7

ʿAbd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock

An Analysis of Some Texts

'The most holy spot [*al-quds*] on earth is Syria; the most holy spot in Syria is Palestine; the most holy spot in Palestine is Jerusalem [*Bayt al-maqdis*]; the most holy spot in Jerusalem is the Mountain; the most holy spot on the Mountain is the place of worship [*al-masjid*], and the most holy spot on the place of worship is the Dome.'[1] The author of these words, Abū Khālid Thawr ibn Yazīd al-Kalāʿī, a contemporary and confidant of the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr, had lived in Ḥimṣ but died in Jerusalem, probably in 770/AH 153.[2] He had obviously adopted a Jewish belief referred to in the *Midrāsh Tanḥūmā*, qedoshim, ch. 10: 'The Land of Israel is situated in the middle of the world, Jerusalem in the middle of the Land of Israel, the Sanctuary (*bēt ha-miqdāsh*) in the middle of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies (*ha-hēḵāl*) in the middle of the Sanctuary, the Ark of the Covenant in the middle of the Holy of Holies, and the foundation rock from which the world was founded in front of the Holy of Holies.'[3] For Jerusalem our Arab witness uses the Jewish name meaning Sanctuary (*Bayt al-maqdis = bēt ha-miqdāsh*).[4] He therefore has to specify the locality further as the 'Mountain', that is Mount Zion,[5] which, as the place of the Temple, needed no explanation for a Jew. He then mentions the new temple of the new religion: the Dome of the Rock.[6]

If he did not talk about the Kaʿba instead, it was because Mecca was not for him 'the most holy spot'. Abū Khālid belonged to a South Arabian clan, and Ḥimṣ was a stronghold of the Yamanis, who were not always fond of North

1 Ibn ʿAsākir (1951), I, 142, l. 1–3; Wāsiṭī (1979), 41, l. 1–4. This text has already been adduced in Busse (1968), 456–457.

2 For further information about this person cf. van Ess (1991–), 1, 114–117. He was a famous Qadarite and had sided with Yazīd III against Walīd II.

3 Midrāsh Tanḥūmā (1913), 78. This passage is translated in Herzberg (1961), 150.

4 For the different connotations of the name *Bayt al-maqdis* in early Arabic texts cf. Busse (1991), 33 f.

5 Or Mount Moriah. Both names are equated in Jewish tradition.

6 *Al-qubba*, i.e. the Qubbat al-Ṣakhra. The context shows that the word *masjid* mentioned in the previous sentence does not mean 'mosque'. It was already used in the pre-Islamic period (cf. Lammens [1926], 42–120), and with regard to Jerusalem it frequently denotes the entire temple area (cf. Creswell [1969], 65 and Grabar [1989], 707). For the history of the Temple Mount since the destruction of the Second Temple, see Peters (1986), 80–96.

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Arabian symbols. Many Yamani families had lived in Syria for generations. They did not, however, have any specifically Jewish affiliations, and certainly did not dream of renewing a Jewish heritage. They appreciated ʿUmar's decision to turn the Temple Mount into a place of worship again after it had been neglected by the Christians for so many centuries,[7] and they were proud of the monumental dome erected by ʿAbd al-Malik in a place to which so many traditions had been attached at different times. But we would probably be underestimating their awareness of belonging to a new age if we assumed that they were merely following older ideas. What was Jewish about the Dome and the place that they chose for it was the anti-Christian emphasis that went with it; in a town which had been predominantly Christian since the time of Constantine, the Dome of the Rock formed a conscious counterpoise to the Anastasis, the dome marking the place of Christ's resurrection, and the dome on the other side of the Kidron valley, on the Mount of Olives, which marked the place of Christ's ascension.[8] The inscriptions with which ʿAbd al-Malik ordered the building to be decorated underline this anti-Christian intention.[9]

But if we think we know what the building was opposed to, what did it stand for? An empty dome could not compete with the Christian monuments even if it was erected on a historic site. Moreover, the building did not serve as a mosque. A rotunda was completely unfit for Islamic ritual; for this the Masjid al-Aqṣā, next door, was available. We know that the rock covered by the dome contained a cavity which was interpreted as a footprint; even today tradition claims that the Prophet left this sign on the ground when he ascended to Heaven for his *miʿrāj*.[10] This seems to make sense: the Muslims would have venerated the place where Muḥammad ascended to Heaven, just as the Christians venerated the places where Jesus had risen from the dead and left this world. There are, however, two arguments against this interpretation. Firstly, the inscriptions do not say anything about the *miʿrāj*; only later additions from the time of Süleyman the Magnificent stress this detail.[11] Secondly, the legend

7 For this event cf. especially Busse (1984): also Soucek (1976), 88–93 and Busse (1986), 164–168.

8 See below, p. 1818.

9 For the inscriptions see van Berchem (1928), 228–255 and R.C.E.A. (1931), I, 8–11. They are translated into German in Busse (1981). Cf. also Rippin (1990), 54–56, and van Ess (1991–), I, 10.

10 Cf. Arnold (1960), 367–368 where, however, this footprint is erroneously located in the Masjid al-Aqṣā. The article was taken over from the first edition.

