

# A Comment on the Antiquity of Traditions Praising Jerusalem

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OUR TOPIC of discussion is closely related to the *ḥadīths* of *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*. Two of the most important problems in the analysis of these *ḥadīths* are determining their dates of composition, and when they were committed to writing. We can say with certainty that they were well-known and widely circulated as early as the beginning of the second century after the *hidjra*. Decisive proof of this is the inclusion of a large chapter of *ḥadīths* extolling the merits of Jerusalem in the work of Muqātil (d. 150 A.H./765 C.E.).<sup>1</sup> These *ḥadīths*—about 60 in number—are transmitted without *isnād* [chain of authorities] and contain most of the elements known to us from later works in praise of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-Faqīh transmits them in Muqātil's name in the chapter of his book devoted to praise of Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Examples of these *ḥadīths* are: "Jerusalem is the land God has chosen from among other lands"; "He who chose to die in Jerusalem, has died as if in heaven"; "All sweet water originates beneath the Rock [foundation stone of the Temple]"; "The Rock is the navel of the universe"; "God will destroy *Yādūd wa-Mādūd* (Gog and Magog) in Jerusalem"; "Before his death in India, Adam commanded that he be brought to Jerusalem for burial"; "The ingathering and resurrection of the dead will take place in Jerusalem." It seems to me that all these *ḥadīths* may be attributed without hesitation to the latter half of the first century of the *hidjra* (the end of seventh century C.E.).

No less ancient, in my opinion, is the *ḥadīth*, "The establishment of the site of the Temple will be the destruction of Yathrib."<sup>4</sup> I would ascribe it to the period of the building of Jerusalem, i.e. the seventh decade of the first century, along with other *ḥadīths* of a similar nature: the tradition that Muḥammad's nation will build the "Temple",<sup>5</sup> the

1 See F. Sezgin, *GAS* I, p. 36-37.

2 Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, ms. Saray Ahmad III, 74, I, f. 210a.

3 *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. De Goeje (Leiden, 1885), p. 93-95.

4 Al-Djāhīz, *al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn*, II, ed. al-Sandūbī, (Cairo 1351/1932), p. 28; Abū Dāwūd, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Muṣṭafā*, (Cairo 1348/1929), p. 209; al-Samhūdī, *Wafā' al-Wafā'*, I, ed. M. Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo 1375/1955), p. 120; Ibn Kathīr, *Nihāyat al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya*, I, ed. M. Fahīm Abū 'Ubayd (Riyād 1968), p. 79; al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, IV (Cairo 1391/1972), p. 360, no. 5612; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-'Itidāl*, II, ed. 'Alī M. al-Bidjāwī (Cairo 1382/1963), p. 552, no. 4828; al-'Azīzī, *al-Sirādj al-Munīr*, II (Cairo 1377/1957), p. 460; al-Daylamī, *Musnad al-Firdaws*, ms. Chester Beaty, no. 3037, f. 105a; al-Bukhārī, *Ta'riḥ al-Kabīr*, III (Hyderabad 1377/1958), I, p. 193, no. 613.

5 Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Djāmi' al-Āthār fī Mawlid al-Nabī al-Mukhhār*, ms. Cambridge, Or. 913, f. 48b.

dispute over Muḥammad's place of burial, in which a group of his friends demanded that he be brought to Jerusalem, the resting place of the prophets,<sup>6</sup> the stories about the construction of the Temple<sup>7</sup> and the burning of the Temple,<sup>8</sup> about Isrāfīl standing on the Rock on the Day of Resurrection,<sup>9</sup> or Jesus blessing Hebron,<sup>10</sup> and the tradition about the *Ka'ba's* journey to the Rock on Judgment Day.<sup>11</sup>

To summarize, Jerusalem praise literature emerged in the second half of the first century of the *hidjra* (the end of the seventh century C.E.) and was put into writing in the first half of the second century of the *hidjra* (eighth century C.E.). *Ḥadīths* in praise of Jerusalem may be found in the earliest collections of *ḥadīths* and Qur'ānic exegesis.

Jewish converts to Islam played an important role in disseminating stories from the Bible and Midrash, and even held parties upon completion of reading the Torah.<sup>12</sup> Although they had severed their ties with the Jewish community, they did not relinquish their heritage, passing this wealth on to Islam. These *isrā'iliyyāt* were absorbed in the Islamic system of values and eventually became an integral part of it. It is only natural, then, that praise of Jerusalem should be of such importance in the body of *isrā'iliyyāt*.

The role played by the *zuhhād* or pious ascetics has also been mentioned. There is evidence that these people did in fact circulate Jerusalem praise literature.<sup>13</sup> It should also be noted that some of them served in the Umayyad government<sup>14</sup> which was extremely interested in developing and promoting such literature.

6 Ibn Ḥadjar al-Haythamī, *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqa*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Laṭīf (Cairo 1375/1955), p. 32; *Life of the Prophets*, anon., ms. British Museum 1510, f. 250a.

7 See 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, V, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-A'zamī (Beirut 1392/1972), pp. 426-428.

8 Al-Fākihī, *Ta'rikh Makka*, ms. Leiden, Or. 463, f. 469b-470a.

9 Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, II, p. 169a.

10 Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, *K. al-Fitan*, ms. British Museum, Or. 9449, f. 65a (and compare *ibid.*, f. 65b).

11 Al-Fākihī, *ibid.*, f. 416b.

12 See Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, VII (Beirut, 1960), pp. 110, 222.

13 See for example Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb*, ed. 'Alī M. al-Bidjāwī, III (Cairo 1380/1960), p. 894, no. 1518 (*wa-rawā fī faḍli-l-shām al-aḥādīth*).

14 See for example al-Minqarī, *Waq'at Šiffīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Ḥārūn (Cairo 1382/1963), pp. 85-86, about the role of Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī in the battle between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya.