

## BOOK REVIEW

### MAPPING ISLAMICJERUSALEM: A REDISCOVERY OF GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES

By: Dr. Khalid A. El-Awaisi

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*'Mapping Islamicjerusalem: A rediscovery of geographical boundaries'* is a study that breaks new ground in our understanding of Islamicjerusalem, and is as ambitious as the title suggests. It investigates the existence of a region for Islamicjerusalem and its extents throughout Muslim centuries. The initial cause of the study as the author states 'is the neglect of the concept of the region that was once popular in the early Muslim periods and also the vanishing of knowledge on the extent of the region in later centuries'. It is worth noting that this topic touches on a new academic territory and explores one aspect of the definition of Islamicjerusalem that is its geographical extent. However, the author has been able to introduce this subject in such a way that is critical, informative and enjoyable to read. The way he takes on board theological, linguistic, historical, geographical or even archaeological accounts and views and assesses them is surely impressive.

This study with no doubt is indicative of a vibrant scholar who has demonstrated the ability to deal with such a complex and forgotten issue in a very innovative way. The book works systematically and

structurally, following a detailed introduction, which does no more than detail the book's origin and lay the groundwork, the work is then divided into eight chapters in addition to the conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter One which is entitled '*the extent of the Land of Barakah*', Khalid El-Awaisi makes detailed investigation of the Qur'anic terminology of which IslamicJerusalem is a central part of, *al-Ard al-Mubarakah* (the Land of *Barakah*). By this investigation the author successfully arrives at an approximation of the extent of this land by consulting the main Muslim sources and working out the land's extent from the Muslim primary sources.

In Chapter 2: '*the extent of the Holy Land*', he follows what has been discussed in chapter 1 and with more deep and thorough investigation. He arrives at the extent of another Qur'anic terminology of which IslamicJerusalem is a part of, *al-Ard al-Muqadasah* (the Holy Land). Once again the author based his discussion on Muslim primary sources and was able to discover the extent of this area, and compares it interestingly with that of the Land of *Barakah*. It is worth noting that both these concepts have been neglected and this is probably is the first attempt in recent times to unveil their extent and understanding.

Chapter 3: '*the names of IslamicJerusalem: from the pre-Muslim period until 23AH*', provides a detailed study of the history and development of the names attributed to IslamicJerusalem, both the city, the region, and to some extent the mosque from just before the rise of Islam till the end of the reign of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab the second rightly guided Caliph. In this chapter, the author also looks into the early Muslim understandings of the names of IslamicJerusalem and attempts seriously to resolve the confusion over multiple usages of the names and their change of use over time

In Chapter 4 which is entitled '*development of the names of IslamicJerusalem: from after the Muslim conquest until the Crusader period (23-500 AH)*' El-Awaisi, continues the

discussion initiated in chapter 3. He devotes this chapter to tackling the period from the reign of Othman Ibn 'Affan, the third rightly guided caliph, until the end of the time of the first Crusade. The main development of the name and its transformation were profoundly traced from Aelia and *Bayt al-Maqdis* to al-Quds. In doing that, El-Awaisi is able to draw the attention to the many accounts that refer generally or indirectly to the region of Islamicjerusalem and traces the multiple usages of the names, and their change of use over time as well as observing the evolving of the new names overriding some of the previous ones.

In chapter 5 '*development of the names of Islamicjerusalem: from after the crusades until the late ottoman period (500-1300 AH)*' El-Awaisi once again followed on the investigation he started in the previous chapter, this time he tackled the period from the first Crusade until the end of the Ottoman period. This helped him to trace the main development of the names of Islamicjerusalem and its transformation from al-Quds to al-Quds al-Sharif and the introduction of further terms employed to refer to the region of Islamicjerusalem.

In chapter 6 which is entitled '*geographical extent of Islamicjerusalem*'. El-Awaisi with much interest and deep insight looked into the direct accounts that refer to the boundaries of Islamicjerusalem throughout the Muslim periods, and develops a framework for the extent of these boundaries. This chapter is enriched with very detailed maps of this region. These surely will aid readers to get a clearer picture of these boundaries.

In chapter 7 which is entitled '*general references to the region*', an examination is carried out on general and indirect accounts referring to the region of Islamicjerusalem. It looks at cities and towns that are named in various geographical and historical sources to be part of this region. It specifies certain points and areas and refines the understanding of the framework already established in the previous chapter

In chapter 8 the author succeeded in presenting the *'administrative districts to Islamic Jerusalem'*. He intellectually examines the extent of the administrative vicinity of Islamic Jerusalem from before the first Muslim rule until the end of the Ottoman period. It provides evidence that these administrative extents were continuously changing and were very different from the framework of the region that he already discussed in the previous two chapters.

Finally, the conclusion of this monograph summarises with the main findings and brings in the different concepts that clearly elaborate the extent of the region of Islamic Jerusalem and its development as well as its connection with other entities around it. One of the most crucial findings of this monograph is that, the author is able to prove that Islamic Jerusalem is a wide region rather than just a city. This in fact is a very important discovery together with the other findings in this monograph makes it a great contribution to the field of Islamic Jerusalem studies and to knowledge in general. Consequently, the author recognised the need to further research on this topic and therefore, he recommends further research into this subject.

To sum up, Khalid El-Awaisi emphasises his theories and arguments by presenting them, very interestingly, with maps and diagrams which have definitely greatly enhanced the appeal of the monograph and enriched the chapters. The main strength of this monograph is that it rediscovers concepts that were long forgotten or shallowly investigated. It also sets out the agenda for further research.

'Mapping Islamic Jerusalem: A rediscovery of geographical boundaries' is in itself a highly rewarding study. It is very well researched, clearly written and makes an important contribution to the historical geography of Islamic Jerusalem. It is a dense and thorough presentation of Islamic Jerusalem based on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches and should be read with care and attention. El-Awaisi's study is a serious contribution to the field of Islamic Jerusalem Studies in particular

and to knowledge in general, breaking new ground altogether. The monograph fills its aims and objectives well and I would highly recommend it to specialists and none-specialists in the field and in particular to university libraries. It surely does mark one of the most important milestones for the field of Islamicjerusalem studies.

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