11 On the outside, beneath the dome; cf. Busse (1977), p. 16.

of Muḥammad's ascension had apparently | not yet reached its final form at 91
the time of ʿAbd al-Malik. There is no direct support for it in the Qurʾān; one has to draw on the exegesis of a passage which originally described a vision the Prophet had had near Mecca (Qurʾān 53:1–18).[12] It is true that, in another verse, the Qurʾān seemed to hint at a mysterious nocturnal journey, the so-called *isrāʾ* which could have taken Muḥammad, in a kind of rapture, to Jerusalem (Qurʾān 17:1).[13] But a nocturnal journey was not an ascension, and if it took him to Jerusalem he would have arrived, as the verse seemed to imply, in the Masjid al-Aqṣā, not on the Rock itself. In order to ascend to Heaven and to leave a footprint on the rock he would have had, *sit venia verbo*, to change stations. This does not look like a coherent tradition.

Now, the edifice which we know as the Masjid al-Aqṣā did not yet exist at the time of ʿAbd al-Malik, and the unobtrusive building noted by Bishop Arculph was probably not yet called *al-masjid al-aqṣā* when he visited Jerusalem at the time of Muʿāwiya.[14] The word *masjid* denoted, as we have seen, the entire 'praying ground' on what was to become the Haram al-Sharīf.[15] Originally, people did not think of specific places ('Haftpunkte') when connecting Muḥammad's *isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj* with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and when they started doing so they seem to have first located the *miʿrāj* in the Masjid al-Aqṣā.[16] Nevertheless, there remains plenty of material which shows that *isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj* were regarded as separate events[17] and although these soon tended to amalgamate there were always traditions which continued to see them as distinct.

12 For the original meaning of this passage, cf. Paret (1971), 460–461 with further literature; cf. also Qurʾān 81:23. The account of the vision implied that Muḥammad had seen God as a gigantic figure at the horizon. This was unacceptable to all those who rejected anthropomorphism; they therefore reinterpreted the passage to mean that the person seen by the Prophet had not been God but Gabriel. This change is already prepared in the Qurʾān itself (cf. Paret [1980], 49–51); it is also the opinion held by Ibn Isḥāq (1858), 153, l. 5–8. Those, however, who were more lenient in this respect seem to have used elements of this passage as 'décor' for the concept of *miʿrāj* which could then imply, as the apogee, an audience with God. The development needs further research. Cf. Schrieke (1916) and, as a kind of review to this last article, Horovitz (1919); Tuft (1979), 24–32; Böwering (1987), 552–556 with further literature; Busse (1990); van Ess (1991–), IV, ch. D 1.2.1.2.

13 For the relevant literature and the different interpretations cf. Paret (1971), 295–296; Grabar (1960), 707.

14 Cf. Donner (1979), 337; Peters (1985), 195–196.

15 Above, n. 6.

16 Busse (1987), 22.

17 Ibn Isḥāq treats them in separate chapters; cf. Busse (1991), 15 and before. But cf. Horovitz (1919), 174–175.

Such traditions could be regarded as 'unorthodox' later on, when they no longer fitted into the accepted scheme. But it is exactly for this reason that they are so interesting to us. They survive in collections of apocryphal *ḥadīth* or in geo-
92 graphical texts which were not | written – or checked – by *ḥadīth* specialists. But we find them also in the *Faḍā'il al-Quds* literature which was destined for local consumption or in *ḥadīth* collections which were preserved outside the Sunni milieu and therefore escaped scholarly censorship. They were never examined for potential implications as was juridical *ḥadīth*; this is why they remained somewhat vague and have to be analysed as a group to reveal their hidden assumptions. Formally, they frequently reveal a feature which is distinctive for an early stage of development: they do not all come from the mouth of the Prophet himself but may be attested as sayings of his Companions or of the next generation.

We may start with a report which almost reached the stage of classical *ḥadīth* but was then rejected for dogmatic reasons. The Prophet says: "When I was carried away at night to *Bayt al-maqdis* Gabriel passed with me by the grave of Abraham (at Hebron). He said: 'Dismount and pray two *rakʿas* here! Here is the grave of your father Abraham.' Then he passed with me by Bethlehem. He said: 'Dismount and pray two *rakʿas* here! Here your brother Jesus was born.' Then he came with me to the Rock and said: 'Here your Lord ascended to Heaven' …".[18] It is because of the last sentence that the text was considered to be erratic and scandalous.[19] But it had been accepted by a renowned early traditionalist, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak, who died in AD 797/AH 181, and the *isnād* which leads back to the Prophet contains famous Baṣran authorities.[20] It is true that the medieval *ḥadīth* experts treat it as a forgery; they put the blame on a certain Bakr ibn Ziyād al-Bāhilī who transmitted the report from Ibn al-Mubārak.[21] But he is much too late for that; even if he invented the *isnād*,[22]

18 Ibn Ḥibbān (1975), I, 196–197; Wāsiṭī (1979), 72 nr. 117 and, in an abridged form, 62 nr. 99; Ibn al-Jawzī (1979), 120, l. 3–9 > Nuwayrī (1923–), I, 338, l. 3–15. Ibn Ḥibbān has been copied by Dhahabī (1963), I, 345 nr. 1281; but the text given is slightly garbled.

19 Cf. Ibn Ḥibbān's remarks about it.

20 ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak < Saʿīd ibn Abī ʿArūba (died 156/773) < Qatāda ibn Diʿāma (died 117/735?) < Zurāra ibn Aufā < Abū Hurayra. Cf. Sezgin (1967), for Ibn al-Mubārak, 95; for Ibn Abī ʿArūba, 91–92; for Qatāda, 31–32.

