁰ *Ge'onim* (sing. *ga'on*)—the heads of the Babylonian Jewish academies of Sura and Pumbedita (c.6th–11th cents. CE); honorific of renowned scholars.

¹⁵¹ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 125–6 (modified).

¹⁵² Schechter, *Saadjana*, 121–4. The relevant text can be found on p. 123.

Meron.¹⁵³ Such structures were Islamic in inspiration and in the case of the Companion Abū Hurayra, an Islamic building—a mosque-shrine.

Oriental Jews probably employed the same words as their Muslim counterparts in referring orally to certain shrines. The word *maqām* discussed earlier does not appear in any Jewish writings. One of the few Geniza specimens concerning Jewish shrines in Palestine frequently employs the Hebrew *qever* (Arab. *qabr*) and *ziyyun* for tomb and mausoleum respectively. *Ziyyun* is literally a 'grave marker' or 'tombstone'. In one passage it is described as a 'sepulchre' (*binyan*) (lit. construction). European Jewish travellers frequently employed such designations to refer to tombs. The *ziyyun* was usually built upon the tombs of holy men.¹⁵⁴ Some tombs of Biblical figures were simply designated as *qever*, while others were *ziyyun*. Rabbi Shmu'el b. Shimshon mentions three *ziyyunim* over the tombs of the patriarchs in Hebron.¹⁵⁵ A Geniza list from the early fourteenth century mentions a '*ziyyun* of granite rocks (*avnei gazit*)' over the tomb of Rabbi Yonathan, the author of the *Targum Yerushalmi*.¹⁵⁶ In Bar'am, Shmu'el b. Shimshon found the tombs of Ḥoni ha-Me'aggel, his wife, and their son over which *ziyyunim* were situated.¹⁵⁷ Moshe Baṣṣola describes the tomb of Yehuda b. Temah in the Galilean town of 'Alama as 'a raised and sealed monument (*ziyyun*)'.¹⁵⁸

Beit

A *beit* is a roofed structure or walled enclosure for tombs which may be rendered as 'sepulchre'. A *beit* stood over the tomb of Aba Arikhah between the tombs of Barukh ben Neriah and Naḥum Alkushi.¹⁵⁹ During the seventeenth century, Rabbi Gershon bar Eliezar (1624 CE) wrote: 'The length of the tomb is 18 cubits and many tombs of disciples surround it. Many tombs are covered in new black cloth where the living make votive offerings (*nodrim*) to them'.¹⁶⁰ In addition to the structure mentioned earlier,¹⁶¹ Moshe Baṣṣola records a *beit* over the tomb of Gehazi: 'Near this

¹⁵³ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 108.

¹⁵⁴ Reiner, *ʿAliyah*, 236.

¹⁵⁵ Eisenstein, *Ozar Maṣṣa'ot*, 63. Ya'ari has 'a tomb of three tofahs', *Iggerot*, 79.

¹⁵⁶ Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 94 (fo. 1).

¹⁵⁷ Ya'ari, *Iggerot*, 80.

¹⁵⁸ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣa'ot* (Ben-Zevi edn.), 45.

¹⁵⁹ Ben-Ya'qov, *Qevarim*, 36.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. ¹⁶¹ See above, p. 275.

sepulchre (*beit*) outside of it on the river bank is an elongated tomb which they say is Na'aman's.¹⁶²

Binyan

A *binyan* is a construction over a grave, a sepulchre. Rabbi Yizḥaq Elfarra of Málaga reported seeing over the tomb of Eleazar ha-Kohen in 'Awartā¹⁶³ near Nabulus 'a large sepulchre (*binyan*) and a large mausoleum (*ẓiyyun*)' which he described as 'the work of kings'.¹⁶⁴ He also mentioned that his son Phineas and his grandson Avishur and the Prophet Aaron's son Ithmar are in a large sepulchre (*binyan*).¹⁶⁵ Jacob b. Nethanel ha-Cohen (12th cent.) observed that 'over the tomb of Seth in Timnat Serah in one monument is a building like a house (*binyan kemo beit*)'.¹⁶⁶ Moshe Baṣṣola indicated a construction (*binyan*) of large rocks over the tombs of Hillel and Shammai:

