

Muslim Women: Active Agents in Demonstrating the Significance of IslamicJerusalem

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Introduction

During the three whole months of my study of two courses on IslamicJerusalem¹, it struck me as rather peculiar that none of the core sources that 'we', the MLitt students, were required to study into were written by women. Not only that, but the available sources kept silent about women both on the elite's and popular levels in relation to the history of IslamicJerusalem. This made me wonder about the position of women in the early history of IslamicJerusalem. Undoubtedly, there must have been women, for people from all genders make history. But what was the role of Muslim women at that time? Were they left inside their homes and *haram* to do all the household physical work, and left all the mental and intellectual public debates to their

¹ Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Dundee, (Autumn Semester 2004). The two mentioned courses are: The Status of Jerusalem in Islam (AM 510A), and History of Islamic Jerusalem 1(AM 510B). With the recent review of the MLitt. Programme in IslamicJerusalem Studies at the Institute, the courses have been changed. The Theroretical Fraework of Islamic Jerusalem's course (AM5011) includes discussions of the role played by Muslim women in demonstrating the signnificance of IslamicJerusalem.

fellow men? When Muslim men left for months and sometimes for years to participate in the Muslims' expansionary battles, were Muslim women left behind? And after conquering Islamicjerusalem, did Muslim women play any significant role, or were they so unnoticed and marginal not to be mentioned explicitly in history books and texts? These questions triggered me to look more into this topic and to try to find the traces to any truth lying behind this matter. Obviously, the starting point on this journey was particularly challenging as none of the early history books is written by women, about women, or for women!

To begin to answer these questions, it was essential to comprehend that such a study could only be approached from two main angles, the early history of Islamicjerusalem generally and Muslims' relation to it, and, on the other hand, women as participants in the making of history.

Very early in Muslim history, Islamicjerusalem occupied a central position. After many preparatory steps starting in the days of Prophet Muḥammad² in al-Ḥijāz region, the early Muslims were finally capable of capturing Islamicjerusalem from the Romans in the year 16 AH. From then onwards, the first Muslims communities' physical contact with Islamicjerusalem and its inhabitants intensified. But the Muslims' relationship with Islamicjerusalem was/is, of course, not only confined to the political side of the first conquest and the Muslims' rule there. On a religious level, there are verses in the Qur'ān that mention Islamicjerusalem, and the Prophet said

² Here and after referred to as the Prophet

a number of *ahādīth* about Islamicjerusalem, which were mostly transmitted by men. Women however, seem to have had some share in this.

But what is meant by “Islamicjerusalem”? Recently El-Awaisi (Summer 2005: 8) presented a working definition of the concept: “A new terminology for a new concept, which may be translated into the Arabic language as Bayt al- Maqdis. It can be fairly eventually characterised and defined as, a unique region laden with rich historical background, religious significances, cultural attachments, competing political and religious claims, international interests and various aspects and dimensions that affect the rest of the world in both historical and contemporary contexts. It has a central frame of reference and a vital nature with three principal intertwined elements: its geographical location (land and boundaries), its people (population), and its unique and creative inclusive vision, to administrate that land and its people, as a model for multiculturalism”.

What is of crucial significance for this study is the argument that one essential aspect of its frame of reference is Islamicjerusalem’s people (population). Therefore, by definition, all components of the “people” should be examined – people from a multitude of backgrounds, young and old, rich and poor, male and female. However, it is a well established fact that historiography has for centuries been dominated by a very specific section of societies, while others, the majority, have been left out, crucially amongst them women. It is one of the main aims of this study to “reinstate” women in the early history of Islamicjerusalem.

During the past few decades a number of studies on the reinterpretation of history, looking through a gendered lens have been done, emphasising the importance of involving and “digging out” the female aspect of history. Thus, gender has become an essential tool of analysing history. Joan Scott (1999: 28-50) has dedicated a whole chapter in her book *Gender and the Politics of History* on ‘gender’ as a useful category of historical analysis. She argues that through the usage of gender as a tool of analysis, with its meaning that goes beyond the physical and biological classification, phenomena can be analysed from different perspectives, bringing in more categories to the scrutiny of history, combined with politics. In this regards Islamicjerusalem’s history should not be different from any other history. The usage of gender as a tool of analysing both its past and present is a necessity for the completion and advancement of this new field of inquiry.

The present study aims at “unearthing” the role played by women in underpinning the significance of Islamicjerusalem. The structure of the study is drawn from an article written by El-Awaisi (Summer 1998: 47-71). In this article he speaks about the significance of Islamicjerusalem in Islam. He divides the article into two main parts; the first is related to what is mentioned in the Qur’ān about Islamicjerusalem and what the Prophet said about it; and the second part is in regards to the manifestations of this status, starting with the Prophet’s preparatory steps to conquer Islamicjerusalem, then the taking over of this task by the first two rightly guided caliphs, and

ending with the movement of Muslims mainly from al-Hijāz region to IslamicJerusalem. Following the lines of this article, this study discusses the contributions of the Muslim women in demonstrating the significance of IslamicJerusalem.

Since the establishment of the Centre for IslamicJerusalem Studies in 2002³ none of the studies done in this field were about women specifically or gender generally in relation to IslamicJerusalem. Therefore, a great deal of findings and possibly different interpretations about this region and its people has gone unmentioned. The present study introduces a new tool of analysis when looking into the history of IslamicJerusalem and its status in Islam. The main argument is that without satisfactorily taking into account the agency of Muslim women in historical sources, the study of IslamicJerusalem is incomplete and fails to achieve its goals. This argument is demonstrated through this article, where various examples show that such a gendered analysis is a vital approach to the study of IslamicJerusalem.

The significance of re-examining some of the *aḥādīth* about IslamicJerusalem that are narrated by women is to show the inclusiveness of this region to all genders from a theological perspective. This should, furthermore, help to answer questions about ambiguities within these *aḥādīth*.

3 To learn more about the establishment, and development of the New Field of Inquiry see: Al-Ahlas, Aisha. 2004. *Islamic Research Academy (ISRA): 1994-2004- Background, Activities and Achievements, With Special Reference to the New Field of Inquiry of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*. Dundee: Islamic Research Academy (ISRA)

Looking at the vital roles played by Muslim women in the steps taken to conquer Islamic Jerusalem, does not only state that battles and wars are not exclusive to Muslim men, but it also shows how important the presence of Muslim women in these battles were for the success of the army as a whole, and for the conquest of Islamic Jerusalem.

Last but not least, it is crucially significant to look at Muslim women within the boundaries of Islamic Jerusalem. Their role in adding to and transforming the existing outlook of Islamic Jerusalem after the conquest and until the end of the Umayyad period is vital and thus must be studied. What emerges from such an analysis are some of the ways in which they were active agents in the society and in making history.