21 Cf. Ibn Ḥibbān and Dhahabī.

22 According to Wāsiṭī, he transmitted the ḥadīth to a man from Jerusalem. If he did so in Jerusalem his relationship with Ibn al-Mubārak, who had lived in Marw, was difficult to check. And it does, of course, not go without saying that the Baṣrans on whom Ibn al-Mubārak relied would have talked about Palestine.

the *matn*, or the material used in it, was certainly much older. Wāsiṭī, who writes from a Jerusalemite point of view, does not put forward any criticism; moreover, he preserves a second version which has a different *isnād* and which may originally have been a mere variant.[23]

It is quite possible that, when Bakr ibn Ziyād al-Bāhilī transmitted the *ḥadīth*, the last sentence served as a transition to a description of Muḥammad's *miʿrāj*; Ibn | Ḥibbān gives us to understand that the report was much longer,[24] and 93
Wāsiṭī has a few more lines which point in this direction.[25] But the report can also be treated as an entity in itself; as it stands, it describes Muḥammad's *isrāʾ* with elements known to us from his *miʿrāj*.[26] The Prophet is accompanied by Gabriel, and he has mounted a riding-beast as he used to do in the imagination of those who talked about his ascension. He meets his predecessors, but instead of doing so during a vertical journey through Heaven,[27] he has this experience on earth, on his way to Jerusalem. Therefore he does not meet them in person but can only see their birth-place or their grave. For the same reason, he does not meet seven of them as he did on his way through the seven spheres, but only two, namely those among them who had become the object of local veneration in Palestine: Abraham and Jesus. It is interesting to note that Moses is not included; in other *isrāʾ* reports Moses appears, together with Jesus instead of Abraham, as the representative of the other religion which predated Islam. But Abraham's superiority to Moses is, of course, a genuine Islamic idea; in the *miʿrāj* stories his place is in the seventh, the highest, heaven.[28] We may thus venture the hypothesis that our text was originally independent of the *miʿrāj* tradition; only in combination with the latter do the elements it contained come to look like parallelisms and repetitions. This also applies to its last sentence. During his *miʿrāj*, Muḥammad finally reaches the presence of God. He does so, too, in the *isrāʾ* described in our text, but only symbolically, by alighting on the Rock of Mount Zion. Like Abraham's tomb and the birth-place of Jesus, the Rock is only a terrestrial memorial; from here God has ascended to Heaven, obviously after having stayed on earth for some time. The *miʿrāj* connected with this spot was thus primarily not that of Muḥammad but of God Himself.

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23 If we assume that the last sentence was subsequently omitted (cf. Wāsiṭī 61–62 nr. 98), the *ḥadīth* was used here as a proof for the *faḍāʾil* of Bethlehem; therefore the reference to the Rock was superfluous.

24 Ibn Ḥibbān (1975), I, 197, l. 6.

25 Wāsiṭī (1979), 72, l. 9–11.

26 For parallel material cf. Busse (1991), 7 ff.

27 For the relevant texts, cf. Ibn Isḥāq (1858), 268–271; Abū ʿAwāna (n.y.), 117–131; Qushayrī (1964), 64, partly depending on Abū ʿAwāna.

28 Busse (1991), 9.

We are not told that it was also God who left His footprint on the Rock at that moment, but that this was implicitly understood is shown by a critical statement attributed to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, the son of ʿAlī: 'These damned Syrians, how pagan they are! They pretend that God put His foot on the Rock in Jerusalem, though (only) one person ever put his foot on a rock (in this way), namely Abraham when he made it the *qibla* for all mankind …'[29] The text leaves no doubt that the idea it attacks was of Syro-Palestinian origin. The rebuke, however, comes from the mouth of an authority who lived in the Ḥijāz;
94 he stresses the | fact that there exists only one holy footprint, namely that by Abraham at the Kaʿba. The editor of the text[30] then hastens to add: "Abd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, ʿĀ'isha, (ʿAbd Allāh) Ibn ʿUmar, Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, and ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr all disapproved of what the Syrians say about the Rock; they prohibit it and use harsh words against it.'[31]

What reasons did these authorities have, apart from the fact that none was a Syrian and that they favoured Mecca over Jerusalem? To start with, let us look again at the same passage. Ibn ʿUmar is said to have trembled out of fear and anxiety when he heard what certain people thought about the Rock, for God is 'too great and exalted to be described like a creature'. The report omits to mention what exactly terrified him; the view he attacks is obviously thought to be too scandalous to be repeated. But we hear that those heretics attributed 'boundaries and locomotion to God', and Ibn ʿUmar goes on to say: 'This is the talk of the Jews, the enemies of God. But the Qur'ān says: 'The All-Compassionate set Himself upon the Throne', which means, His decree and His might rule over His creation.'[32] This sounds somewhat cryptic. But the formulation leaves no doubt that the problem was one of anthropomorphism. It was the anthropomorphists (*mushabbiha*) who 'described God like a creature' and who put 'boundaries' on Him by imagining His having a body. There is more, however. We are told that they attribute not only boundaries to Him but also 'locomotion', and Ibn ʿUmar finds it appropriate to talk about the Throne which he interprets in a metaphorical way. All this seems to have something to do with 'the talk of the Jews'; from a Ḥijāzī viewpoint, Syrian 'theology' looked as though it was being infiltrated by Jewish lore.

29 Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb (n.y.), III, 35, l. 16–18. The report is transmitted by Layth ibn Abī Sulaym al-Qurashī who died in 143/760 or 148/765; cf. Dhahabī (1963), III, 420–423 nr. 6998 and Ibn Ḥajar (1911–1912), VIII, 465–468, nr. 833.

30 That is, Layth ibn Abī Sulaym or Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb.

31 Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb (n.y.), III, 36, l. 6–8.

32 Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb. (n.y.), III, 35, l.10–16.

This brings us to our next authority, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd. With him, we are no longer in the Ḥijāz but in Kūfa.[33] The source, however, is still the same: the *Musnad* written by the second-century Ibāḍī scholar Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb who, like all Ibāḍīs living in Baṣra, detested anthropomorphic tendencies.[34] Ibn Masʿūd hears somebody transmitting material from the Torah. The man stops talking when Ibn Masʿūd passes by, but some listeners give the *ṣaḥābī* to understand that the foreigner told his audience that God rose from Jerusalem to Heaven after creation and that in doing so He put His foot on the Rock. Ibn Masʿūd is shocked: the man who had been sitting there 'can only have been Satan', and 'there will be a time when polytheism (*shirk*) is more clandestine than ants stepping on a black rock in dark night.'[35] 'Polytheism' is here, it seems, only another word for | anthropomorphism;[36] the strange simile used by Ibn 95
Masʿūd became known later on as a *ḥadīth*.[37] The locomotion is, as we clearly see now, God's ascension to Heaven or, before that, His coming down to earth in order to perform His first task there: creation. And we may suspect that during this event, probably after having finished His work, He sat down on His Throne erected on the Rock.

We are indeed close to Jewish ideas. Creation took place on Mount Zion, from the foundation-rock (*eben shetiyya*) which was, as we have seen, 'in front of the Holy of Holies'.[38] We are, of course, not dealing with a *creatio ex nihilo* here; God needed a solid basis for shaping the world. According to Jewish belief, His most important act in this process was the creation of Adam, for He created him from the clay which He found on the Mountain, i.e. from the 'place of his atonement', where the altar of Ex. 20: 24 was to be erected.[39] Theological speculation concluded from this that Mount Zion was the Paradise where Adam had lived and where God stayed with him; God brought him

33 For Ibn Masʿūd cf. Vadet (1968), 873–875.

34 For further detail cf. van Ess (1991–), II, 198 ff. and 206 ff.

35 Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb (n.y.), III, 39, l. 2–11.

36 From a Muslim standpoint, the classical 'polytheists' were the Christians since they believed in trinity; by defining Christ as God, however, they also fell into anthropomorphism. Both terms could therefore easily be associated.

37 van Ess (1961), 46; Reinert (1968), 56; Gramlich (1990), 143.

38 See above, p. 1805; Schäfer (1974). For the *eben shetiyya* cf. Jeremias (1926a), 93 ff. = (1926b), 53 ff.; Böhl (1974). It seems to have originally been understood as a weaver's peg which God had driven into the earth (Böhl, 259).

39 Cf., for instance, Midrāsh Berēshīt Rabbā (1965), 132, ch. 14, 8. The relevant material has been collected by Jeremias (1926a), 78–79 = (1926b), 38–39; but cf. Kretschmar (1987), 89–92.

'into His palace', which was called Eden.[40] Afterwards, that is, after Adam's fall, God returned to Heaven; this would have been the moment when he left a footprint on the Rock.[41] In spite of that, or because of it, Mount Zion still projects into Heaven. This was, of course, derived from the fact that Mount Zion was the place of the Temple; the Temple, the 'Holy of Holies', had established the presence of God.[42]

What we have to ask is to what extent these ideas were taken over by Syrian Muslims and how they were transformed in the process. In Muslim tradition, too, we find the statement that the Rock is closest to Heaven;[43] it represents the 'lower throne' of God, under which the entire earth is spread
96 out.[44] Therefore it belongs | to Paradise;[45] God sat there after the creation, and from there He returned to Heaven, after forty years, leaving His footprint on the ground.[46] The Rock is also the spot where God will be present again for the Last Judgement.[47] Every Thursday evening (*laylat al-jum'a*) the deceased believers gather there, at least with their souls;[48] for in this way they will be ready when the Throne is put up again for resurrection[49] and when they are reunited with their bodies to enter Paradise. This is all very similar to Jewish imagery. The main difference is that Adam does not play any important part in this context.[50] He is replaced by Muḥammad, for Muḥammad visited this earthly Paradise when God 'carried him by night from the Holy Place of worship

40 Pirqē de Rabbi Eliezer (1916), 84. The idea that 'Zion' could be related to 'Eden' was confirmed by Is. 51, 3.

41 This is at least what is said by Newby (1989), 30 n. 89. He does not, however, give any evidence and may have had only the Muslim texts in mind. Cf. Ps. 47, 6: 'God has gone up with a shout'.

42 Hirschberg (1951–1952), 322; Keel (1977), 51–52. I should like to thank my colleague H.P. Rüger for fruitful consultation concerning the material used in this paragraph.

43 Qushayrī (1964), 103, l. 9–11.

44 Ibn al-Faqīh (1885), 97, l. 1–2 = Wāsiṭī (1979), 30 nr. 41, 69 nr. 111, 72 nr. 118 = Ibn al-Jawzī (1979), 145–146, always according to Ka'b al-Aḥbār (for whom cf. Wolfensohn [1933], 42); Jeremias (1926a), 94 = (1926b), 54.

45 Wāsiṭī (1979), 78 nr. 128; Ibn al-Jawzī (1979), 139, l. 6–7 (where *firdaws* is used as the word for Paradise). Cf. Ibn al-Faqīh (1885), 94, l. 9.

46 For the forty years cf. Kister (1969), 195.

47 Wāsiṭī (1979), 88–89 nr. 143–145; Ibn al-Faqīh (1885), 96, l. 17–18; Muhallabī (1958), 54, l. 19–20; Hirschberg (1951–1952), 326–327, 330.

48 Thus according to a Shī'ī tradition; cf. Majlisī (1956–1972), VI, 286 nr. 8.

49 Wāsiṭī (1979), 70, l. 1–2; Hirschberg (1951–1952), 331–332; Busse (1968), 456. Also Wāsiṭī, but with a somewhat uncritical treatment of the sources.

50 The main exception is Wāsiṭī (1979), 77, concerning Adam's grave at the Rock. Muhallabī

(*al-masjid al-ḥarām*) to the Further Place of Worship (*al-masjid al-aqṣā*), the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs' (Qur'ān 17:1).

It is not surprising, then, to find that Muhammad met God there, sitting on His Throne. What is surprising is the blatant anthropomorphism of the *ḥadīth* describing this event. The Prophet saw 'the Lord of all mankind in an enclosure of al-Quds in the image of a youth bearing a crown which dazzled the eye'.[51] He was even touched by Him before being addressed: 'I saw my Lord in His most beautiful shape like a youth with exuberant hair, sitting on the Throne of grace, around Him a golden carpet. He put His hand between my shoulder-blades, and I felt its coolness in my liver. He said to me …'[52] For our purposes however, what is even more striking is the detail that, according to the first tradition, the event takes place 'in an enclosure of al-Quds' (*fī ḥaẓīra min al-quds*). Al-Quds does not strictly mean Jerusalem here; Jerusalem was called Bayt al-maqdis at that time, or even | Īliyā', Aelia Capitolina.[53] The lexicographers explain *al-quds* as 97
'the paradise'.[54] They are right; they only forgot to add that it was the earthly paradise. The expression seems to derive from an underlying identity of this paradise with the Holy of Holies on the Temple Mount;[55] the 'enclosure', then, is perhaps not a simple *hortus conclusus*,[56] but the temple precincts. By creating a *masjid* on the Haram al-sharīf, the Muslims had returned to the Holy of Holies its former dignity, and God Himself had honoured it again with His presence. In a passage added to the *Pirqē de Rabbi Eliezer* a certain Rabbi Ishmael mentions among the fifteen things which the 'children of Ishmael' will accomplish in the land of Israel the fact that they will fence in the broken walls of the Temple

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talks about Adam having been created there, but he regards this as a tradition of the *ahl al-kitāb* (Muhallabī [1958], 51, l. 12–13).

51 Suyūṭī (n.y.), I, 30, l. 10–11.

52 Ritter (1955), 445–446 with further parallels; cf. Bayhaqī (1985), 557–561 and van Ess (1988), 10–11. That this scene took place during the *isrā'* is made explicit in a version preserved by Ibn al-Jawzī (1979), 32, l. 14; cf. also al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (1931), viii, 151, l. 9–21.

53 Goitein (1960), 322b–323a; Busse (1991), 33. Thawr ibn Yazīd whom we mentioned at the beginning reported from Kaʿb al-aḥbār that Jerusalem should be called *Bayt Allāh al-muqaddas* instead of Īliyā' (Wāsiṭī [1979], 21, l. 1–5).

54 Ibn al-Athīr (1963), I, 404: *al-janna*; taken over by Lane (1863), 2497. Note that the formulation explained by the lexicographers is *ḥaẓīrat al-quds* and not *ḥaẓīra min al-quds* as in our text; cf. also *ḥaẓīrat al-quds min al-janna* in Ibn Khuzayma (1935), 237, l. 17.

55 For the question where the historical Holy of Holies was situated (which is independent of our discussion here) cf. recently Kretschmar (1987), 82–83, 95, 108, and 111.

56 As assumed in van Ess (1988), 19 n. 86.

and erect a building on the Sanctuary.[57] Indeed, ʿAbd al-Malik, whose work is obviously alluded to here, seems to have constructed the Double Gate which was opened as a major entrance on Herodian foundations in the southern wall of the Ḥaram; it was later called Bāb al-nabī, possibly because it was considered to be the place where Muḥammad had entered the Temple Mount during his nocturnal journey.[58] When the Muslims changed the name of Jerusalem from Bayt al-maqdis to al-Quds at a later date, they may have done so precisely because of these associations.

As regards anthropomorphism, it was not as alien to early Islam as we might suspect from what Islamic, especially Muʿtazilite theology said about God and His 'unity', the concept of *tawḥīd*, later on. In the early period, anthropomorphic *ḥadīth* was widespread, and theological systems were elaborated on this basis in Sunnī as well as Shīʿī Islam. The authors of these systems did not see any serious contradiction with the Qurʾān. Rather, they felt their approach was confirmed by Qurʾān 112, especially by the epithet *al-ṣamad* which was connected there with God, the 'One' who 'has not begotten and has not been begotten'. The same *sūra* holds a prominent place in the inscriptions which ʿAbd al-Malik
98 ordered to be put on the | Dome of the Rock. He also chose its words for the new coins which he struck after his monetary reform.[59]

The problem is whether we can link ʿAbd al-Malik to the anthropomorphism of the *aḥādīth* mentioned. For although he quotes Qurʾān 112 in the inscriptions, he avoids any confirmation of a non-transcendental concept of God. It is possible that he did so because any such statement would have aroused controversy; but he may simply have taken anthropomorphism for granted or failed to see any theological difficulty in it. We should, of course, not expect him to refer to *ḥadīth* in such a prominent place; *ḥadīth* was not yet a quotable authority in his period. On the other hand, we cannot overlook the fact that he does not mention Qurʾān 17:1 either; Muḥammad's nocturnal journey was obviously not yet on his mind. In such an ambiguous situation, we may for a last time seek some enlightenment from a hitherto unknown text.[60] A certain Hishām ibn ʿUrwa reports from his father: "I came to ʿAbd al-Malik and mentioned in his presence the Rock which is in Jerusalem (*Bayt al-maqdis*). ʿAbd al-Malik said:

57 Pirqē de Rabbi Eliezer (1916), 22.

58 Rosen-Ayalon (1989), 41–45. According to one of the *isrāʾ* reports the Prophet entered 'the town' through the 'Southern gate'; Busse (1991), 13. The second important gate which is nowadays known as the Golden Gate may have been added under Walīd when the Masjid al-Aqṣā was built (Rosen-Ayalon [1989], 45).

59 For further detail cf. van Ess (1988) and (1991–), IV, ch. D 1.1.

60 Ibn Khuzayma (1935), 72, l. 5–10.

This is the rock of the All-Compassionate on which He has set His foot. I said: For Heaven's sake! God says in the Qurʾān: 'His Throne comprises the Heavens and the Earth', and you say: He sets His foot on this (rock). For Heaven's sake, this (rock) is only a mountain (of the sort) of which God proclaims: 'My Lord will scatter them as ashes; then He will leave them a level hollow (wherein thou wilt see no crookedness neither any curving, Qurʾān 20: 105 ff.)'."

As before, we have to read between the lines. ʿAbd al-Malik is blamed for his anthropomorphic conception of God. This has something to do with God's sitting on the throne, for his opponent rebukes him by quoting Qurʾān 2:255, the famous throne-verse: 'His Throne comprises the Heavens and the Earth', i.e. God's Throne could never stand on the earth alone. Moreover, the rock where it is supposed to have stood is only a normal mountain, and we know, again from the Qurʾān, that on the Last Day God will scatter all mountains like ashes. The same would have happened if He had put His foot on one of them. ʿAbd al-Malik cannot therefore be right when he assumes that God did this when rising from His Throne in order to ascend to Heaven again.

What we get in this story is, of course, not facts but literature. The report is fictitious: no contemporary would have reproved a caliph. But it shows at least that people *believed* that ʿAbd al-Malik believed what he is said to believe. And it shows where those people lived, for Hishām ibn ʿUrwa, who is introduced as the author of the story, is by no means an unknown person.[61] His father, who is here supposed to have met ʿAbd al-Malik, was ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr, one of those scholars | whom the aforementioned report enumerated as opponents of the 99
'Syrians'.[62] He is the brother of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, the anti-caliph whom ʿAbd al-Malik had to fight during the first half of his reign, and he lived in the Ḥijāz, where the opposition to this Syrian aberration was strongest.

Does this prove the old hypothesis that ʿAbd al-Malik understood the monument which he erected in Jerusalem as a conscious antithesis to the Kaʿba at Mecca, which was controlled by ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr?[63] Not necessarily.

61 Cf. Sezgin (1967), I, 88–89; he died in 146/763.

62 See above, p. 1810. For ʿUrwa cf. Sezgin (1967), I, 278–279; he is said to have died in 94/713.

63 Advanced for the first time by Goldziher (1889–1890), II, 35–36; taken up by Caetani (1912), III, 773, by Creswell (1969), 65 and Caskel (1963), more recently by Sellheim (1970), 104 and Borrmans (1981), 8. The report in al-Yaʿqūbī on which Goldziher based himself (now translated in Peters [1985], 197) speaks of the footprint on the Rock as having been left by Muḥammad, but is seriously invalidated by the fact that Zuhrī is mentioned as a scholarly witness who, at the period of ʿAbd al-Malik, was still quite young and a rather unimportant person (cf. Duri [1957], 11). We have, however, to keep in mind that other sources, though later, give less distorted accounts and refer to older informants. More

What we have before us is merely a report written with a Ḥijāzī prejudice. Like all the other texts quoted above, it cannot be dated with certainty. What we may be sure of is only that Ḥijāzī scholars protested against the veneration of the Rock found in Syria and that they connected this with ʿAbd al-Malik's construction of the Dome. In order to draw further conclusions we would need a text *defending* ʿAbd al-Malik's purpose, but such evidence has not come to light yet. We are certainly well advised to dissociate the caliph from the prophetic tradition talking about Muḥammad's encounter with the youthful God; they presuppose the localization of the nocturnal journey on the Temple Mount, and this seems not to have happened until after the death of al-Walīd.[64] They were too numerous and too different in their *isnāds* for all of them to have originated in Jerusalem anyway. We have thus to assume that they – or rather some of them – were attracted later on by a previous local belief which said that God set up His throne in Jerusalem.[65] This local belief had been strengthened by the building activities of both ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Walīd and quickly acquired a Muslim identity of its own. But originally the element which we rec-
100 ognized as being essentially new with regard to | the Jewish tradition, i.e. the replacement of Adam by Muḥammad, was not yet prominent; ʿAbd al-Malik seems to have thought of the Rock more in connection with God than with the prophet.

All this does not yet exclude the possibility that he acted in conscious competition with his rival in the Ḥijāz. But again we are confronted with the problem of chronology, and again our evidence comes only from the other side. At a certain point, Ḥijāzī scholars tried to transfer traditions from the Rock to the Kaʿba or to Arabian localities: the sacrifice of Abraham,[66] the idea of the navel of the earth,[67] even the earthly paradise, together with God's footprint.[68]

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about this subject is now to be found in two articles by A. Elad: Elad (1991), 56 ff. and in this volume, p. 33 ff.

64 Busse (1986), 242 and extensively (1991), 34 ff.

65 The importance of this local tradition has recently been emphasised by Rosen-Ayalon (1989), 61–63. In contrast to her interpretation, and in agreement with the material treated above, I would not restrain the role of the Throne to the Last Judgement; creation seems to have been more important. For this latter aspect cf. also Nuwayrī (1923–), I, 326, l. 15–327, l. 3, and the saying of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār quoted by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī and translated by Elad, p. 38 in this volume.

66 Busse (1986), 238; Newby (1989), 18.

67 Hirschberg (1951–1952), 333; Busse (1986), 237–238. The Muslims may have understood the change of *qibla* in this sense.

68 The Ḥijāzī scholars located it in a *wādī* near Ṭāʾif where God 'had taken His last step'

Right from the beginning, they seem to have thought that Muḥammad started for his *miʿrāj* from Mecca, not from Jerusalem.[69] In contrast to this, evidence of an ideological offensive on the part of the Syrians is, to say the least, equivocal. It is true that at that time the pilgrimage to Mecca was not yet a commonly accepted symbol of identity all over the Islamic world.[70] But in order to concur with Caskel's hypothesis that ʿAbd al-Malik introduced a new sacrificial feast in which the octagon of his Dome was used for the *ṭawāf*, we would need further material; the anonymous verse | Caskel adduces in support of his idea 101
is not sufficient and is difficult to pin down.[71] For the moment, it is much simpler to assume that ʿAbd al-Malik merely acted in a local context. In any case, his competing with the Ḥijāz would only make sense if the date which he gives for the erection of the Dome refers to the completion of the building rather than its beginning.[72] In the local context the problem of dating can

(*ākhir waṭ'a*); the place was obviously very fertile and was considered a 'sacred valley' (cf. Lammens [1922], 139–140; Kister [1979], 18). Later on 'God's last step' was reinterpreted metaphorically as the Prophet's last campaign against the unbelievers (cf. Kister [1979], 1, who, however, construes the argument in the opposite way). For further competing traditions cf. Busse (1986); for the rivalry in general cf. Kister (1969). The belief in Abraham's footprint at the Kaʿba seems to be older than the tradition of Muḥammad's footprint in Jerusalem (see above, p. 1810). A similar transfer had already taken place from the Temple Mount to Golgotha, under Christian influence; cf. for Abraham's sacrifice, the tomb of Adam and the navel of the earth, Jeremias (1926a) and, with modifying remarks, Kretschmar (1987), 84–99, 106–111. For the time of the Crusaders cf. Busse (1982), 27–30. The Crusaders understood the foot-print on the Rock as having been produced by Christ; cf. Hirschberg (1951–1952), 331 and Busse (1982), 30.

69 Schrieke (1916), 14–15 and Horowitz (1919), 162–166; also Schrieke (1927), 552–554 and Horovitz (1936), 505–508. The event was then frequently connected with the legendary opening of Muhammad's breast which took place at the Kaʿba (cf. Bevan [1914] and Birkeland [1955], 13–39) and the Kaʿba was primarily seen in relation with its replica in Heaven, the *bayt maʿmūr* of Qurʾān 52:4. Consequently, the *masjid al-aqṣā*, too, was located in Heaven, as a symbolical counterpart of the *masjid al-ḥarām* (cf. Horovitz [1919], 162–166 and Busse [1991], 10 and 25 f.). This concept was based on popular cosmological and astronomical ideas for which cf. King (1985) 319–327, and King (1987), 180–185.

70 This has recently again been stressed by Rippin (1990), 53. Cf. also Sharon (1991), 129.

71 Caskel (1963), 28–29. Confirmation might come from the material in Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's *Mirʾāt al-zamān* which has been treated by A. Elad; there the same details are mentioned together. Cf., however, as a contrast, the verse of al-Farazdaq quoted in Kister (1969), 182, which points to a veneration of both sanctuaries on the same level. Rabbat (1989), 21 n. 66, dates this poem to 75/694, i.e. shortly after the civil war.

72 For this problem, cf. Rotter (1982), 227–230 and Blair in this volume, esp. p. 69.

be largely disregarded. There is some reason for assuming that ʿAbd al-Malik wanted to renew the Solomonic temple; Priscilla Soucek and Heribert Busse have collected material for such a hypothesis.[73] ʿAbd al-Malik 'loved Zion', as the *Prayer of Rabbi Shimʿon ben Yoḥay* said.[74] But this should not be regarded as an indication for going back to the Jewish past; rather it was a symbol set against the Christians in Jerusalem. The Syrian Muslims wanted to surpass the dome which covered the spot from which *Christ* had ascended to Heaven, by constructing a new one which covered the rock from which *God* had ascended to Heaven. The Christians proved the divinity of Christ with a footprint in the floor of the Church of the Ascension, and the Muslims were happy to produce similar evidence on the Rock, evidence which had perhaps already been used by the Jews. It is probably not fortuitous that the absolute dimensions of the Islamic building are exactly the same as those of the Anastasis.[75] The shift which Islam, as a newcomer, produced in a not altogether coherent tradition did not occur without an element of adaptation and imitation; diversity in similarity was the key to finding one's own identity. But the Muslims tried to see the local tradition with their own eyes; compared with the Mount of Olives or even with Golgotha, the concept of Mount Zion offered the greater historical depth.