Afterward, I went to the opposite mountain; there are the tombs of Shammai and his wife atop the mountain, a construction (*binyan*) of very large rocks, every wall is from a single stone. The slab that forms the roof is six cubits by four cubits in width and the thickness is half a cubit. It is inconceivable how this rock was placed in the hands of man. Inside this construction (*binyan*) are two coffins of bored rocks. They are visible from a window there. Beneath this construction (*binyan*) is a fine cave with eleven crypts (*kukhin*) of his disciples surrounding it.¹⁶⁷

Binyan also referred to mosques or synagogues over tombs. In Kefar Kanna, Rabbi Jacob of Paris beheld the tombs of the sons of the Prophet Jonah b. Amittai, noting that 'over them is a fine construction (*binyan*)—a mosque (*beit tefilah*)'.¹⁶⁸ Moshe Baṣṣola claimed of two tombs near Nevratin that 'there is no sepulchre (*binyan*) over them, just a cairn (*gal*) of stones'.¹⁶⁹

Synagogues

Synagogues (sing. *beit kenesset*), such as those of Elijah and Moses (see Chapter 4), were prominent pilgrimage sites. As discussed

¹⁶² Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣā'ot* (Ben-Zevi edn.), 67. For the story of Na'aman and Gehazi, see 2 Kings 5: 1–2.

¹⁶³ Yāqūt, *Mujam al-Buldān*, 3. 745.

¹⁶⁴ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 109.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. ¹⁶⁶ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 95.

¹⁶⁷ Baṣṣola, *Maṣṣā'ot* (Ben-Zevi edn.), 47.

¹⁶⁸ Eisenstein, *Oẓar Maṣṣā'ot*, 70.

¹⁶⁹ Ya'ari, *Maṣṣā'ot*, 141.

earlier, the synagogues of Elijah throughout Syria, Palestine, and Egypt contained grottoes referred to as *me'arat ha-khevyah* or *khevyah*. Rabbi Jacob of Paris visited a number of other synagogues of Elijah in the Syrian towns of Baḥsitā, Lādhiqīya, Ḥamā, and Ḥims.¹⁷⁰

The Talmudic sages were also buried in synagogues as in the case of Rabbi Ze'ira, Barukh b. Neriah, and Rabbi Yosef.¹⁷¹ Not all synagogues were pilgrimage sites nor was their association with the patriarchs sufficient to render them as such. Moreover, most synagogues mentioned in travel itineraries were not accorded the measure of sanctity of the aforementioned places. The commemorative element was greater than the veneration of the saints concerned. Rabbi Yiḏḥaq Elfarra of Málaga visited a synagogue which contained a red stone from the Temple.¹⁷²

Other structures

The *beit midrash*, which in its classical sense is a collegium or place of religious instruction in Judaism, is probably a mausoleum or raised structure.¹⁷³ In Meron, Rabbi Shmu'el b. Shimshon, who travelled in the company of the exilarch Rabbi Jonathan ha-Cohen of Lunel, visited the *beit midrash* of Rabbi Shim'on b. Yoḥai:

From there we mounted to the village of Meron, and we found there the sepulchre of Rabbi Eleazar, son of Hisma. At Meron we found also the *beit midrash* of Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai; it is four square, and in it he lies buried, and with him his son Rabbi Eleazar. . . .¹⁷⁴

Beit midrash in this and in the case of Solomon's *beit midrash* in Sidon refers not only to a 'tomb', as Ilan suggests, but more specifically to a mausoleum. Moshe Baḥṣola describes Zebulon's tomb as possessing an *istabah* (Gk. *stibadion*), a stone slab or bench. This is the only known instance of this word employed in the medieval context.¹⁷⁵

With the notable exception of pre-Islamic Galilean monuments, Islamic domed shrines influenced the construction of domed monuments over tombs of Jewish saints. Even the founding of Jewish shrines indicates that prominent Jews from the Mediterranean

¹⁷⁰ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 126–7.

¹⁷¹ Eisenstein, *Ozar Massa'ot*, 71.

¹⁷² Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 67.

¹⁷³ Ilan, *Qivrei Zaddiqim*, 86, 113.

¹⁷⁴ Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 108 (modified).

¹⁷⁵ This passage is quoted above on pp. 244–5.

region who settled or visited saints' shrines in Galilee built domed structures which complemented their surroundings.