A good amount of historical research has been done on women in societies generally and about women in Muslim societies in specific. These studies claim that men primarily wrote history, and so part of history is still “buried”. The main concern of these studies is to show the role women play in societies on different levels, like women’s role and participation in the economic life, political life, and their status in families and gender relations. A good example of this is a contemporary study on Arab women. Tucker (1993: vii) assumes that the “Arab” conquests of the seventh century created some kind of cultural unity between the areas stretching from Morocco in the West to the Gulf in the East. She acknowledges that the Arab world is not synonymous with Islam, but the latter plays a great role in shaping its culture. Against this background, *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers* offers a compilation of

case studies on women in the Arab world examining their participation and addition to four main fields: Gender Discourses, Women's Work and Development, Politics and Power, and Gender Roles and Relations.

This article's analytical framework and its reflections on what it means by 'Muslim Women: Active Agents in demonstrating the significance of Islamicjerusalem' is understood as an ongoing process of intentional and unintentional attempts done by Muslim women to demonstrate the significance of Islamicjerusalem and what it means for the Muslims. These attempts did not necessarily wipe out the existing outlook and structure of Islamicjerusalem, but they can be considered as significant additions to what was already there.

The participation of women in this process starts with their active involvement in the transmission of some *aḥādīth* narrated by the Prophet about Islamicjerusalem, and/or by helping to explain the meanings of some of the verses in the Qur'ān related to it. The Muslim women taking part in the physical steps to conquer Islamicjerusalem and spread a Muslim sovereignty to it is also an illustration of their participation.

Lastly, this framework includes their positive contribution within the boundaries of Islamicjerusalem to bring a profound Muslim aura to it, done mainly (but not exclusively) through encompassing different religions within Islamicjerusalem, social activities, and education.

Muslim Women: Triggers, Participants, Debaters and Narrators of Prophetic *Aḥādīth* about the Significance of Islamicjerusalem

Muslims' religious attachment to Islamicjerusalem is based on a variety of grounds. For one, the Nocturnal⁴ Journey to Islamicjerusalem and the Ascension of the Prophet is an issue that occupies the minds and thoughts of numerous people; and secondly the land, in which the Muslims believe people will be raised and gathered on the Day of Judgement, is Islamicjerusalem; and last but not least, the ritual of starting a pilgrimage from Islamicjerusalem to Makkah was recommended by the Prophet and implemented by some of the companions. These are only very few examples that show the spiritual significance of Islamicjerusalem, its incorporation in Muslim beliefs and practices. Nevertheless, these are prominent examples, in which women's presence is very evident. Yet due to the limitation of this study, one example only will be examined, which is the narration about the land where people would be raised and gathered⁵.

⁴ Please note that the Night Journey is another terminology used to refer to the Nocturnal Journey

⁵ For information about the other two examples, please see: Hassan, Sarah Mohamed Sherif Abdel-Aziz. 2005. *Women: Active Agents in Islamising Islamicjersualem from the Prophet's Time Until the End of the Umayyad Period* (unpublished), MLitt. Dissertation in Islamicjerusalem Studies. Dundee: Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, pp. 14-31

***Ḥadīth Bayt al-Maqdis 'Arḍ al-Manshar wa al-Maḥshar* narrated by Maymūnah bint Sa'd- the Prophet's bondmaid**

One of the main issues that give IslamicJerusalem a distinctive status for the Muslims is the belief that it is the land, where people would be raised and gathered on the Last Day. Interestingly, the person who caused the Prophet to say a whole *ḥadīth* about this is a woman – his bondmaid Maymūnah ⁶. Most of the books of merits about IslamicJerusalem mention this *ḥadīth*, however there are several disagreements in the way the tradition is put in each of these books. It is worth noting that the disagreement regarding this narration is reflected in some of the books of *ḥadīth*. Moreover, some books of merits even state that it is a different woman, the Prophet's wife Maymūnah Bint al-Hārith, who narrated this tradition. This section is seeking to clarify some of these ambiguities.

The ḥadīth as stated by Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Mājah

Ibn Ḥanbal (1995: (18), 606) states the *ḥadīth* about Maymūnah's enquiry as follows⁷: “O Prophet (*nabiyy*), give us a pronouncement about IslamicJerusalem. He said: the land where they will be raised and gathered, go to it and pray there, for a prayer there is like a thousand prayers in any other place. She asked: but what if one can not go? He said: then one should

⁶ She is Maymūnah bint Sa'd from *al-Kūfah*; she narrated a number of Prophetic *ḥadīth* apart from the one under examination. (Ibn Ḥanbal 2001: (3) 409).

⁷ Personal translation of the Arabic text

send oil to light it, for those who send oil there are like those who pray in it”.⁸

Ibn Mājah (2000: 206) also mentions this *ḥadīth* in the book about performing the prayers and their *sunnah*. The way the *ḥadīth* is narrated is very similar to the one mentioned above. The only difference in the text itself is in regards to the usage of the personal pronoun in the *ḥadīth*, and in the order of some of the verbs. “O Apostle/ Prophet (*rasūl*), give us a pronouncement about Islamicjerusalem. He said: the land where they will be gathered and raised, go to it and pray there, for a prayer there is like a thousand prayers in any other place. She asked: but what if I cannot go? He said: then you should send oil to light it, for those who send oil there are like those who pray there”.

At first glance, both narrations seem to be the same. Yet, there are subtle differences. The first difference that will be discussed here is the verb order of “raised/gathered”. While Ibn Ḥanbal speaks of “raised and gathered”, Ibn Mājah’s version says “gathered and raised”. This verb order might not seem significant, but it could have theological consequences as to the procedures on the Day of Judgement.

The interpretation of the order of the verbs raised and gathered is that people will first be raised from the dead and then gathered in that region. However, it is also possible that

⁸ ‘An Maymūnah mawlāt al Nabiyy qālat: Ya Nabiyy Allāh aftinā fī Bayt al-Maqdis. Faqāl: Ard al-Manshar wa al-Maḥshar I’tūh faṣallū fih fa’inna ṣalātun fih ka-’alf ṣalāh, fīmā siwāh. Qālat: Ara’ayt man lam yaṭiq ann yataḥammal illayhi aw ya’tih. Qāl falyahdi illayhi zaytā yasruj fih fa-in man ahdā lahu kān kamann ṣallā fih.

people on the Day of Judgement will be gathered in that region and then be sent to either Heaven or Hell, and so in this case the verb raised could mean sent rather than elevated or raised to Heaven. Yet, the former interpretation seems to make more sense for two main reasons. Firstly, because Ibn Ḥanbal's date of birth and death (164-241 AH) are before those of Ibn Mājah (209-273 AH), and so the probability that Ibn Ḥanbal has copied or heard the *ḥadīth* in its original form is higher than in the case of Ibn Mājah. And secondly, because if the Prophet wanted to mean "sent" rather than "raised", as suggested in the second interpretation, he could have used precisely this verb to make it more obvious. It, therefore, seems to sound more logical to have the order of the verbs raised and then gathered, rather than gathered and then raised.

The second difference between the two versions of the *ḥadīth* lies in the grammatical usage of the subject. In Ibn Ḥanbal's version of the *ḥadīth*, Maymūnah uses the passive voice for she says 'and what if *one* can not go?' whereas in Ibn Mājah she is reported to have used the active voice: 'and what if *I* can not go?'. Ibn Ḥanbal's version, again for the reason of the life times of the two scholars, seems more convincing. Furthermore, both versions of the *ḥadīth* start with Maymūnah bint Sa'd asking the Prophet to give a pronouncement about Islamicjerusalem "to *us*", using the plural form of the verb: *Aftinā*. It can, therefore, be argued that had Maymūnah wanted to ask the Prophet about Islamicjerusalem for her own personal and individual reasons, she could have used the *singular* form from the beginning: *Aftinī* 'Give *me* a pronouncement'. The

internal harmony of the first *ḥadīth* is more pronounced and thus more reasonable.

The ḥadīth as written in Sunan Abū Dawūd

Abū Dawūd (1988: (1) 122) placed this *ḥadīth* under the chapter of *Bāb fī al-Sirj fī al-Masājid* ‘lighting a lamp in mosques’ in the book of *al-Ṣalat* (Prayer). The translated *ḥadīth* (Hasan, 1984: (1) 118) reads as follows: “Maimūnah, the free slave-girl of the Prophet (may peace be upon him), reported that she said: Apostle of Allah, tell us the legal injunction about (visiting) Bait al-Muqaddas (the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem) {Bayt al-Maqdis}. The Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Go and pray there. All the cities at that time were effected {sic!} by war. If you can not visit it and pray there, then send some oil to be used in the lamps”.⁹

It should be noted that Abū Dawūd does not explain what is meant by Bayt al-Maqdis and of course it is obvious that there are slight differences between the versions of the *ḥadīth* as narrated in each of these books. But there can be no question that they all agree that the one who narrated the tradition and the one who asked the Prophet about Bayt al-Maqdis is the Prophet’s bondmaid.

⁹ The reader should pay attention that this is an already translated *ḥadīth* and not the original one. The additions of visiting between brackets, using the term Bait al-Muqaddas instead of Bayt al-Maqdis, and stating that by Bayt al-Maqdis (as in the Arabic version) the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is what is referred to, are all by the translator, and not the interpretation of the author of this article.

In Abū Dawūd's (1988: (1) 122) version of the *ḥadīth*, Maymūnah also starts by asking the Prophet to give a pronouncement about IslamicJerusalem in the plural form. However, the rest of the *ḥadīth* differs from the variants offered by Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Mājah (i.e.: Maymūnah asking the Prophet of what should be done if someone can not go). Abū Dawūd gives the answer of the Prophet in the plural form as well: 'and if you (plural) can not go there and pray there (*fa' in lam ta'tūh wa tuṣallū fīh*), then send (*fa'ib'athū*) oil to be used in its lamps'. Hence, all of the Prophet's orders were given in the plural form, restoring the internal harmony missing in Ibn Mājah's version of the *ḥadīth*.

The noted difference between this *ḥadīth* and the ones already mentioned, is, firstly, that it is not mentioned what the benefits of praying there would be (like a thousand prayers in any other mosque); and secondly, that the part of Maymūnah asking the Prophet about what should be done if one can not go is omitted and replaced by an explanation that the cities at that time were affected by war¹⁰. And the third difference between the three is that in the first two versions, the Prophet used the expression *falyahdi* (to give or to send as a gift), whereas in Abū Dawūd's version the Prophet is said to have used *falyab'ath* (to send or dispatch), which can have practical consequences in the ways in which the oil was "sent".

Despite the differences, it is also clear that all three of them mention that the Prophet gave an alternative of what

¹⁰ It is not stated in the *ḥadīth* as written by Abū Dawūd whether this is a later addition to the text as a logical explanation or not.

should be done in the case when praying in Bayt al-Maqdis (IslamicJerusalem) is not possible.

A further interesting aspect about this tradition, which makes it stand out, is the opening phrase. This *ḥadīth* is the only one in regards to IslamicJerusalem which uses the term *Aftinā*. Ibn Ḥajr (1992: 131) claims that there are some other *ḥadīths* narrated by Maymūnah that use the term *aftinā*. He states that she is thought to have asked the Prophet questions about charity (*ṣadaqah*), grave torture, and theft. The way he puts the tradition is similar to the one mentioned above. For instance, Ibn Ḥajr (1992: (8)131) states that on the account of 'Umayyah bint 'Umar, Maymūnah said: Oh Prophet of Allah, give us a pronouncement about charity...'

Other *ḥadīths* might have the derivatives of this verb, like for instance *aftā*, but not in the same way used by her. What is the significance of this verb? The term *Aftinā* in the Arabic language comes from the word *Fatawā*¹¹ (Ibn Manzūr 1999: (10) 183), which is the question, or case to which the *faqīh* (jurist) gives an answer, or a verdict. In the same regards 'Ābādī (1991: (4) 540) says that the meaning of the word *aftāhu*, which stems from the same root, but in the past tense means that a matter has been clarified. He follows on to say that a *fatwā* is what a *faqīh* says. In the al-Mawrid dictionary- Arabic/English (Baalbaki 2001: 815) the translation of the word *Fatwā* and *Futyā* is: (formal) legal opinion, advisory opinion.

¹¹ From the Arabic root F-T-W/Y.

What one can understand from this is that the term *Aftinā* is thus usually used when there is a *concern* or *dispute* regarding a certain issue. In the case of the *ḥadīth* discussed here, the dispute would thus have been about IslamicJerusalem. This in itself opens the gates for new interpretations and conjectures.

Against this background, it seems obvious that there was disagreement about the status and position of IslamicJerusalem among some of the early Muslims and this is why Maymūnah asked the Prophet to give a pronouncement about it.

This view is further affirmed by the fact that the term *Aftinā* is used to refer to a plural subject and not singular, as mentioned above. This would mean that a *group of persons* were arguing about the status of IslamicJerusalem. Since the one who asked this question is a female and given a tradition of gender separation, one can assume that the members of this group were *all* females. This, in turn, shows that women at that time used to have intellectual and theological debates and arguments, and when there was a deadlock or they could not arrive at an answer themselves they used to resort to the Prophet.

From the answer of the Prophet to Maymūnah, it further becomes obvious that he encouraged women to go to IslamicJerusalem to pray there, and he offered them an alternative for the case when going there proved impossible: one could send oil to it. This pronouncement is valid for Muslim women and men until today. Because of the political situation of the region, it is not easy for most of today's Muslims to go to IslamicJerusalem to pray. Therefore, instead of disregarding its

importance and Islamic Jerusalem's status in Islam they should use the alternative the Prophet referred to at the time of the *ḥadīth*, which is to send oil.

But another question remains unanswered: why did the Prophet say that one should send oil to lighten its lamps? What is the significance of oil in this case? According to Ibn Manẓūr (1999: (6) 122), the word *Zayt* is a derivative of the word *Zaytūn*. *Zayt* means the sap and extraction of olives. Neither Ibn Manẓūr (1999: (6) 122), nor 'Ābādī (1991: (1) 324) mentions that oil is used to lighten up places, they only mention that oil is to be used as a lubricant and nourishment.

In the Qur'ān, the word *Zaytūn* (olive) is mentioned five times, whereas the word *Zayt* is mentioned only once. Interestingly, the only time where oil is mentioned in the Qur'ān, the term is used in the context of lighting lamps. In Sūrat al-Nūr, it is stated: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star: [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree – an olive-tree that is neither of the east nor of the west- the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it: Light upon Light! Allah guides unto His Light him that wills [to be guided]; and [to his end] Allah parables unto men, since Allah [alone] has full knowledge of all things".

Al-Ṭabarī (1999: (9) 325) explains that what is meant by *yakādu zaytuhā yuḏī'u* (the oil whereof...give light) is the light, generated by burning oil. "Al-Qurṭubī (1998: (6) 239) in his

explanation of this verse refers to what Ibn ‘Abbās said about oil: it has only benefits, and first among them is its use to lighten up places. A more recent scholar, Abul A‘lā Mawdūdī (1998: (6) 254), says about this verse, specifically on the part about oil: “The statement that this lamp is lit from the oil of an olive tree, ‘neither eastern nor western’, provides an impressive image of the perfection and intensity of the light of the lamp. In the past light was mostly obtained from lamps lit by olive oil, and the brightest lamp was one which was lit from the oil of the olive tree situated in an open and elevated place”.

This discussion provides further clues as to the significance and meaning of the *ḥadīth*. If the Prophet presents the sending of oil as an alternative to not being able to go to IslamicJerusalem to pray there, it could mean that the place should be lightened up and sending “light” is a beneficial thing to do. However, one could also think of another interpretation besides this immediate one.

Enlightenment!

If one assumes that oil is used in the *ḥadīth* as a metaphor of light, and given that knowledge and education is generally seen as a form of “light” (not in a physical but rather in a philosophical sense), light becomes a metaphor for knowledge also in this context. It is suggested that when the Prophet told Maymūnah bint Sa‘d to send oil to IslamicJerusalem to lighten it up, he did not only mean the physical oil and the physical benefits of oil, but he also meant to encourage women to attain more knowledge for the sake of IslamicJerusalem and thus

enlighten their minds about Islamicjerusalem. And obviously this can be done when an individual is both inside and outside the boundaries of Islamicjerusalem¹².

Furthermore, when the Prophet said that one should send oil to lighten it up, he used the term *falyahdi*, which, according to scholars of the Arabic language, means to “give as a gift”. The Prophet was aware of the fact that people could not easily travel to Islamicjerusalem at that time, because of the prevailing instability, and yet he said that one should bring oil to Islamicjerusalem. How can a person send oil to a place without accessing it? The clue lies in the verb used. Instead of using *falyab’ath* (to send out and dispatch) the Prophet chose to say *falyahdi*. The *gift* of oil, sent without direct access to the destination, must refer to more than the physical lighting material and point to knowledge and education to be found in Islamicjerusalem.

Moreover, this *ḥadīth* was/is the source of various *fatāwī* for a number of Muslims. For instance, al-Albānī (2002: (3) 587) in his book on Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī, mentions an incident when a servant went to ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar telling him that she wanted to go to Iraq. He replied that she should go to al-Shām instead, since it is *the land where people would be gathered*. Thus, one can see the far-reaching consequences of the question Maymūnah bint Sa’d asked the Prophet about Islamicjerusalem. ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar, the son of ‘Umar Ibn

¹² On more information about the boundaries of Islamicjerusalem, please refer to El-Awaisi, Khalid. 2003. *The Geographical Boundaries of Islamicjerusalem (unpublished MLitt Dissertation)*. Dundee: Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies.

al-Khaṭṭab, was aware of the significance of IslamicJerusalem and he obviously advised people to go there based on her account. It should be noted that the woman servant is recalled to have told him that she was in a dire situation, upon which he advised her to go to IslamicJerusalem. This is similar to what happened to the Prophet when he had passed through the year of sadness and as a way out, Allah sent him to IslamicJerusalem to start his ascension. In this sense IslamicJerusalem becomes a place of salvation.

Maymūnah bint Sa‘d, the enquirer about IslamicJerusalem, does not only serve as an example of a Muslim woman transmitting a Prophetic *ḥadīth* and thus be one of the long list of female companions who narrated *ḥadīth* on the Prophet’s account; but she surpassed this by bringing to the Muslims a highly significant pronouncement about IslamicJerusalem. It is because of her that IslamicJerusalem’s books of merits dedicate a whole section on *‘Arḍ al-Manshar wa al-Maḥshar*, and thus emphasising the “Islamic” aspect of IslamicJerusalem. With her question and by the Prophet’s answer, the significance of IslamicJerusalem on the theological level was pushed forwards.

In short, the *ḥadīth* narrated by the Prophet’s bondmaid Maymūnah bint Sa‘d shows how women debated intellectual and theological issues, and it also shows how the Prophet encouraged women to pray in IslamicJerusalem, to travel there, and to find an alternative in case they could not go. This *ḥadīth* has been an important reason for a number of companions to go to IslamicJerusalem to pray there and in other events to reside

there. This shows how women are involved in the Prophetic *aḥādīth* about Islamicjerusalem, thus pushing forward the process of the spiritual significance of Islamicjerusalem. In fact, the *ḥādīth* examined in this section is amongst those relied upon most frequently in the books of merits about Islamicjerusalem. The fact that it is narrated by a woman strengthens the position of women in Islam generally, and in relation to Islamicjerusalem in particular.

Muslim Women: Partners in the Military Steps Towards the Conquest of Islamicjerusalem

In the previous section, the main aim was to disclose the role early Muslim women played to confirm the spiritual and theological significance of Islamicjerusalem. In order to affirm this ideological significance, Muslims began to establish a physical presence within the boundaries of Islamicjerusalem, thus starting a process of a more *tangible* significance the city and the region. As Islamicjerusalem was under the rule of the Romans during the time of the Prophet, it had to be militarily conquered first to reach this goal. This conquest did not take place suddenly but it was the result of a long-term military strategy with numerous stages. Gil¹³, El-Awaisi, Aḥmad, and a number of other scholars suggest that the Prophet had planned for the conquest of Islamicjerusalem for years, yet the fruit of his planning was reaped by ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

Obviously, military campaigns are highly complex activities and involve a lot more detail than mere dates in the history books.

¹³ See Gil (1992: 21), El-Awaisi (1998: 60), and Aḥmad (1989: 83-87)

Such campaigns needed combatants, logistic support, and needed someone to nurse the injured and bury the dead. It becomes immediately obvious that almost all sectors of society, including women, were involved in such projects in those days. Thus, it is safe to assume that the early Muslim women were at the battlefields to do the nursing and cooking. It is this chapter's aim to analyse the Qur'an's explicit mentioning of the participation of women in one of the preparatory battles, and also to show through the sacrifices women did how their knowledge about the importance of this battle¹⁴.

Getting Startd

Most military campaigns are carefully planned, seldom are they the outcome of rash decisions, and if they are, they generally prove unsuccessful. This is particularly true in an historical context, in which communication was slow. Careful planning was needed in terms of training, but also in terms of buying and preparing all the necessities for life in the camps and on the battlefield, as battles were long-term projects. One very lucid example of such battle preparations in the context of conquering IslamicJerusalem can be seen in the battle of Tabūk¹⁵.

¹⁴ For more information on the role of Muslim women in the practical steps towards the first Muslim conquest of IslamicJerusalem, kindly see: *Hassan, Sarah Mohamed Sherif Abdel-Aziz. 2005. Women: Active Agents in Islamising IslamicJerusalem from the Prophet's Time Until the End of the Umayyad Period.* Dundee: Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Pp. 32- 47

¹⁵ Tabūk according to al-Ḥamawī (n.d: (2) 17-18) is a place between the al-Qurā Valley and al-Shām; he explains that between Tabūk and Madīnah there

Al-Wāqidī (2004: (2) 379) states that the Muslims knew from a group of tradesmen that Heraclius was in Ḥimṣ and had sent his armies to al-Balqā' to camp there. The Muslims also heard of their numbers, and so the Prophet decided to prepare for a battle. Two main aims seem to have motivated his decision: to call non-Muslims (here the Romans) to embrace Islam and to conquer Islamic Jerusalem. The triggering event was what the Muslims heard about the Roman camps and their numbers in al-Balqā'.

It needs to be emphasised here that this preparatory process, summarised in two paragraphs, spanned a comparatively long time-period. During these pre-battle activities, women were crucially involved in the preparations. Before the battle even started, women were amongst those who gave generously from their possessions to grant financial assistance to this battle. Al-Wāqidī (2004: (2) 380-381) recalls that women depleted their material resources as a contribution to equipping the army. He quotes Um Sinān al-Aslamiyyah who said that she saw a garment in the hands of the Prophet (PBUH) in 'Āishah's house; in it there were musk, bracelets, anklets, earrings, rings, and other things that women had sent to him, things that Muslim women usually keep in their trousseau.

are twelve stages. He quotes Abū Zayd who says that Tabūk is between al-Ḥijr and the beginning of al-Shām, about four stages from al-Ḥijr, midway to al-Shām. The date of the battle of Tabūk is not a matter of controversy for scholars, there is general agreement on when it was, and how long the Prophet stayed there. Al-T (1997: (2) 179) relates that the Prophet set off for Tabūk in 9 AH, in the month of Rajab, in order to summon the Romans to embrace Islam.

Taking into account that this happened at a time when life was considered to be very hard for the Muslims, at a time when they struggled to make ends meet (al-Wāqidī, 2004: (2) 381), these “donations” acquire special value. Being more than a simple “contribution” of women towards the war endeavour, one must not forget that they were giving from their bride wealth, from the dearest they had, their future security. This goes a long way in illustrating that the early Muslim women comprehended the importance of such a battle, and wanted to contribute to its success by any means available to them.

Having secured the material needs, a decision had to be taken as to who would actually be present at the battlefield. The participation of Muslim women on the scene of the battle and in the camps of the Muslim army must be gleaned from a number of different events.

During the process of calling upon people to take part in this battle, a whole group of people stood out and was subsequently identified as Hypocrites. This refers to a number of Muslims, who did not want to join the Muslim army going to Tabūk, despite the fact that the Prophet had made participation compulsory. They found different excuses, apologised to him, and he initially accepted this. This issue was, however, so controversial that verses in the Qur’ān were revealed to the Prophet about them, like: “The Hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding) with each other: they enjoin evil, and forbid what is just, and are close with their hands. They have forgotten Allah; so He has forgotten them. Verily the Hypocrites are rebellious and perverse. Allah has promised the Hypocrites

men and women, and the rejecters, of Faith, the fire of Hell: therein shall they dwell: sufficient is it for them: for them is the curse of Allah, and an enduring punishment”. (Qur’an, 9:67-68).

Sa’īd Ḥawwā (1999: (4) 2288-2295), explaining the general meaning of verses 38 to 72 of this chapter, says that the main area where one could see people turning away from Allah’s will is in the battle of Tabūk. A number of people asked the Prophet to allow them not to attend this battle (the Hypocrites). Ḥawwā also explains that Allah gently reproached the Prophet for initially giving those who did not want to fight in the battle the permission not to. Allah did not want the Prophet to do so, as it should be known explicitly who the honest and believing Muslims are and who are not. Ḥawwā further explains that the believing Muslims would not have asked the Prophet not to join the battle, for they see *jihād* – and the battle of Tabūk can be seen as such – as a means of getting closer to Allah¹⁶.

In these verses the reference to hypocrites is gender inclusive. This not only means that women were among them, but – by analogy – also that women were called upon to join the Muslim army going to Tabūk. Obviously, some of them refused to heed the call and did not join the army.

In the same chapter other verses are directed to the believing Muslims generally, not distinguishing between

17Moreover, these people are considered hypocrites because they did not do as the Prophet told them to, although they had sworn submission and allegiance to Allah and the Prophet. They clearly went against the verse in Sūrat al-Nisā’ that reads as follows: ‘O You who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you...’. In the situation of the battle of Tabūk, the Prophet had two rights over the Muslims, being their Prophet, and charged with political authority over them.

genders, using the terms *al-Mu'minīn wa al-Mu'mināt* (the believing Muslim men and women). This, again, would infer that amongst the Muslims, who went to Tabūk, there were females. The translated verses read as follows: “O you who believe! What is the matter with you, that, when you are asked to go forth in the Cause of Allah, you cling heavily to the earth? Do you prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter”. (Qur'an, 9:38) “The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise. Allah has promised to Believers, men and women, Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in Gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of Allah: that is the supreme felicity”. (Qur'an, 9:71-72)