102 This encourages us to venture a last hypothesis. 'Diversity in similarity' might turn out to be an appropriate principle for explaining even the mere architectural form. It is true that the dimensions used for the Dome of the Rock were those of Byzantine imperial monuments; Ecochard has shown the correspondences with the Basilica of Simeon the Stylite in Qalʿat Simʿān and even with San Vitale in Ravenna.[76] It is also true that the Dome is a memorial

73 Soucek (1976), 74–88. Busse stresses the fact that the imitation relates to the entire ensemble on the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, not to the Dome alone; the Dome and the Masjid al-Aqṣā form the same axis as the different parts of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre ([1981], 177; [1987], 3–6). Confirmation of this idea is now found in Rosen-Ayalon (1989), 6–7 and 70–71.

74 A Jewish apocalypse which was given its final form in the time of the Crusades; cf. Lewis (1949–1951), 329.

75 For the exact figures cf. Mauss (1888); Creswell (1969), 107; Chen (1979) and (1980). The rotunda of the Church of the Ascension also had the same radius as the inner circle of the Dome. It was, however, not surrounded by an outer octagon, as Creswell (1969), 107 assumed; the octagon was not added until the period of the Crusades (Corbo [1965], 97–118). In this respect it does therefore not come closer to the Dome of the Rock than the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Anastasis did not need an octagon because it was part of a more complex structure.

76 Ecochard (1972), 37–45.

building; again the relationship with Byzantine models is quite clear.[77] But besides all this, there remains one peculiarity which attracts our attention. In a somewhat isolated variant of the traditions treated above, the youthful God whom Muḥammad is said to have met is represented as sitting under a red tent.[78] In pre-Islamic times, leather tents of this colour and kind belonged to the shaykh of a tribe.[79] They were employed for representative purposes and hospitality; sometimes they were offered to distinguished guests.[80] In a well-known *ḥadīth*, Muḥammad is described as residing in one, at Mecca, at some distance outside the town, obviously after the conquest;[81] he also used it during the *ʿumra* which he performed in connection with his last *ḥajj*,[82] and he even put it up at a place of worship (*masjid*!) when he went into retreat (*iʿtikāf*).[83] The tribes used to take such a tent with them when going on a raid; it was a symbol of their identity, and in the Jāhiliyya period it possibly contained an idol.[84] The Muslims accorded it a place in their *imaginaire* even after they had turned to a sedentary way of life and had settled in an urban environment: in Paradise, the believers will be living in such tents,[85] and the martyrs were said to be accommodated, immediately after their death, in one which stands at the entrance | to Paradise, so that they are the first to go in when they are 103
united again with their bodies at the time of resurrection.[86] The name for such a tent, however, is *qubba*. It is round; therefore the same word could be used to

77 Grabar (1973), 51 and 58, who uses the term 'ciborium' or 'reliquary'. F.E. Peters has launched the interesting hypothesis that Heraclius already thought about building an octagon on the Temple Mount (or even started building it) after the Jews had re-appropriated the place for their ritual during the rule of the Persians between 614 and 617 (Peters [1986], 88 and 95).

78 Only preserved in Faḍl ibn Shādhān (1972), 15, l. 3–4, where the *ḥadīth* is traced back via ʿIkrima to Ibn ʿAbbās.

79 Rackow and Caskel (1938), 181 n. 3; Lammens (1928), 135.

80 Jacob (1897), 86 and 245–246.

81 al-Bukhārī (1862–1868), *Libās* nr. 42; Muslim (1955), *Ṣalāt* nr. 249–250 etc.

82 Muslim (1955), 889, l. 3–6 = *Ḥajj* nr. 147; for parallels cf. Wensinck (1936–1969), v, 220–221. Here, however, the tent is made of felt.

83 Ibn Ḥanbal (1895), v, 172, l. 19 ff. (cf. l. 3 from the bottom).

84 This at least according to the hypothesis of Lammens, who so far has written the most suggestive pages about it (Lammens [1928], 110–111, 122–125, 127–142); but compare the critique by Farès (1932), 100–101 and 163–164 n. 2, also Reintjens (1975), 153–154. Lammens' ideas have recently been revived in connection with the discussion about the origin of the *miḥrāb* (cf. Fehérvári [1990], 8a).

85 Cf. the ḥadīth in Wensinck (1936–1969), v, 221b.

86 Ibn Ḥanbal (1895), 1, 266, l. 7–9 / (1949 ff.), iv, 124 nr. 2390.

mean 'dome'. It was the symbol of the lord; *qubba* and *rabb* go together.[87] Is the Qubbat al-Ṣakhra, the Dome of the Rock, nothing else then than the tent over God's throne on the Rock? I leave this for the specialists to decide.[88]

87 Lammens (1928), 133–134.

88 They should also make clear what we have to think of the mosaics in this connection. Priscilla Soucek (1976), 98–99 has associated them with the idea of an earthly paradise; recently, Myriam Rosen-Ayalon has forcefully argued in the same direction ([1989], 46–61). Perhaps it is also worth remembering that the divine youth was later on sometimes imagined as being surrounded by a curtain of pearls (Suyūṭī [n.y.], I, 31, l. 7). Unfortunately, the mosaics which covered the outside of the building are known to us only through a late description dating from the year 1483 (Creswell [1969], 98–99; Rosen-Ayalon [1989] 20–22).