Shrines were the most prominent constructions in villages, towns, and cities, second only to mosques, as indicated by their centrality in the monumental, social, and religious contexts. However, many such places combined the function of *masjid* and shrine, the latter often adjoining the mosque.

Building shrines, like building mosques, mobilized various sections of the population to contribute resources and labour to such pious causes. The restoration and construction of shrines represented an effort by Muslim rulers and the ruling elite to mobilize the population while perpetuating the veneration of holy persons.

Conclusion

THE veneration of saints in the medieval Islamic Near East was profound in its conception and articulation, affecting the lives of many Jewish, Muslim, and Christian devotees from all walks of life, who through their experiences sought to reaffirm their faith, chart their sacred pasts, and derive relief from illness and adversity. The *ziyāra* brought people of different faiths and backgrounds together to partake in it, to celebrate life, faith, and renewal. As S. D. Goitein observed in his pioneering study *Jews and Arabs*, *ziyāra* was ‘the very center and pivot of popular religious life’.¹ Although for the edification of their co-religionists, Jews, Christians, and Muslims narrated stories and accounts of a polemical nature about each other, they respected each other’s veneration of holy sites. The historical record is replete with examples of the personal experiences of individual devotees and the communities of which they were a part. For the Damascene Jew Moses b. Samuel, the profligate Aleppan soldier ‘Abd Allāh al-Bajānī, the Kurdish devotee of Khālid b. al-Walīd, the Mongol convert, and the many other men and women whose experiences it would be inaccurate to characterize as incidental historical accidents or popular stories, experiencing the holy was an extraordinary and profoundly personal phenomenon, which they related to friends, relatives, communal leaders, historians, and theologians, etc. Jewish and Muslim keepers served together at Ezekiel’s shrine and perhaps at other shrines. Politics and war were natural corollaries to religion; faith and devotion as they were articulated in the context of shrines and living saints were a powerful panacea against the enemy and for the fulfilment of spiritual and even material needs. Nūr al-Dīn, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and their successors consulted saints and sought their blessings before waging war as did the Ottoman sultan Selim

¹ S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages* (New York, 1955), 188.

I.² At times of war rulers and common people invoked the sacred, such as the ‘Uthmānī codex of the Qur’an. Relics, talismanic objects, sacred rocks, grottoes, and pillars graced Islamic cities, towns, and villages and Muslim, Jewish, and Christian shrines. As this study has demonstrated, while *ziyāra* in the medieval Near East has essential elements in common with its modern counterpart—holy persons, shrines, and fundamental rituals and beliefs, it is not synonymous with the popular culture described in the writings of anthropologists and social scientists.³ Powerful images of devotees visiting shrines in far-flung places across the Middle East and North Africa today do not adequately capture the dynamic of a vibrant pre-modern religious culture which assumed a more prominent role in the lives of devotees.⁴ Today, younger generations throughout the Middle East have rejected as superstition and folklore the veneration of saints and making *ziyāra* to their tombs and shrines. The forces of modernity, urbanization, politics, conflict, and war have irreparably marred the landscape. Among the Muslims and Christians of the Holy Land, *ziyāra* to the shrines of saints has all but faded into historical memory.

By equating pre-modern *ziyāra* culture with its modern counterpart, a hierarchical model emerges which recognizes the existence of two cultural and religious spheres—one high/official and the other low/popular.⁵ First, such a distinction between popular and official religion did not exist in Islam and Judaism. Islam as a faith is popular. Yet *ziyāra* is identified as a form of popular reli-

² Concerning Nūr al-Dīn’s patronage of saints, cf. Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil fi-al-Ta’rikh*, 11. 199; Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij*, 1. 265. Prominent individuals like al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars’ wazīr patronized living saints. Ibn Shaddād, *Alāq* (Sourdel), 187–8.

³ For a critique of social-scientific interpretations of ‘official’ and ‘popular’ Islam, cf. J. Waardenburg, ‘Official and Popular Religion in Islam’, *Social Compass*, 25 (1978), 315–41.

⁴ *Ibid.* 318–19.