Thus, it seems safe to assume that women were active participants at Tabūk, yet the names of specific women are not stated in any of the books that were looked into. This is not the place to speculate why women seem to “disappear” between the lines of history books, despite their crucial roles in at least nursing, and cooking, fighting etc. Suffice it to emphasise that the available evidence testifies to their presence: the verses mentioned above are directed to both men and women, indicating that women were also called up for battle; the Prophet did not differentiate between women and men in his call for people to prepare for *al-Jihād* against the Romans, when he

learnt about the condition of the Roman army (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995: (3) 362); finally, the mere size of the Muslim army is so impressive that one cannot imagine it without logistical support. According to al-Wāqidī (2004: (2) 384), Zayd Ibn Thābit, who attended the battle, reported that the Muslim army comprised thirty thousand combatants; a little later in the same source¹⁷ it is stated that the Prophet was accompanied by thirty thousand people and ten thousand horses. These vast numbers of people and animals were without any doubt in need of assistance and care: cooking, cleaning, nursing, and even fighting. The Prophet, as a prudent strategist, must have realised the consequences of and prerequisites for meeting a strong enemy with such a big army; he himself, as in other battles, took one of his wives with him to Tabūk, which was to be his last campaign. This is hinted at in al-Wāqidī's (2004: 413) quotation of one of the men who attended Tabūk. "Irbād bin Sāriyah said: I used to stay next to the Prophet's door in Madīnah and during our travels. One night while we were in Tabūk we went for an errand, then we returned to the place to the Prophet stayed, and he had had his dinner with his guests. Then the Prophet wanted to enter his tent with his wife Um Salamah bint Abī Umayyah...".

Umm Salamah is the only one amongst the undoubtedly large number of women, who is mentioned by name, which is probably due to her elevated position as the Prophet's wife. Even though this mentioning of a woman of the "elite" is emblematic for much of historiography, it can nevertheless

¹⁷ Al-Wāqidī (2004: (2) 389).

indicate a pattern of early Muslim warfare – many wives accompanied their husbands to the battlefields.

This assumption is affirmed by another incident that happened to a man and his wife while they were in Tabūk. Al-‘Asqalānī (1992: (3) 372) speaks about a man called Abū ‘Umar Ibn Shaybah bin Abī Kathīr al-Ashja‘ī, who had gone with the Prophet to the battle in Tabūk. There he was reported to have approached his wife who had died, and he went to the Prophet to tell him what happened. The Prophet told him not to inherit her.

Even though the campaign in Tabūk illustrates lucidly the various steps that needed to be taken in the run up to the actual battle, and it gives valuable clues as to the essential involvement of women in this, it remains a unique event, since there was actually no confrontation between the Roman and the Muslims armies. The Romans did not confront the Muslims, and thus did not go into any kind of fighting. Al-Wāqidī (2004: (2) 379, 398) states that the Romans were in great numbers in al-Shām, that the armies camped in al-Balqā’, while Heraclius stayed in Ḥims. He continued to stay there, when the Prophet arrived in Tabūk, where he remained for twenty nights. When the Prophet went back to Madīnah during the month of Ramadan, there is still no mentioning of the Muslim armies meeting the Roman armies¹⁸. Given the unique circumstances of this campaign, it might not come as a surprise that women are not explicitly mentioned as combatants – men, too, were not actively fighting and getting laurels. What then was the situation like, when fighting actually took place?

¹⁸ Al-Ṭabarī (1997: (2) 185-186)

In short, the magnitude of the successive Muslim victories cannot be measured without assessing their wider context. The discussion in this section has shown that women played a crucial part in the run-up and during these battles, a part, without which success might not have come so easily. Their contribution prior to the battle of Tabūk helped equip the army in the first place. By offering their entire future security in the form of their dowries clearly shows how eager they were to go out to the battle and defeat the Romans.

Without the active presence of women from the start in preparatory battles, the conquest of Islamic Jerusalem would not have been achieved under such circumstances.

Muslim Women: Active Agents in Islamic Jerusalem after the First Muslim Conquest

After the first Muslim conquest of Islamic Jerusalem in 16 AH¹⁹, Muslims from the al-Ḥijāz region and some of the Muslims who participated in the conquest of the al-Shām region took residence in Islamic Jerusalem. Most of these men took their wives and families with them and thus, the initial conquest was followed by a process of Muslim settlement in Islamic Jerusalem. As a consequence, significant changes began to take place. Abd Rahman (2004: 69-81) has analysed the changes in religious activities that were taking place in Islamic Jerusalem after the first Muslim conquest. This change, she claims, becomes manifest in the development of religious institutions, rituals, and

¹⁹ For more information on the different accounts on the dates of the conquest of Islamic Jerusalem, see al-Tel (2003: 107-123).

in intellectual activities in IslamicJerusalem. These transformations were the work of many people, and Abd Rahman (2004: 78-81) lists a long list of names of companions and followers directly or indirectly involved in this endeavour; they went to IslamicJerusalem for a visit only, or to reside there, or to start their pilgrimage from there. However, from amongst this long list, she only mentions the names of two women who are known to have gone the city, namely the Mother of the Believers Şafiyah bint H̄uyayyi, and Umm al-Dardā’.

Even though the period of time, which these people spent in IslamicJerusalem differed considerably, they all left their marks. In this section I attempt to analyse how one of these women – by going there either for a visit, had an impact on underpinning the significance of IslamicJerusalem in different areas.²⁰

Mother of the Believers Şafiyah – “Asserting the Inclusive Nature of Gender and Religions of IslamicJerusalem”

According to al-Dhahabī (2001: (2) 231), her full name is Şafiyah bint H̄uyayyi bin Akḥṭab bin Sa’yah. Her descent can be traced back to Prophet Israel son of Isaac son of Abraham, and further to Prophet Aaron. Al-Dhahabī (2001: (2) 232-237) states that she got married to the Prophet when she was

²⁰ For more information on the role of Muslim women inside IslamicJerusalem, kindly see: Hassan, Sarah Mohamed Sherif Abdel-Aziz. 2005. *Women: Active Agents in Islamising IslamicJerusalem from the Prophet’s Time Until the End of the Umayyad Period*. Dundee: Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies. P.p 48-69

seventeen in the aftermath of the battle of Khaybar²¹, and died in the year 50 AH.

Her relationship to IslamicJerusalem was a special one. Some of the books of merits mention that she went to IslamicJerusalem and prayed there. Unfortunately, most of these books do not give any details about when she went, whom she went with, how long she stayed, and what exactly she did there. Those that do mention her, refer to her prayer and a pronouncement about the Day of Resurrection. For instance, al-Wāsiṭī (1979: 76) explains that Ṣafīyyah went to IslamicJerusalem and was told to pray at the place, where the Prophet is said to have prayed during the Nocturnal Journey and the Ascension. Al-Wāsiṭī relates: “On the account of ‘Umar, on the account of al-Walīd, on the account of Ibrahīm bin Muḥammad, on the account of Zahīr, on the account of Abū Ḥuthayfah (the caller for prayers in Bayt al-Maqdis), “on the account of his grandmother that she saw Ṣafīyyah, the Prophet’s wife PBUH, and Ka‘b telling her: O Mother of the Believers, pray here, for this is where the Prophet PBUH led all the Prophets in prayer on the Night of the Ascension. Then Abū Ḥuthayfah pointed to the Dome at the back of the Rock”.

The place where Ka‘b wanted Ṣafīyyah to pray is at the back of the Rock, which means that the Dome of the Rock, which had been and still is the direction of prayer for the Jews, would have been between her and the Ka‘bah in Makkah. This

²¹ Al-Balādhurī (1992: 2540) states this battle took place in the year 7 AH, thus her date of birth could be estimated to be in the tenth year before the migration of the Prophet to Madīnah.

incident has to be viewed within the context of another, similar statement by Ka‘b to the Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Al-Maḳḳisī (1994: 166) recalls that when the latter went to Bayt al-Maḳḳis after the first Muslim conquest he asked Ka‘b about the place of the Rock, after he had seen it. He asked Ka‘b ‘where do you think we should erect the Mosque?’ Ka‘b replied: ‘Make it behind the Rock, so that the two directions of prayer²² meet’. ‘Umar, however, who was convinced that the best of mosques are the ones built at the front, built the mosque in front of the Rock.

Here, it has to be remembered that both Ṣafīyyah and Ka‘b have one thing in common, they were both Jews who converted to Islam and, therefore, the direction(s) of prayer might have special significance for them. Even though al-Wāsiṭī does not explicitly state whether the Mother of the Believers Ṣafīyyah did actually pray *behind* the Rock or not, but one can argue that the only reason that would have made her pray behind the rock is that she might have wanted to evoke the parallels between the “two religions”, bring them together and integrate them.²³ The account of al-Maḳḳisī (1994: 329) does not help to answer this question – he explains that when she went to Bayt al-Maḳḳis²⁴ she prayed there, yet he remains silent about the exact *place* where she prayed.

²² Of Muslims and Jews, S.H.

²³ This can be also looked at in the view that in Islam, Judaism emerged from the same roots. Allāh had sent to the Children of Israel Prophet Moses who in Islam is a Muslim and also his brother Aaron. Verses 51-53 in Sūrat Maryam are an example of this.

²⁴ By Bayt al-Maḳḳis here, it is understood to be al-Aḳṣā Mosque

Another noteworthy aspect of the above-mentioned quotation by al-Wāsiṭī (1979: 76) concerns the presence of Abū Ḥuthayfah's grandmother inside the al-Aqṣā Mosque, who then related the incident. Not only does her presence seem to be “natural”, she could also have served as a guide for the Mother of the Believers.

Another event stated in books of merits about IslamicJerusalem, regarding the Mother of the Believers Ṣafīyyah's visit is noted by Elad (1995: 142) who says: “According to an early tradition, Safīyya, the Prophet's wife (d. 35 or 51/ 655 or 671-672), came to Jerusalem, went up to Tūr Zaytā and prayed there, then stood on the edge of the mountain and said: “Here all men²⁵ will be divided on the Day of Resurrection to Heaven and to the Fire (of Hell).”²⁶

Her statement about the division that will happen on the Day of Resurrection echoes with the Prophetic *ḥadīth* narrated by Maymūnah, the Prophet's bondmaid, about IslamicJerusalem being the land where people will be raised and gathered, as mentioned in chapter one. This statement affirms that IslamicJerusalem is the land of steadfastness. Both of these statements draw attention to the significance and inclusiveness of this region to everyone – it is neither confined to one religion, nor to one gender, and this was personified in Mother of the Believers Safīyyah, The indiscriminate gathering of people of

²⁵ In al-Maqdisī's version it is *al-Nās*- people, and not *al-Rijāl*- men as translated by Elad.

²⁶ This can also be found in al-Maqdisī (1994: 329)

all backgrounds on the Day of Judgement has its repercussions in this life – the region must be viewed in its inclusiveness in terms of religion and gender, a fact that Maymūnah, but especially Mother of the Believers Safiyyah reminds us of. Her behaviour and proclamations vividly confirm that the only aspect that differentiates between people on the Day of Judgement (and in this life) is their level of piety and righteousness²⁷.

One other aspect deserves mentioning here. The sections in the books of merits about IslamicJerusalem in which the Mother of the Believers Şafiyyah is mentioned are:

- about the merits of praying inside the Dome of the Rock (al-Wāsiṭī, 1979: 76);
- about the companions who went to IslamicJerusalem (al-Maqdissī, 1994: 299);
- about the merits of supplication at the Dome, from which the Prophet ascended, and at the Golden Gate;
- about the merits of the Dome of the Prophet; or
- about the merits of al-Sāhirah (Ibn al-Murajjā, 1995: 77, 123, 234).

It is worth mentioning that Mother of the Believers Şafiyyah is not the only one mentioned in these areas, other

27 This is affirmed in the Qurʾān for it is stated in Chapter al-Ḥujurāt, 13: O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things).

narrations are included here, and they are generally by men. Yet, she is the only woman mentioned, and her narrations are supported by those of the male narrators. This is, again, a strong indicator of the inclusiveness of this region to both genders, and of their equal status.

What, however, renders the behaviour of the Mother of the Believers Şafiyah rather controversial, if not to say outrageous can only be understood against the backdrop of her Jewish roots. Armstrong (1997: 8) hints at this, when she compares the exclusiveness of this region from a Jewish perspective to its inclusiveness assigned to it by Muslims. She explains that Jews must undergo a number of ritual purifications before entering the Temple. Jewish women like the ‘Gentiles’ were/are excluded from the innermost sanctities of Jewish ritual practice. Thus, if one considers that the place, where the Mother of the Believers Şafiyah stood and is said to have prayed, is the “Jewel of Islamicjerusalem”²⁸, its most sacred part, her behaviour quite dramatically exemplifies that this region encompasses all genders and that there is nothing that privileges Muslim men in terms of ritual purity, access, and of praying there.

The significance of her stay in Islamicjerusalem aside, there is little we know about *why* the Mother of the Believers Şafiyah went there. One could assume that, like so many others, she might have gone to Islamicjerusalem to start a pilgrimage from there or to light a lamp inside the Mosque. Yet,

²⁸ El-Awaisi (2003: 4)

her Jewish roots make another explanation possible. After embracing Islam, she always maintained the links with her Jewish relatives, and this was even emphasised by the Prophet himself. For example al-Dhahabī (2001: (2) 232-238) mentions various incidents, which show this sustained relation. He narrates that once one of Safiyyah's bondmaids went to Caliph 'Umar and told him that Ṣafiyyah preferred Saturdays over other days and kept links with the Jews. When 'Umar asked Ṣafiyyah about this, she told him that she no longer honoured Saturdays since Allāh replaced it for her with Fridays; and regarding the Jews, she said, that she had blood relations with them so she kept them. Thus, it is obvious that she clearly differentiates between her religious and kinship loyalties – there is no inherent contradiction between her religious or ritual behaviour, on the one hand, and her emotional links to her relatives, who happen to be Jewish, on the other.

