YOU SHALL ONLY SET OUT FOR THREE MOSQUES

A STUDY OF AN EARLY TRADITION

You shall only set out for three mosques: The Sacred Mosque (in Mecca), my mosque (in Medina) and al-Aqṣā mosque (in Jerusalem), this well-known tradition of the Prophet licensed the pil-

grimage to the mosques of Medina and Jerusalem in addition to the obligatory hajj and ‘umra to Mecca. A vivid controversy arose over the authenticity of this tradition which grants, as it does, an exceptional position to Medina and Jerusalem.

This hadith is in fact a restricting one and seems to imply the prohibition of pilgrimage and visit to mosques and sacred places other than those indicated. The custom of such pilgrimage apparently had its origin at a very early period and was already in vogue in the second century. In the course of the fierce polemics concerning the permission of journey to visit the tomb of the Prophet, the minor sanctuaries and the graves of prophets and saints, this hadith was closely studied and analyzed and became the pivot of the discussion which lasted through many centuries. The crucial point was to establish the meaning and the intention of the initial phrase of the sentence: lā tushaddu l-riḥālu illā ilā... «the saddles shall not be fastened (for journey) except for»... As the exception is of the kind of al-istithnā’ al-mufarragh in which the general term is not expressed — the partisans

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of the prohibition of journeys to the grave of the Prophet and to minor sanctuaries maintained that the hadith should be interpreted as “do not set out for any place except for the three mosques.” Those who approved of such pilgrimages argued that the meaning of the phrase was “do not set out for any mosque except for the three mosques.” As they considered the general term from which exception is made to be “mosques” they concluded that the faithful should set out— as regards mosques (for the purpose of prayer and devotion)— only for these three mosques; for other sanctuaries there is no reservation.

They could in fact quote a hadith in which they could find a convincing proof of their argument: lā tushaddu riḥālu l-mašiyyi lā masjidin yudhkara lāhu fihi illā ilā thalāthati masājīda... the saddles of the riding beasts shall not be fastened (for their journey) to a mosque in which God is invoked except to the three mosques»...⁴ Even more explicit in favour of this view is another hadīth: lā yanbaghī li-l-muṣāllī an yashudda riḥālu ilā masjidin yabghī fihi l-salāta ghayra l-masjidī l-ḥarāmi wa-l-masjidī l-aqsā wa-masjidī hādhā. «It is not proper that a man praying set out for a mosque in which he seeks to pray except the mosque of the Ḥarām, the mosque al-Aqsā and my mosque».⁵ It is evident that these traditions confirm the view that the three mosques are to be preferred in comparison with other mosques; one shall set out for these mosques to gain the benefit of prayer and devotion; but he is permitted, and it is even recommended to him, to set out for other sanctuaries which are not mosques.

The close observation of the ḥadīth about the three mosques is illustrated by a curious story reported by al-Wāsiṭī⁶: Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz used to visit the Miḥrāb Dāʿūd on foot; only on his return he used to ride. When asked about it he answered: I was told that ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbdallāh used to set out for the mosque of Qubā’ riding a horse without a saddle; (this he used to do because) he considered that fastening the girth of the saddle of the horse was like fastening the saddles of the riding beasts which is mentioned (scil. as forbidden) according to the tradition: «you shall not fasten the saddles... except for three mosques»...

G. E. von Grunebaum characterizes this ḥadīth as an «earlier battle, long since abandoned, which the theologians fought against the cult of those minor sanctuaries»⁹. This battle was in fact an early one.

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⁵ Ib.; but see the interpretation of this ḥadīth given by Ibn Taymiyya in al-Qastālānī, Irṣāḥ al-sārī III, 240 (he forbids the journey to the grave of the Prophet on the ground of this ḥadīth).
⁶ Al-Wāsiṭī, op. cit., f. 47a.
Mālik b. Anas records in his *Muwatta'* 10 a story about a discussion between Abū Hurayra and Ka‘b (al-Aḥbār) concerning the question at what hour on Friday God fulfils the wishes of the faithful. This discussion took place when Abū Hurayra met Ka‘b on his pilgrimage to al-Ṭūr. In a parenthetical passage Malik reports that Abū Hurayra on his return was rebuked by Baṣra b. Abī Baṣra 11 who told him: «Had I met you before you went out (scil. to al-Ṭūr) you would not have set out; I heard the Prophet saying: the riding beasts shall be driven only to three mosques... etc.» 12. A similar tradition (in which the name of Abū Hurayra is however not mentioned) is recorded by ‘Abd al-Razzāq 13 in his *Muṣannaf* 14: a man who returned from a journey to al-Ṭūr was reproached and reminded of the utterance of the Prophet about the three mosques. Another tradition records a talk between ‘Arfaja and Ibn ‘Umar. Ibn ‘Umar, when consulted by ‘Arfaja about a journey to al-Ṭūr, answered: You shall only set out for three mosques, the mosque of Mecca, the mosque of the Prophet (i.e. Medina) and the mosque al-Aqṣā; abandon al-Ṭūr and do not go there 15.

Commentators are agreed that by al-Ṭūr in these traditions Mt. Sinā is meant 16. Mt. Sinā was in fact regarded as a sacred place.

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15 Ib., f. 40a.
16 See e.g. note 12 above; but see al-Harawi: *al-Ishārāt ilā ma‘rīfati l-ziyārāt*, ed. Janine Sourdel-Thomine, Damas 1953, p. 21, 11. 16-17.
According to Muslim tradition the Prophet was instructed by the angel Jibril to pray there during his night journey to Jerusalem. At the "laylat al-qadr" the angels will hoist their flags in four mosques: the mosque of Mecca, the mosque of the Prophet, the mosque of Jerusalem and at 'Tūr Sinā. Ibn Taymiyya stresses that the journey to Mt. Sinā is forbidden on the ground of the utterance of the Prophet about the exclusiveness of the journey to the three mosques.

By the beginning of the second century there seems to have already been a unanimity of the Muslim community about the sanctity of these three mosques and consequently about the sanctity of these three cities; this is later reflected in the rich literature concerning the virtues of these cities.

There appear, however, to have existed earlier trends which aimed at emphasizing the sanctity of Mecca, or the sanctity of both Mecca and Medina, while minimizing that of Jerusalem. These trends are reflected in some early traditions, only partly preserved in the canonical collections of hadith. These traditions which probably preceded the Muslim consensus regarding the hadith of the three mosques will be viewed in the following pages.

I

A tradition recorded on the authority of 'Ā'isha, the wife of the Prophet, mentions only two mosques: the mosque of Mecca and the mosque of Medina. The Prophet said according to this tradition: «I am the seal (khatam) of the prophets and my mosque is the seal of the mosques of the prophets. The mosques which deserve mostly to be visited and towards which the riding beasts should be driven are the mosque of Mecca and my mosque (i.e. the mosque of Medina). The prayer in my mosque is better than a thousand prayers in any other mosque except that of Mecca.»

17 See e.g. al-Wāsiṭi, op. cit., f. 49b, 1.6 and f. 60a, penult.: ... ẓal layta bi-'Tūrī Sinā' ḥaythu kallama llāhu Mūsā sallā llāhu 'alayhi wa-sallama ...; Ibn. Kathīr: Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-`aṣīm, Beirut 1966, IV, 245, 1.7; al-Zarkashī, op. cit., p. 298.
19 Ibn Taymiyya: Majmū'at al-rāsā'il II, 55, 1. 3: — wa-lau nadhara l-safara ilā... au ilā l-Tūrī lādhī kallama 'ilāhu 'alayhi Mūsā 'alayhi l-salām.»
An almost identical tradition is reported on the authority of Ṭāwūs \(^{21}\): «You shall set out for two mosques: the mosque of Mecca and the mosque of Medina» \(^{22}\). The initial phrase of this tradition is almost identical with that of the tradition about the three mosques; mention is however made in this tradition of two mosques only, those of Mecca and Medina. A similar tradition is recorded by al-Mundhiri: «The best mosque towards which the riding beasts should be driven is the mosque of Ibrāhīm (i.e. the mosque of Mecca) and my mosque» \(^{23}\).

A significant tradition reported by Ibn Jurayj sheds some light on the attitude of certain Muslim scholars of the second century towards the pilgrimage to the three mosques. Ibn Jurayj records that Ibn ‘Aṭā \(^{24}\) reported a tradition recommending the pilgrimage to the three mosques and adds: «‘Aṭā’ used to exclude (the mention of) the AQSā, but he reverted later to counting it with them» (kāna ‘Aṭā’un yunkiru l-AQSā thumma ‘āda fa-‘addahu ma’ahā) \(^{25}\).

It is ‘Aṭā’ who was asked by Ibn Jurayj: «What (is your opinion) about a man who vowed to walk from Baṣra to Jerusalem». He answered: «You were merely ordered (to pilgrimage to) this House (i.e. the Ka’ba) \(^{26}\). Ṭāwūs, on whose authority the tradition about the two mosques was transmitted, bade people who vowed to journey to Jerusalem to set out for Mecca \(^{27}\).

These traditions bear evidence to the fact that among scholars al-Ḥamīd al-‘Abbāsī: op. cit., p. 73; Juz’ Abī l-Juhm al-‘Alā’ b. Mūsā, Ms. Hebrew Univ., Majmū‘a, p. 43, 1. 3


\(^{25}\) ‘Abd al-Razzāq, op. cit., f. 39b.

\(^{26}\) Id., op. cit., Murad Molla 606, f. 40b, inf.

\(^{27}\) Ib., f. 41b.
of Islam in the first half of the second century there was some reluctance to give full recognition of sanctity to the third mosque and to grant Jerusalem an equal position with the two holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina.

This reluctance is plainly brought out in a series of traditions in which the Prophet is said to have advised the faithful to refrain from the journey to Jerusalem for prayer and to perform the prayer either in Mecca or in Medina. A tradition told on the authority of Žābir b. ‘Abdallāh 28 reports: A man 29 approached the Prophet at the day of the conquest of Mecca and said «O Messenger of God, I vowed to pray in Jerusalem if you conquer Mecca». The Prophet then said: «Pray here». The man asked him another time and the Prophet gave the same answer. He asked him a third time and the Prophet said: «Then the matter is at your disposal» (fa-shā‘naka idhān). 30

A very similar tradition is recorded on the authority of Abū Sa‘īd (al-Khudrī) 31. But whereas the preceding tradition stresses the preference of Mecca, this one puts Medina to the fore. A man came to the Prophet, it is told in the story, in order to take leave from him before setting out for his journey to Jerusalem. The Prophet told him that a prayer in his mosque (i.e. in Medina) would be better than a thousand prayers in another mosque except the mosque of Mecca. Some versions of this tradition mention the name of the man, al-Arqām, but do not record the phrase about the mosque of Mecca 32.

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29 According to the report of ‘Abd al-Razzāq, op. cit., Murad Molla 604, f. 37b, 41a and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythāmī: Majma‘ al-zawā‘id, Cairo 1353 AH, IV, 192, the name of the man was al-Shārid. About al-Shārid see Ibn Sa‘īd: Ṭabāqāt V, 113; Ibn Ḥajar: al-Isāba III, 204, no. 3887.


31 See his biography in Ibn Ḥajar’s Isāba, III, 85, no. 2189; al-Dhahābī: Tadkhirat al-ḥuẓfāz, I, 44.

To this category of traditions belongs the story told about Maymūna, the wife of the Prophet. A woman became ill and vowed to perform a pilgrimage to Jerusalem if she recovered. Having recuperated and prepared provisions for her journey she came to Maymūna to take her leave. Maymūna advised her to stay at Medina, to consume her provisions there and to fulfil her vow by praying in the mosque of the Prophet (in Medina). Maymūna quoted in this connection the utterance of the Prophet that a prayer in his mosque was better than a thousand prayers in any other mosque except that of the Ka'ba 33.

A story closely resembling the preceding tradition is told on the authority of Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab 34. The story told about ‘Umar is however in favour of Mecca, not of Medina. A man came to ‘Umar asking permission to travel to Jerusalem. ‘Umar ordered him to prepare his provisions. But when these were prepared ‘Umar bade him to perform the ‘umra instead of going to Jerusalem 35.

The essential reason for the resistance of a group of Muslim scholars to grant license of pilgrimage to Jerusalem is plainly reflected in another story about ‘Umar told on the authority of the same Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab, who transmitted the preceding story; it is recorded by the early scholar of hadith, ‘Abd al-Razzaq b. Hammām in his Musannaf. According to this story, when ‘Umar was in an enclosure of camels of sadaqa two men passed by. He asked them wherefrom they came and they answered that they had come from Jerusalem. ‘Umar hit them with his whip and said: «(Have you performed) a pilgrimage like the pilgrimage of the Ka’ba »? They said: «No, o Commander of the faithful, we came from such and such a territory, we passed by it (scil. Jerusalem) and prayed there.» Then ‘Umar said: «Then it is so», and let them go 36.

The story shows clearly that Muslim scholars feared that Jerusalem might become a place of pilgrimage like Mecca and acquire a sanctity like that of Mecca. The two sanctuaries, that of Mecca and the one of Jerusalem are mentioned jointly in the verse of al-Farazdaq:

\[
\text{Wa-baytānni baytu llāhi nānḫu wulātuhu:}
\]
\[
wā-baytun bi-ʾalā Ḥiyāʾa musharrafu
\]

(To us belong) two Houses: the House of God, of which we are the governors: and the revered House in the upper (part of) Ḥiyāʾa (i.e. Jerusalem)\(^{37}\).

This verse testifies to the veneration of these two sanctuaries at the end of the seventh century. It is significant that the two sanctuaries are referred to as being on the same level\(^{38}\). This these scholars tried to prevent. Jerusalem could only be considered as a place of devotional prayer, a holy place endowed with special merits for pilgrims to Mecca; but it could not be awarded the rank of Mecca and it never got it.

The reluctance to perform the pilgrimage to Jerusalem found its expression in some utterances reported on the authority of the Companions of the Prophet. (Abdallah) b. Masʿūd is stated to have said: «If (the whole distance) between me and Jerusalem were two parasangs I would not go there\(^{39}\).

Mālik (b. Anas) refrained from coming to Jerusalem for fear that this may become a sunna\(^{40}\).

The justification of this attitude which tried to diminish the importance of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem is found in a remarkable saying of al-Shaʿbī\(^{41}\): «Muḥammad, may God bless him, was only turned


\(^{38}\) Comp. another verse of al-Farazdaq, Divān, p. 619, composed in the first decade of the eighth century:

\[\text{wa-bi-l-masjidi l-aqṣā l-imāmu 'lladhi 'ḥadā : bihi min gulūbi l-mumtiRNNA dālālūhā.}\]


\(^{40}\) Al-Shāṭibi, op. cit., I, 347: wa-qad kāna Mālikun yuwaḫrhu l-majīʾa ilā bayti l-maqdisi khifatā an yutakhadha dhālika sunnan.

away from Jerusalem (i.e. from his first qibla) because of his anger.» A gloss added to this tradition states: «he means (anger with regards to Jerusalem » 42.

The son of Sa'd b. Abi Waqqās, 'Āmir 43 and his daughter 'Ā'isha 44 reported on the authority of their father that he would like much more to pray in the mosque of Qubā' than in Jerusalem. 45

'Umar is also said to have stated that he preferred one prayer in the mosque of Qubā' than four prayers in Jerusalem 46.

The superiority of the mosque of Medina over al-Aqṣā was expressed by the Prophet himself. According to a tradition reported on the authority of Abū Hurayra, the Prophet was asked whether prayer in al-Aqṣā was better than prayer in his mosque (i.e. in Medina). The Prophet answered: «A prayer in my mosque is better than four prayers in it». (i.e. in al-Aqṣā) 47.

A peculiar tradition attributed to the Prophet recommends to journey to three mosques only, exactly as in the tradition discussed

above. This tradition, however, places the mosque of al-Khayf instead of al-Aqṣa as the third mosque.

The traditions quoted above can be taken to represent an early stratum of lore in which the opposition displayed by certain circles of Muslim scholars at the beginning of the second century to the ranking of Jerusalem on the level of Mecca and Medina is reflected. They bring out quite clearly the tendency of those who tried to subdue the excessive veneration which was forming with regard to the sanctuary of Jerusalem.

II

Against the records in which an attempt is made to diminish the position of the sanctuary of Jerusalem one can notice quite well in the traditions the existence of a trend going in the opposite direction: it aims at granting Jerusalem the rank of Medina and emphasizes the peculiar features of sanctity of the mosque, of the city and of the region of Jerusalem.

«The assignment of relative ratings of efficacy to prayer in different localities is a common method of ranking towns in terms of their holiness» stated G. von Grunebaum. This was indeed applied to Jerusalem in comparison to Mecca and Medina.

A significant tradition granting the mosque of Jerusalem an unusually high rank is recorded on the authority of Abū Hurayra and ‘Ā’isha. «A prayer in my mosque (i.e. in Medina) — says the Prophet in this hadith — is better than a thousand prayers in any other mosque except al-Aqṣa.» It is evident that this tradition contradicts the well-known tradition in which the concluding phrase reads: «except (prayer in) the mosque of Mecca.» The phrase «except (prayer in)"
the mosque of Mecca» was in this hadith replaced by the phrase «except (prayer in) al-Aqṣā ».

Another tradition reported on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās links the hadith about the three mosques with the utterance of the Prophet about the value of the prayer in these mosques granting al-Aqṣā preference over the mosque of Medina. «A prayer in the mosque of Mecca (al-masjid al-ḥarām) — says the Prophet — is worth a hundred thousand prayers, a prayer in my mosque (i.e. in Medina) is worth a thousand prayers, and a prayer in al-Aqṣā is worth ten thousand prayers» 53. This tradition occurs with greater exaggeration in Muthīr al-gharām 54: The Prophet states that a prayer in the mosque of Mecca is worth a hundred thousand prayers, a prayer in the mosque of Medina a thousand prayers and a prayer in Jerusalem twenty thousand prayers.

More restrained are two traditions recorded by Ibn Majāh. One of them states that the Prophet when asked about the mosque of Jerusalem recommended to come to Jerusalem, the land of the Resurrection and the place of assembly for the Final Judgement 55 and to pray there, as a prayer performed in it is worth a thousand prayers


elsewhere. The second tradition records the utterance of the Prophet assigning to the prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem the value of fifty thousand prayers, to the prayer in the mosque of Medina fifty thousand prayers and to the prayer in the mosque of Mecca a hundred thousand prayers.

In another tradition, reported on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, the Prophet assigned to a prayer in the mosque of Mecca the value of a hundred thousand prayers, to a prayer in the mosque of Medina fifty thousand prayers and to a prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem twenty thousand prayers. In another tradition reported as well on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās the value of a prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem is considerably reduced. The Prophet — according to this tradition — assigned to a prayer in the mosque of Medina the value of a hundred thousand prayers, to a prayer in the mosque of Mecca a hundred thousand prayers and to a prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem a thousand prayers. Another tradition reported on the authority of Abū l-Dardā' states that the Prophet assigned to a prayer in the mosque of Mecca the value of a hundred thousand prayers, to a prayer in the mosque of Medina the value of a thousand prayers and to a prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem the value of five hundred prayers. Ibn Taymiyya records as the number of prayers

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56 Ibn Mājah: Sunan al-Muṣṭafā, Cairo 1349 AH, I, 429 (Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥ. b. 'Abd al-Hādi remarks in his comment ib., that the Prophet was probably asked whether the prayer was permitted in the mosque of Jerusalem after the Qibla was diverted from it. He also remarks that only prayers in mosques other than those of Mecca and Medina are meant, as a prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem is like a prayer in Medina); al-Zarkashi, op. cit., p. 289; al-Wāṣiṭī, op. cit., f. 41b; al-Samḥūdī, op. cit., I, 295; Ibn Bābūya: Thawāb al-a’māl, Tehran 1375 AH, p. 30; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, op. cit., Ms. p. 128; Abū l-Maḥāsin Yūṣuf b. Mūsā al-Ḥanafī, op. cit., I, 25.


58 Ch. D. Matthews: Kit. Bā’īṭu-n-nafūs, ib., p. 60 (Palestine, p. 11).

59 Al-Zarkashi, op. cit., p. 118 (quoted from al-Ṭabarānī’s al-Mu’jam al-kabīr); al-Samḥūdī, op. cit., I, 290 (quoted from al-Zarkashi); Abū Ṭālib al-Makki, op. cit., III, 182.

corresponding to a prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem five hundred or fifty 61.

It is evident that the traditions which assign values to prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem are contradictory and mutually exclusive. They have to be seen against the background of a controversy concerning the weight to be accorded to prayer in the mosques of Mecca and Medina. These two cities contended for a long time for the superiority of their sanctuaries 62 and their merits 63. Quite early traditions reflecting this controversy are recorded in 'Abd al-Razzāq's Muṣannaf. When asked by a man whether to journey to Medina 'Aṭā' answered:

61 Ibn Taymiyya: Majmū'at al-rasā'il, II, 54 inf.
62 See for instance al-Samhūdi, op. cit., I, 296 (wa-dhahaba ba'dukum išā anna l-ṣalāta fi masjidī l-Madinatī aʃfalu min al-ṣalāti fi masjidī Makkata bi-mi'ati ṣalātin); and see ib. pp. 297-300 the discussion about the value of the prayer in Medina in comparison with the prayer in Mecca; al-Zarkashi, op. cit., pp. 186-190; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khaftājī, op. cit., III, 583.
63 See for instance al-'Abdārī, op. cit., II, 31; al-Samhūdi, op. cit., I, 34, 52; The Prophet was created from the clay of Medina as reported in the tradition that a man is buried in the earth from which he is created. A contradictory tradition was recorded by al-Zubayr b. Bakkār. According to this tradition the Prophet was created from the clay of the Ka'ba. See al-Shaukānī, op. cit., V, 25; Ibn Ṣahīra, op. cit., p. 18; and see G. E. von Grunebaum: Muḥammadan Festivals, New York 1951, p. 20. Ibn Ḥaḍar al-Haythami: al-Ni'ama al-kubrā 'alā l-ʿālam bi-maulid Sayyid bani Āda, Ms. (in my possession) f. 7a. Al-Shābī disliked to stay in Mecca because the Prophet departed from Mecca; he considered Mecca (dār al-rābiyya) (al-Samhūdi, op. cit., I, 35; for the expression (dār al-rābiyya) see Abū l-Maḥāsin Yūsuf b. Mūsā al-Ḥanafi, op. cit., II, 203, 1.8); and see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi: Taqyid al-ʿilm, ed. Yūsuf al-ʿUshāsh, Damascus 1949, p. 72; Marwān b. al-Ḥakam mentioned in his speech the merits of Mecca, its sanctity and the merits of its people. Rāfī' b. Khudayj reminded him of the sanctity of Medina, the merits of its people and mentioned the fact that it was declared as haram by the Prophet and that the declaration was kept in Medina, written on a khāuli'î skin. Marwān answered: (I heard something about it.) (qad sami'tu ba' ṣa ḥālika); al-'Abdārī, op. cit., II, 34; Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-'Abbāsī, op. cit., p. 58: wa-yastadillūna bihi 'alā afḍalīyyati ḥādhihi l-baldātī (dār al-sā'īri l-buldāmi muṣlaqaq, Makkata wa-ḥayrihā...); and see ib., p. 61 about the doubled blessing of the Prophet granted Medina compared with the blessing of Abraham for Mecca; and see al-Samhūdi, op. cit., I, 26: al-Madīnatu khayrun min Makkata; al-Suyūṭī: al-Jāmī' al-ṣaghīr, II, 184; al-Ḥaḍarī, op. cit., I, 79 seq.; al-Samhūdi, op. cit., I, 24-26; Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-'Abbāsī, op. cit., p. 69 (muslimu l-Madīnatī khayrun min muslimi Makkata); al-Ṣāfī, op. cit., pp. 77-79; al-'Abdārī, op. cit., I, 257 (— wa-qad taqaddama annahu 'alāyhi l-ṣalāta wa-l-salāmu aʃfalu min al-ka'bati wa-ḥayrihā...); and see ib., II, 38; about the partisans of the superiority of Medina and those of Mecca see al-Shaukānī, op. cit., V, 24; Taqī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Malik b. Abī l-Muḥāfaṣa, op. cit., p. 97; al-Zurqānī: Shahr al-Mawāhib al-adwānīyya, Cairo 1329 AH, VIII, 322; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khaftājī, op. cit., III, 584-587.
to circumambulate the Ka'ba seven times is better than your journey to Medina» 64. Al-Thauri is said to have answered when asked about a journey to Medina: «do not do it» (lā taʃ'al) 65. 'Aṭā' reported that he heard 'Abdallah b. al-Zubayr stating in his speech on the minbar (scil. of Mecca): «a prayer in the mosque of Mecca is better than a hundred prayers in any other of the mosques.» «It seems to me — added 'Aṭā' — that he intended the mosque of Medina» 66. Qatāda said it plainly: «A prayer in the mosque of Mecca is better than a hundred prayers in the mosque of Medina» 67. An identical utterance on the authority of 'Abdallah b. al-Zubayr is reported by Abū l-Āliya 68.

These traditions, some of which are early ones, shed some light on the rivalry between Mecca and Medina 69. The idea of the sanctity of Jerusalem grew and developed within the framework of this contest.

III

As against the tendency of restriction and limitation one can notice the opposite one, which aims to extend the number of holy mosques by the addition of one or two mosques to the three mosques, about the pilgrimage to which a consensus of the Muslim community had been reached. «The most distinguished mosques are: the mosque of Mecca, then the mosque of the Prophet (i.e. Medina), then the mosque of Jerusalem, then — it has been said — the mosque of al-Kūfa because of the consent of the Companions of the Prophet about it; and people said: the mosque of Damascus» 70.

The mosque of Damascus was ranked with the three mosques and the relative value of prayers in it was fixed in a saying attributed

66 Ib., f. 37b.
67 Ib., f. 38a.
68 Ib., f. 38a.
69 For the sanctity of Medina see G. E. von Grunebaum: The sacred character of Islamic cities, p. 31.
to Sufyān al-Thaurī. When asked by a man about the value of a prayer in Mecca Sufyān answered: «the value of a prayer in Mecca is of a hundred thousand prayers, in the mosque of the Prophet fifty thousand prayers, in the mosque of Jerusalem forty thousand prayers and in the mosque of Damascus thirty thousand prayers» 71. The equality of the mosque of Damascus with the mosque of Jerusalem is stressed in a story of a conversation between Wāthila b. al-Asqa’ 72 and Ka‘b al-Aḥbār 73. Wāthila intended to set out for Jerusalem, but Ka‘b showed him a spot in the mosque of Damascus in which the prayer has the same value as the prayer in the mosque of Jerusalem 74.

Shi‘īte tradition put the mosque of al-Kūfah in the rank of the three mosques; Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān stated that it was the fourth mosque after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem 75. The mosque of al-Kūfah is said to have been — like the mosques of Jerusalem and Mecca — the mosque of Adam 76 the place of prayer of prophets 77 and the place where the Prophet (Muḥammad) prayed 78 at the night of his

73 See S. D. Goitein, op. cit., p. 144; and see on Ka‘b; I. Wolfensohn: Ka‘b al-Aḥbār und seine Stellung im Ḥadīth und in der islamischen Legendenliteratur, Gelnhausen, 1933.
74 Al-Raba‘i, op. cit., p. 37, no. 65.
76 See al-Wāṣiṭī, op. cit., f. 53b (the grave of Adam); Ch. D. Matthews: Palestine, pp. 32-33; Ibn Ṭahfira, op. cit., p. 143 (the prayer of Adam in Mecca); and see G. E. von Grunebaum: Muhammadan Festivals, p. 20 («Adam is said to be buried in Mecca»).
77 See for instance Shams al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., ff. 15b, 7b, 8b; Shīhāb al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, op. cit., Ms. p. 125 seq.; and see about the graves of seventy prophets in the Ka‘bā and graves of the prophets in Jerusalem, al-Suyūṭī: al-Durr al-manṭhūrı’ I, 136; about the prayer of seventy prophets in the mosque of al-Khayf (see above note 48) see Ibn Ṭahfira, op. cit., p. 324 etc.
78 About the prayer of the Prophet in Jerusalem see e.g. Ibn Hishām: al-Stra al-nabawiyya, ed. al-Saqā, al-Abyārī, Shalābi, Cairo 1936, II, 38, 39; Ibn Sayyid al-Nāṣ: ‘Uyūn al-adhār, Cairo 1356 AH, I, 141, 144; Ibn Kathīr: op. cit., IV, 241, 245; but see the tradition stating that the Prophet did not pray in Jerusalem ib. pp. 254-255; and see this tradition discussed Abū l-Maḥāsin Yūsuf b. Mūsā al-Ḥanafi, op. cit., II, 176-177.
Isrā’. The value of a thousand prayers was assigned to a prayer in the mosque of al-Kūfa.

Some of the Shi’i traditions bring out a rivalry which existed between al-Kūfa and Jerusalem. A man came to ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib — says one of these traditions — when he was in the mosque of al-Kūfa to take his leave; the man was about to set out for Jerusalem. ‘Ali bade him to sell his mount, to consume his provisions and to pray in the mosque of al-Kūfa, as the obliging prayer performed there has the value of a pilgrimage (to Mecca) and the voluntary prayer has the value of an umra.

Ja’far al-Sādiq (Abū ‘Abdallah) was asked by a man about mosques of merits. Ja’far mentioned the mosques of Mecca and Medina. The man asked about the Aqṣā mosque and Ja’far answered: «that is in heaven, there the Prophet was carried at night» (īlayhi usriya rasūlu llāhi). The man said: «people say bayt al-maqdis» (Jerusalem - K) Ja’far said: «al-Kūfa is better than that».

A peculiar utterance attributed to ‘Alī runs as follows: «You shall set out only for three mosques: the mosque of Mecca, the mosque of Medina and the mosque of al-Kūfa». In this tradition, styled exactly like the discussed tradition about the three mosques, the mosque of Jerusalem was replaced by the mosque of al-Kūfa. To ‘Alī is attributed the following utterance as well: «Four are the palaces of Paradise in this world: the mosque of Mecca, the mosque of Medina, the mosque of Jerusalem and the mosque of al-Kūfa».

A mosque ranked with the three mosques was the mosque of al-Janad in al-Yaman. To the Prophet was attributed an utterance

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81 Yāqūt: Mu’jam al-buldān, s.v. al-Kūfa; al-Majīsī, op. cit., XXII, 90 (lithogr. ed.).
82 Al-Burāqī, op. cit., p. 29 (quoted from Tafsīr al-‘Ayūshī).
83 Ib., p. 48.
bading to set out for the mosques of Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and al-Janad 85.

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Tradition emphasized the common features of sanctity of these mosques, stressed the special graces bestowed on them or on each of them and pointed out the close relations between these sanctuaries. « The earth was water — reads a tradition attributed to ‘Ali — God sent a wind which wiped away the water and on the earth appeared a foam, which He divided into four pieces; of one of these pieces He created Mecca, from the other He created Medina, from the third one He created Jerusalem and from the fourth He created al-Kufa 86. At the Day of Resurrection the Ka’ba will be carried to the Rock in Jerusalem 87. The mount Qasıyun granted his shadow to the mountain of Jerusalem and was granted the grace of God 88. The Ka’ba was built from the stones of five mountains: Lubnān, Ṭūr Zayta, al-Jūdī, Ṭūr Sinā and Ḥirā’ 89. From the splits of Mt. Sinā, which split at the day when God spoke to Moses, three mountains in Mecca arose (Ḥirā’, Thabīr, Thaur) and three in Medina (Uḥud,

87 Al-Wāsiṭī, op. cit., f. 45a. 58a; al-Nuwayrī, op. cit., I, 335; Shams al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., f. 15b; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqqīsī, op. cit., Ms., p. 143; al-Suyūṭī: al-Durr al-Manthūr, I, 136 inf.; (but see ib, I, 137 sup.: the Ka’ba will be brought to the grave of the Prophet, scil. in Medina —; the Ka’ba promises to intercede for people who visited her, asking the Prophet to intercede for people who did not visit her). About the intercession of the mosque of al-Kūfah for the people praying in this mosque see al-Majlīsī, op. cit., XXII, 86 (lithogr. ed.).
Wariqān, Raḍwā) 90. The mountain of al-Khalil (Ḥebron), Lubnān, al-Ṭūr and al-Jūdī will on the Day of Resurrection be brought to Jerusalem, set at her corners and God will put his throne upon them to judge the people of Paradise and those of the Hell 91. Al-Ṭā‘īf was originally a place in Palestine — says a tradition attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās; it was removed by God and placed in the spot of al-Ṭā‘īf of today 92. Three angels are entrusted with the guard of the three mosques: one is entrusted with the mosque of Mecca, one with that of Medina and one with al-Aqṣā 92.