⁵ In a study of popular culture in medieval Cairo, Boaz Shoshan stressed the need to transcend the division between high and low culture. *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*, 77–8. However, Shoshan does not entirely reject this model. See his comments in a review of *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*, by C. S. Taylor, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 32 (2000), 545–6. J. Waardenburg exemplifies the problematic nature of these and other categories; he proposes a tripartite model of ‘official’, ‘normative’, and ‘popular’, according to which popular festivities and the veneration of saints represent a popular form of Islam (‘Official and Popular Religion’, 319).

gion and culture in which the common people partook. Moreover, the views of theologians concerning *ziyāra* are taken to represent a commentary on popular culture and religion while in fact they addressed permitted and forbidden conduct.⁶ During the Middle Ages the boundaries between so-called popular and canonical Islam were blurred.⁷ Even such a distinction is not wholly valid since rulers, theologians who themselves were responsible for instilling proper practice in accordance with the Sunna of the Prophet, and the supreme leader of Sunni Muslims the Abbasid caliph contributed to the formation of the cult of saints; as did, for instance, the Mamluk and Ottoman sultans Baybars and Selim I, whose patronage of certain shrines marked a revival not only in the veneration of particular holy persons, but also in the transformation of physical structures through the construction of such edifices as *madrasas* and places of residence for visitors. In the Islamic case, tension existed, at least, always in the background, between the customary practices of a given locality and the Sunna. Thus, established local customs and traditions determined the precise articulation of *ziyāra* practices. Similarly, in Judaism theologians like Sahl b. Maṣliḥ and Maimonides tried to uphold correct practice—the former through condemning the irreligious practices of others and the latter by issuing a legal response as to the permissibility of performing certain rituals.

In order to determine whether certain elements of *ziyāra* were popular, three fundamental components should be considered: the actors, the rituals they performed, and the texts they composed and read. ‘Popular’ must be interpreted on the basis of a set of texts, fundamental rituals, and beliefs which were widespread among a particular group or sect or among the inhabitants of a village, town, or region, or among the adherents of one or more faiths.⁸ Within the broader *ziyāra* culture a fundamental set of rituals existed in which the majority of Muslims, Jews, and Christians partook:

⁶ Ibid. 317. Roger Chartier provides a useful discussion of this distinction in the early modern French context: ‘Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France’, in S. L. Kaplan (ed.), *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Berlin, 1984), 229–31.

⁷ Waardenburg, ‘Official and Popular Religion’, 324–7. ‘Official Islam’ is regarded as the upholding by rulers of the faith as embodied in the Qur’an and the Sunna and its exposition by the ulema.

⁸ This idea is adapted from R. Chartier, ‘Culture as Appropriation’, 229.

prayer, reading and reciting Scripture, supplication, visiting tombs. To these may be added lighting candles, making vows, and performing other ritual acts. The articulation of these rituals differed among devotees of different faiths in different localities. Other sorts of rituals were popular among certain groups of devotees. For instance, rulers and Muslim and Jewish notables restored and built shrines. Scholars and theologians composed *ziyāra* texts, and learned *zuwwār* read them and instructed the illiterate in proper *ziyāra* etiquette. Members of various Sufi orders venerated their founders and partook in *ziyāra* rituals on particular days of the week. According to Ibn al-Ḥājj, the women of Cairo dedicated a *ziyāra* day for visiting the shrine of a particular saint. The women of Damascus visited certain shrines on Wednesdays and Fridays after the Noon Prayer. Among Shi'is, visiting Ḥusayn and the other imams was universally popular.⁹

The historical record has preserved the beliefs and rituals of the common people, their celebrations, and their personal experiences. Lying on or rubbing against tombs were acts performed by common people at the shrine of Ezekiel and elsewhere. However, no evidence exists of theologians, scholars, and writers of pilgrimage guides participating in or condoning such acts. All Shi'i *zuwwār* performed supplicatory prayers based on the traditions of the fifth and sixth imams and prostrated themselves at the tomb of 'Alī. Such ritual acts represented normative *ziyāra* rites in which Shi'is partook, irrespective of their social status.

The *ziyāra* was a culture of devotion encompassing four fundamental aspects of the cult of saints—saint, shrine, devotee, and ritual—which do not constitute formal categories, but rather are a convenient means of looking at the broader social context for the development of what might be regarded as aspects of medieval Islamic and Jewish 'popular' religion and culture. Mosques were built around tombs and shrines or often contained them. Synagogues also contained or were themselves shrines, as in the case of the shrines of Moses, Elijah, Ezekiel, and Ezra. Theologians and traditionists narrated, collected, recorded, and read aloud the traditions of the Prophet and his Companions. Cults were informally conceived through Muslims and Jews identifying holy places through the senses, pleasant odours, dreams, and inscriptions and sustained through the performance of ritual which involved the use

⁹ Here popular means normative practice among Shi'is as such practices were based on the traditions of the fifth and sixth imams.

of holy or sacred substances, such as water, perfume, and soil. The imposition of control or sometimes de facto control is evident in scholars' organizing of *ziyāras* and in rulers' patronage of shrines. Theologians sought to maintain a tradition of *ziyāra* firmly rooted in the established traditions of their forebears, sometimes regardless of whether such traditions could be authenticated. Despite Ibn Taymīya's attempt to curb the veneration of saints among Muslims, he was intimately aware of how devotees conceived of cults. As he aptly observed, why were shrines established for Ḥusayn and 'Alī hundreds of years after their deaths? The answer, with which Ibn Taymīya would have disagreed, is belief. In 1926 the Wahhābī movement, followers of Ibn Taymīya, succeeded in destroying the shrines which stood over the tombs of the Prophet's Family and Companions and putting an end to *ziyāra* practices, though not is the *ziyāra*.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Three decades ago Oleg Grabar suggested further inquiry into the 'development of activities around holy places and the architecture these activities created'.¹⁰ This study is a stepping-stone in that direction. Yet a systematic study of pilgrimage ritual throughout the medieval Islamic world needs to take into account, as far as possible, diversity in ritual forms and regional variations, such as at the shrines of Ḥusayn at Karbalā' and 'Alī at Najaf, which along with Jerusalem and the Cave of the Patriarchs provide the richest examples for case studies of the prayers and supplications performed during *ziyāra*.¹¹ Only then, patterns of ritual behaviour can be established with greater precision.

The cult of saints cannot be regarded as a Syrian phenomenon. Saints and their devotees crossed geographical boundaries, thus indicating universality in saint veneration, which requires consideration in the regional context. However, local customs and traditions gave cult centres peculiar characteristics, such as the presence of talismanic objects and strange rocks at which outsiders marvelled. A detailed study of the therapeutic uses of talismanic and devotional objects is also necessary.

¹⁰ Grabar, 'Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures', 12.

¹¹ The author is currently undertaking a study of pilgrimage ritual in Judaism and Islam.

The discussion of 'sainthood' in Judaism is inconclusive: it has not presented a complete picture of sanctity of persons in the Jewish context, but has only suggested that for medieval Jews manifestations of sainthood were present in their ancestors, as well as among renowned theologians like Maimonides and Naḥmanides who posthumously acquired a measure of sanctity. In the medieval context this did not necessarily suggest anything apart from performing prayer at their tombs. The modern Near East is replete with a body of Judaeo-Arabic midrashic and homiletic literature concerning persons like the Biblical Joseph and Maimonides. Yet the medieval antecedents of such compositions have yet to be discovered. Iraqi Jews singing *ziyāra* songs and Egyptian Jews writing eulogies on Maimonides in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggest long-established traditions, which are, however, untraceable. Like the proverb (Arab. *mathal*), *ziyāra* songs and legends concerning medieval theologians like Maimonides belonged to an oral culture, which was seldom recorded. Only sporadic, tersely worded descriptions largely contained in the accounts of European Jews illustrate the merits of the ancestors through whom miracles were worked posthumously. Maimonides was a 'holy *zaddiq*'. Beyond such opaque language, where does the true nature of the sanctification of medieval theologians lie? The fact that Damascene Jews venerated the Damascene Shaykh Arslān illustrates that Jews were integrated into social and political life, perhaps by necessity and faith. Did the merits of the Patriarchs end with the last of the Talmudic sages or did their successors, the *ge'onim* and other prominent theologians, posthumously become the focus of cult centres where Jews prayed and supplicated as in the modern context? Since for Jews Muslim saints did not possess the merits of their ancestors, any special merit attributed to Muslim saints was born of a common devotional setting.

What did it mean for Jews and Muslims to partake in a common *ziyāra* culture? In ritual terms, it is possible to claim that for a Jew to light a candle over the tomb of a saint and for a Muslim to do the same, or for both to supplicate at the tomb of saints is an act distinct to each religion. Inasmuch as Jewish prayer and supplication are different from those of Muslims in their articulation, the very acts of uttering sacred formulas and gesturing represented a common language of ritual communication which was observed

and mimicked by devotees. It rightly may be assumed that such acts were commonplace and did not merit being recorded.

Celebrations and other communal events were regular occurrences which allowed for a temporary suspension of prescribed social norms, tension, and notions of hierarchy and status as devotees sought to fulfil their spiritual and devotional needs. Friendships formed in the context of saint devotion were never reported; perhaps because they were commonplace, particularly at festivals and on ordinary *ziyāra* days when the composition of devotees was more heterogeneous and devotees were not engaged in group worship as on a holy day. So long as devotees entered a sacred space and engaged the sacred by participating in devotional acts or in public processions and festivals, they no longer existed at the margins. Jews, Muslims, and Christians shared sacred places and undertook sacred journeys together.

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GLOSSARY

abdāl (lit. substitutes) in Islamic mysticism, saint substitutes; the hierarchy at any given time consists of forty *abdāl*. In the event one dies, another is elected in his stead.

adab al-ziyāra (pl. *ādāb al-ziyāra*) pilgrimage etiquette, proper rules for performing *ziyāra*.

‘aliyah Jewish Pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Amoraim Rabbinic authorities in Palestine and Babylonia (3rd–6th c. CE).

athar (pl. *āthār*) (lit. a trace, vestige) a sacred object or relic; monuments, ruins.

awliyā’ (sing. *walī*) friends of God. In the Qur’an, the Friends of God are the believers; also refers to Sufis and various classes of saints.

baraka blessing, often associated with righteous and pious individuals, living and dead saints, and devotional objects.

bid‘a (pl. *bidā’*) innovation, heretical innovation.

dhikr remembrance of God.

du‘ā’ supplicatory prayer.

Hadith the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad. Qur’an and Hadith are the basis of Islamic law.

hajj Pilgrimage to Mecca. One of the five pillars of Islam incumbent upon Muslims who possess the financial means and are in good health once in their lifetime.

ḥaṣid (pl. *ḥaṣidim*) a pious individual, a Jewish saint.

ḥishtateah In Judaism, the act of prostrating oneself in prayer or supplication, usually before the tomb of a holy person.

īd (pl. *āyād*) a holy day, the two canonical Muslim holy days commemorating the conclusion to the hajj (‘Īd al-Aḍḥā—the Feast of Immolation) and the conclusion to the month of Ramadan (‘Īd al-Fitr—Feast of Breaking the Ramadan Fast). Also, a festival place, or place frequented, such as a tomb or shrine.

jāmi’ (pl. *jawāmi’*) a congregational mosque, a large mosque where Friday prayer is held.

jawsaq (pl. *jawāsiq*) a resting place, or pavilion for large gatherings found, for instance, at the cemeteries of Cairo.

karāma (pl. *karāmāt*) a miracle, charisma; act of God that breaks the habitual course of nature and is displayed through the agency of a saint in his lifetime or posthumously (contrast *mu’jiza*).

kashf (pl. *kushūf*) spiritual illuminations. See also *mukāshafāt*.