Another incident that exemplifies her struggle of loyalties is when the Prophet once went to her and saw her crying. When he asked her why she was crying, she told him that she had heard the Mothers of the Believers 'Āishah and Ḥafṣah say that they were better than her because she was the daughter of a Jew. The Prophet told her that this could not be true, since her husband was Muḥammad, her father was Aaron, and her uncle was Moses. The Prophet was clearly emphasising her descent from and relation with Prophets who were Jews (and Muslims). One final example shall illustrate Safiyyah's continuing ties with Jews and her Jewish heritage. Al-Dhahabī mentions that

when Şafiyah died, she left part of her inheritance to a Jewish relative of hers.

Safiyah's life story in general, and her visit to Islamicjerusalem in particular, illustrate vividly, how the whole process of negotiating her Jewish background and her Muslim religion culminates in Islamicjerusalem. Her personal experience leaves an impact on all Muslims until today, as it shows how the inclusive process of one individual, who is very prominent for Muslims, took place. Moreover, her behaviour speaks volumes about the ideal type of relationship between people from different Semitic religions. Her attitudes towards Jews did not change because she became a Muslim; on the contrary, she still cared for them and maintained a relatively strong relationship with them. Her attitude is a symbol of the multi-religious tolerance that is so characteristic of Islamicjerusalem.

Conclusion

It was towards the end of the third section of this article that I was finally able to put a handle on the overarching theme of the whole study. "Muslim Women: Active Agents in demonstrating the significance of Islamicjerusalem" should only be the start of a whole new set of studies about Islamicjerusalem. A study that 're-tells' the history and re-asserts the significance of Islamicjerusalem.

Throughout the study, gender was used as a tool of analysis in approaching the study of Islamicjerusalem, and it is based on a structure that tackles both the theological and the

manifested significance of Islamicjerusalem. The theological aspect covered one Prophetic *hādīth* about Islamicjerusalem narrated by a woman. The manifested significance, on the other hand, was approached through looking at the role of women in the preparatory steps to conquer Islamicjerusalem during the Prophet's time, and the study ended with the movement of Muslims to Islamicjerusalem.

The main argument of the study was that not taking into consideration the female side of the story, any analysis about Islamicjerusalem would be partial. The argument was pursued throughout the study and the conclusions, at which the study arrived, supported this argument.

These conclusions along with the ones mentioned in each section of this article enabled me to answer the questions raised at the very beginning of this study. It is now safe to draw some gender related conclusions. It is clear that in the early Muslim period, Muslim women's role in the society was quite active. They were not confined to their homes only, but they had debates on an intellectual level, they were aware of the importance of Islamicjerusalem, and those, who were capable, applied what the Prophet said about either visiting or starting a pilgrimage from there. Even though wars continued to be a male-dominated arena, Muslim women managed to find ways to get engaged in them. They contributed to them by all available means, they gave up their future securities, and in other cases they fought like male knights, admonished the Muslim men who escaped the battlefields, and, not forgetting one of their major duties, they looked after their children as well. Moreover, after

the conquest Muslim women were not limited to their houses but on the societal level they were preachers, educators, and social carers.

For these reasons, one wonders even more, why the remarkable roles of these Muslim women are deeply buried in the sources and take such great effort to “un-dig”. They clearly had an active role in the making of the history of Islamicjerusalem and in shaping its society that is marked by its cultural distinctiveness. Two possible reasons for this could be that either these Muslim heroines were simply “forgotten”, left out because the male writers were too concerned about their fellow men, and thus paid no attention to their partners in the shaping of historical events and records. Or it was done on purpose for reasons such as the “patriarchal” prevailing culture, in which the writers were embedded at the time of the writing of their books, which made them conceal the “other side” of history. Based on the sources examined in this study, this question is difficult if not impossible to answer.

Nevertheless, this study does not only disclose the active roles played by these early Muslim women, but it also paves the way for future studies about Muslims’ history generally and that of Islamicjerusalem in specific, as will be suggested later. Through following the same historical approach, the usage of gender as the tool of analysis, and reading between the lines for anything that indicates that a Muslim woman could have been involved (and in other cases *must* have been involved) a re-interpretation of history could be done, ambiguities and riddles could be solved, and the loss of history could be compensated.

This study needs to be seen in the context of other existing literature on Muslim women's history. Much of this literature focuses on the suppression and unquestioned submission of Muslim women in the patriarchal, male-dominated Muslim societies. This study was able to show the encompassing character of Islam to both males and females. Examples of this are, how the Muslim women spoke with the Prophet and narrated some of his *aḥādīth*, how they are mentioned in the Qur'ān like men in regards to carrying arms and setting off for the *jihād*, that they were present in the battlefields similarly to the presence of men, and that they travelled to places of worship just like men. And thus, any act that took place within the Muslim history that was of an exclusive nature to Muslim men only should be looked at in terms of a "Muslim" act rather than an "Islamic" act. Therefore, it is the prevailing culture in some Muslim societies rather than the religious precepts that determined/s the exclusiveness or the inclusiveness of women. Similar to the structure of gender generally, where it is the societies with their prevailing cultures that determine the relations between the different genders and structure of the society.

This study also has significant impact on the definition of Islamicjerusalem, as it has been suggested earlier. As a consequence of the discussion presented in this article, it must be emphasised that characterising Islamicjerusalem as 'a unique region laden with rich historical background, religious significances, cultural attachments' is only possible when taking into consideration in equal measures the work of two, and not

one part of the population. Women as much as men left their marks in the beginning of the Muslim history of and the physical attachment to Islamicjerusalem, and *both* genders played a role in asserting its inclusiveness to religions and genders. Only when this crucial element of inclusiveness is sufficiently taken into account, can Islamicjerusalem indeed become a model for 'multiculturalism' in practice.

What needs to be emphasised here, is that this study, essential as it is, is merely the cornerstone for a whole range of possible further gender studies on Islamicjerusalem. The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches that characterise Islamicjerusalem Studies must be utilised in further discussions and examinations of gender in Islamicjerusalem. Comparative studies between the Prophetic *aḥādīth* narrated by men and the ones narrated by women regarding Islamicjerusalem are urgently required. The number of *aḥādīth*, their authenticity, and liability for jurisprudence are worth examining. The question of gender relations in Islamicjerusalem after the first Muslim conquest, comparing them to gender relations in different historical periods needs to be tackled. Furthermore, one needs to look into the construction of power relations within the smallest cell in the society and from there taking it to include different sects and groups within the society. Contemporary studies that would involve fieldwork should be done on the present role of Muslim women in Islamicjerusalem. Here, questions such as how they live under non-Muslim provisions, what kind of social and cultural activities they engage in, and what shape their political participation takes,

eed to be addressed. Such data could then be compared with the role of Muslim women in similar circumstances, such as during the time when Islamicjerusalem was under the crusaders' rule. Therefore, the approach taken in this article – to examine the history of Islamicjerusalem through women's participation in the making of this history – not only helped to shed new light on old problems, but also proves highly fruitful in paving the way for numerous future research projects.

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