The shared sanctity of the mosques gave rise to traditions which talk of the merits of performing devotions distributed between them. To the Prophet is attributed the following utterance: «Whoever goes on pilgrimage or on a pious visit from al-Aqṣā to the mosque of Mecca — the faults he has committed and those he may later commit will be covered for him and he shall be granted Paradise».94. On the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās the following saying is related: «Whoever makes pilgrimage and prays in the mosques of Medina and al-Aqṣā in the same year, he shall be absolved from his faults as he was on the day his mother bore him» 95. A group of people — Ibn al-Firkāh reports, quoting from the book of Ibn al-Murajja — used to stay in ‘Abbadān 96 during the month of Ramaḍān, then they

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91 Asad b. Mūsā, op. cit., p. xxiv; Ch. D. Matthews: Palestine, p. 120.
93 Shams al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., f. 16b; al-Suyūṭī: al-La‘ālī al-maṣnū‘a, I, 92.
96 See on ‘Abbadān Yāqūt: Mu‘jam al-buldān, s.v. ‘Abbādān: ... fīth qaumun munqati‘ina, ‘alayhim waqfun fī tilka l-jazirati yu‘tauna ba‘dahu wa-aktharu nawa‘iddikim min al-nudhūr ... wa-yaqṣiduhum al-mujāwirin fī l-mawa‘īsimi li-l-ziyāratī, wa-yurwii fī faṣḥa‘ilīhā aḥādithu ghayru thābitatin ... ; Muḥ. Ṭāhir b. ‘Ali al-Hindi: Tadhkirat al-mau‘ūd‘al, Cairo 1343 AH, p. 120: ... two gates open in this world for Paradise are ‘Abbādān and Qazwīn; the first place which believed in Muḥammad was ‘Abbādān ...; and see Abū Ṭalib al-Makki, op. cit., IV, 103.
would go to Mecca on pilgrimage and come to Jerusalem for prayer. 

«Whoever performs the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and does not visit me (i.e. the grave of the Prophet in Medina) treats me harshly» — says a tradition attributed to the Prophet, told on the authority of Ibn 'Umar. A tradition recorded on the authority of 'Abdallah b. Mas'ud (or 'Abdallah b. 'Umar) contains all the three sanctuaries. The Prophet said: «He who performs the pilgrimage to Mecca and visits my grave (in Medina) and goes forth to fight (in a holy war — ghazā ghazwatan) and prays for me in Jerusalem — God will not ask him about what he (failed to perform of the prescriptions) imposed on him.» A ḥadīth attributed to the Prophet states: «He who visits me (i.e. the grave of the Prophet in Medina) and visits the grave of my father (i.e. my ancestor) Ibrāhīm (i.e. in Hebron) within one year — shall enter Paradise.» Al-Zarkashi considers the ḥadīth as forged and mentions an opinion that it was transmitted only after the conquest of Jerusalem by Salah al-Din in 583 AH.

IV

With the general admission by the scholars of the ḥadīth about the three mosques the old controversy about the position of Jerusalem fell into oblivion. Traditions aiming at minimizing of the importance of Jerusalem were not recorded in the canonical collections of ḥadīth. The main concern of the scholars of Islam came to be to fight objectionable practices of bid‘a in connection with the pilgrimage to Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and other sanctuaries.

According to prescriptions visitors should perform the circumambulation of the Rock in the direction opposite to that prescribed for the circumambulation of the Ka'ba. The Rock should be circumambulated being on the right of the visitor. The ḥawāf around

97 Ch. D. Matthews: Palestine, p. 12.
98 al-Subki, op. cit., pp. 27-29; Muh. Tāhir al-Hindi, op. cit., p. 76, l. 3.
99 Al-Subki, op. cit., p. 34; Muḥ. Tāhir al-Hindi, op. cit., p. 73; al-Samnādī: Nusrutu l-imāmi l-Subkī, p. 163.
the Rock is a bid'a. Similarly the tawāf around the grave of the Prophet was forbidden. The visitor in the Dome of the Rock has to put his hand on the Rock, but it is forbidden to kiss the Rock. It is as well forbidden to kiss the grave of the Prophet. It is forbidden to pray behind the Rock towards Mecca in order to combine the qibla of the Rock and the qibla of Mecca. It is forbidden to kiss the stones of the building or to kiss the stones of the Cave, as only one stone in the world is recommended to touch and to kiss: the stone of the Ka'ba. Forbidden is as well to imitate the hajj.

Al-'Abdārī reports about a curious instance of bid'a performed by the visitors of the sanctuary of Jerusalem: people, men and women alike, come to a place called « the navel of the earth », expose their navels and press them towards this spot, exhibiting in this fashion their naked bodies.

About similar customs in Mecca reports al-Nawāwī: « some wicked deceivers claimed that a place in the wall surrounding the Ka'ba, opposite the door of the Ka'ba, was « al-'urwa al-wuthqā ». Those people led them fraudently to believe that whoever touched it was in possession of the 'urwa al-wuthqā. As the spot was a high one the people would climb on the back of each other in order to touch it and it would come about that women ascended on the backs of men, thus mixing together and touching each other. Another bid'a was the custom of the touching of the 'navel of the earth': a nail in the mosque of Mecca was claimed to be « the navel of the earth » and common people would swarm to this spot, uncovering their navels and pressing them towards the « navel of the earth ».

Al-Ṭūrṭūshī tells about the celebration of the « Day of 'Arafa » in the mosque of Jerusalem. People from Jerusalem and neighbouring
villages stood in prayer facing Mecca, raising their voices in the 
\(\text{du'}\)a, just as if they were attending the \(\text{wuq}u\)f of 'Arafa. The common belief was that the preformance of four \(\text{wuq}u\)fs in Jerusalem was equivalent to the pilgrimage to Mecca.\(^{110}\)

A \(\text{bid'a}\) innovation started in al-Aqṣā in 448 AH. It was introduced by a man from Nablus called Abū l-Ḥamrā'. He prayed the \(\text{ṣalāt al-raghā'ib}\) in the mosque, people joined him and it became a practice, almost a \(\text{sunna}\).\(^{111}\)

Another \(\text{bid'a}\) reported about was the prayer of \(\text{rajab (ṣalāt rajab)}\) introduced in the mosque of Jerusalem in 480 AH.\(^{112}\)

Muslim scholars condemned severely the \(\text{bid'a}\) of songs and dances performed in al-Khalil (Hebron) after the afternoon-prayer and called \(\text{naubat al-Khaliil}\).\(^{113}\) Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythami reports about ‘shameful actions’, \(\text{qabā'īh}\), committed during the \(\text{tawāf}\) of the Ka'ba, the kissing of the Black Stone and during the maulid-festivals in Mecca.\(^{114}\)

But the persevering struggle of the orthodox scholars against these innovations failed. \(\text{Bid'as}\) and beliefs about miraculous properties of sanctuaries and graves spread nevertheless widely among the common people.

Ibn Taymiyya waged in vain his campaign against the sanctity of the Rock in Jerusalem, trying to prove that only Jews and some Christians adored the Rock (\(\text{wa-kadhāliku l-ṣakhratu, innamā yu'azzimuhā l-Yahūdu wa-ba'dyu l-Naṣārār}\)); none of the Companions of the Prophet or the \(\text{Tābi‘ūn}\) had adored the Rock.\(^{115}\) Muslim tradition claimed that God ascended the Heaven from the Rock\(^{116}\) and that it was God’s dwelling for forty years.\(^{117}\) This was strongly refuted

\(^{110}\) Abū Bakr al-Ṭūrūshī, \(\text{op. cit.}\), 116-17 (quoted by Abū Shāma, \(\text{op. cit.}\), p. 22); and see S. D. Goitein, \(\text{op. cit.}\), p. 137 (about \(\text{ta'rif}\)); Ibn Taymiyya : \(\text{Majmū‘at al-rasā‘il, II, 57 : ... au an yusāfira ilayhā li-yu’arrija bihā 'ashiyata 'Arāja...}\)

\(^{111}\) Abū Bakr al-Ṭūrūshī, \(\text{op. cit.}\), p. 121 (quoted by abū Shāma, \(\text{op. cit.}\), p. 24).

\(^{112}\) Al-Ṭūrūshī, \(\text{op. cit.}\), p. 122.

\(^{113}\) Al-‘Abdari, \(\text{op. cit.}\), IV, 245-46; and see the passage against the pilgrimage to al-Khalil in Ibn Taymiyya’s \(\text{Minhāj al-sunna I, 335-36.}\)

\(^{114}\) Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythami: \(\text{al-Ni‘ma al-Kubrā, f. 3a-3b.}\)

\(^{115}\) Ibn Taymiyya : \(\text{Majmū‘at al-rasā‘il, II, 58 (quoted in Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī : Iṣṭaḥ al-maṣājid min al-bida‘i wa-l-a‘wā‘id, Cairo 1341 AH, pp. 214-17.}\)

\(^{116}\) Al-Wāṣīṭī, \(\text{op. cit.}\), f. 51a-b; al-Nuwayrī, \(\text{op. cit.}\), I, 336-37 (quoting al-Wāṣīṭī); and see al-Majlisi, \(\text{op. cit.}\), VIII, 574 (lithogr. ed.).

\(^{117}\) ‘Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit swore: lā, wa-lladhi kānat ṣakhratu bayti l-maqdīsī lahu maqāman arba’īna sanatan, when arguing about something with ‘Abdallah b. Maa‘ūd, al-Wāṣīṭī, \(\text{op. cit.}\), f. 51a.
by Shi'i and Ibadī traditions alike, but this refutation seems to have had no effect.

Ibn Taymiyya tried to explain that there was no haram in Jerusalem or in Khalil and that there did only exist three harams: the haram of Mecca, the haram of Medina and the haram of Wajj (recognized only by some Muslim scholars). This attempt was also set at nought; the sanctuary of Jerusalem is called till the present day al-Haram al-Sharif and that of al-Khalil is called al-Haram al-Ibrahimī.

Thus it seems that the tradition about the three mosques, a very early one itself and one whose aim was to exclude the claims for pilgrimage to other shrines, was only granted general recognition following a period of internal struggle at the beginning of the second century. During that period the status of Jerusalem was disputed by certain orthodox circles while other sanctuaries vied for acceptance as places of pilgrimage.

The tradition about the three mosques was granted the consensus of the orthodox scholars, while at the same time elements of popular belief left their indelible mark on the rituals of pilgrimage to these sanctuaries.

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120 Ibn Taymiyya: Majmū'at al-rasā'il, II, 60.