- madhhab* (pl. *madhāhib*) school of Islamic jurisprudence.
- madrasa* (pl. *madāris*) teaching college, where the Islamic sciences are taught.
- majdhūb* (lit. possessed, a madman) one enamoured of God; a marginal holy man.
- manāqib* extraordinary attributes, feats, deeds, and praiseworthy qualities of revered persons and saints.
- manāsik* pilgrimage rites, usually referring to the rites of the hajj, also used to refer to the rites of Shi'i pilgrimage to the tombs and shrines of the Shi'i imams.
- maqām* shrine, oratory, place where a holy person was thought to have passed through or resided. See also *mashhad*, *turba*.
- maqāma* (pl. *maqāmāt*) a genre of Arabic rhymed prose often translated as 'literary sessions'.
- mashāyikh al-ziyāra* pilgrim guides who led pilgrims around the cemeteries and pilgrimage places, particularly in Cairo.
- mashhad* (pl. *mashāhid*) a mausoleum, shrine, place of witnessing, a place where one is martyred. See also *maqām*, *turba*.
- mashhad al-ru'yā* a vision mausoleum usually established upon seeing a prophet or saint in a vision.
- maṣjid* (pl. *masājid*) (lit. a place of prostration) a mosque.
- mawlid* (pl. *mawālid*) (lit. a birthday) the birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad, also the anniversary marking a saint's birthday or death and the festivals associated with them.
- mazār* (pl. *mazārāt*) a place that is visited, a shrine.
- minbar* high platform or pulpit in a mosque where a preacher ascends to give a sermon to the congregation.
- mūjiza* (pl. *mūjizāt*) a miracle, a miracle performed by a prophet (compare *karāma*).
- mukāshafāt* spiritual illuminations. See also *kashf*.
- muwallah* (pl. *muwallahūn*) (lit. crazy, insane, mad) one enamoured of God; a marginal holy man; 'Walah' is the state of being madly enamoured of something, a mix of holiness and craziness.
- Passover** Jewish festival observed on the 14th–21st of the month of Ayyar which commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt.
- Pesach** (see Passover).
- peṣaḥ* (see Passover).
- qabr* (pl. *qubūr*) a grave, tomb.
- qever* (pl. *qevarim*) a tomb, grave.
- qibla* the direction of prayer in Islam facing Mecca.
- qiddīs* (pl. *qiddīsūn*) a holy person, a Christian saint.
- qubba* a dome, cupola, a domed mausoleum or shrine.

quṭb (pl. *aqṭāb*) (lit. pole or axis) in Sufism, the *quṭb* is atop the hierarchy of saints.

rakā (pl. *rakāʿāt*) is a single 'unit of prayer' in which the worshipper recites a number of ritual prayers and invocations while standing, bowing, prostrate, and sitting.

ribāṭ (pl. *rubuṭ*) (lit. binding, tie) a retreat for devout men or women, a frontier post; may be synonymous with *zāwiya*.

rihla a journey, voyage, travel.

saḡar journey, travel.

ṣaḡāba the Companions of the Prophet Muḡammad.

ṣāliḡūn righteous individuals, saints.

ṣhadd al-riḡāl (lit. fastening saddles to mounts) journeying or setting out on *ziyāra*.

ṣhaḡā intercession by God; intercession of God through the agency of a saint or prophet.

Shavuoth Festival of Weeks—Jewish holy day occurring seven weeks after Passover commemorating Moses receiving the Ten Commandments.

Succoth Feast of the Tabernacles—Jewish holy day occurring on the 15th of the Hebrew month of Tishri and lasting for seven days. It commemorates the wandering of the Children of Israel in the Wilderness (Lev. 23: 43).

Sunna (lit. practice, custom) the sayings, deeds, and silent affirmations of the Prophet Muḡammad and his Companions (see *ṣaḡāba*) as preserved in the Hadith. Shi'is additionally relied on the traditions of the imams.

takīya often rendered as *tekke* (Turk.)—a Sufi residence.

tawassul seeking means to God; intercession.

turba a mausoleum; a tomb complex which contains one or more tombs; a shrine.

umma the Islamic community founded by Muḡammad at Medina, the community of believers. Also used in the medieval writings of Oriental Jews to refer to the Children of Israel.

umrah a lesser pilgrimage in Islam which is mentioned in the Qu'ran and which may be performed throughout the year. While the hajj is obligatory (q.v. hajj), the *umrah* is recommended.

walāya sainthood.

walī a saint (see *awliyā*).

zaddiq a righteous person, Jewish saint.

zāwiya (lit. a corner) a Sufi lodge; a small mosque, sometimes associated with a saint's tomb, a complex containing a tomb, accommodation or other facilities for members of a Sufi order.

ziyāra (pl. *ziyārāt*) (lit. a visit, visiting, visitation) pious visitation or pilgrimage to tombs, shrines and tombs (*ziyārat al-qubūr*); visiting living

saints for the purpose of obtaining blessing and knowledge; pilgrimage sites.

zuhd asceticism, retreating from the worldly life, an attribute of a righteous person or saint; such a person is known as a *zāhid* (pl. *zuhhād*).

zuwwār (sing. *zā'ir*) visitors, those who undertake *ziyāra*, devotees, pilgrims.

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