

The Shī'īs in Palestine

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The Shī'īs in Palestine

From the Medieval Golden Age until the Present

By

Yaron Friedman



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Cover illustration: The tomb of al-Nabī Yūsha' (the Prophet Joshua), Galilee—Safed district. Photo by Yaron Friedman.

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Preface

Studying the history of Shī'ism in the region that is today the state of Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, is an unusual experience for a researcher. The Iranian Islamic Republic, which leads most of the Shī'ī world today, declared Israel its enemy. Nevertheless, for long periods of its history (before and after the development of Zionism), Palestine was a place where Shī'īs and Jews coexisted.

The fact that there is almost no remaining Shī'ī presence in present-day Israel and that almost the entire Muslim Palestinian population is Sunnī makes the reconstruction of the history of Shī'ism in this region a challenging yet fascinating task.

When I began the present research, I realized that in that year, *'āshūrā'* (the tenth of Muḥarram 1438 AH), coincided with Yom Kippur (the tenth of *tishrei*, 5777 of the Jewish calendar). This was the first time after thirty three years that these two occasions happened at the same time, as it used to be originally in the eve of Islam, when the tenth of Muḥarram and Yom Kippur fell on the same day. The day of the tragic massacre of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, the Prophet Muḥammad's grandson, took place on the date of Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement. These two events are considered the holiest days in the year, for Shī'īs as well as for Jews. The same coincidence occurred in the second year of my research. On both 11–12 October 2016 and in 29–30 September 2017, *'āshūrā'* and Kippur happened to occur at the same time.

As part of my field research, I visited the two most important Shī'ī sites in Palestine. On the morning of *'āshūrā'*, 10 October 2016, I visited the place that was, more than a thousand years ago, the holiest Shī'ī site in medieval Palestine, namely, the location where it is believed that the head the Ḥusayn b. 'Alī was buried. I arrived at the site, near the Barzilai hospital in Ashkelon, hoping to witness Shī'ī pilgrims from the Ismā'īlī Bohrā community performing *ta'ziya* (mourning) ceremonies. Instead of the historical mausoleum, I found a small modern and modest sanctuary, without even the typical mosque or dome. Unfortunately, the Bohrās did not come that year. My visit reflected my impression about the history of Shī'ism in Palestine: it was a phenomenon that existed in the past, then disappeared, but its traces can still be found.

On another trip, on 2 September 2017, I traveled to the tomb of al-Nabī Yūsha' (the Prophet Joshua) in Galilee; for the last three centuries, this was the holiest Shī'ī site in Palestine. Although it was partly in ruins, I could easily see that it was still attended and venerated by locals, though most of them are Sunnīs and Druzes, not Shī'īs, as in the past. The new graffiti on the walls and the remnants of cloth and food inside the domed building indicated that

people continue to make pilgrimages to this site. This phenomenon reflects the need of Arabs from Galilee to seek the spiritual support of the *ahl al-bayt* (People of the House), the close family of the Prophet Muḥammad, as well as that of the Prophet Joshua, who was a prophet in Islam and was particularly important to Shīʿīs.

Indeed, the fact that I live in the territory of my study contributes to my research. Conversations I have had with Israeli Muslims, including colleagues in the university and my own students at the University of Haifa and the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), helped me understand the Sunnī attitude toward the Shīʿīs in general and those in Palestine in particular. In this study, I included appendices with photos I took during my visits to the two Shīʿī sites that are most relevant to the topic. I added the inscriptions, which I photographed on the inside walls of the shrine of al-Nabī Yūshaʿ; these have not yet been studied. Given the sensitivity of the topic of Sunnī-Shīʿī relations, local Arabs preferred to avoid interviews concerning the Shīʿīs in Israel. Nevertheless, since some interviews with Palestinians who converted to Shīʿism are already widespread online, I was able to use them to shed light on the issue of the influence of Shīʿism in Palestine. A translation of two of the most important interviews appears in the appendices.

As a lecturer in the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in the University of Haifa, I benefited from the encouragement of Professor Fruma Zacks and her colleague Professor Yuval Ben-Bassat, and for this I would like to thank them both. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance of those at the library of Haifa University, who gave me access to the documents used in this study. My gratitude goes to Sigal Shoshany, the head of Beit Gordon Museum in Kibbutz Deganya Alef, for her warm welcome and for her authorization to photograph the two rare Sitt Sukayna marble tablets. I wish to thank the Israel State Archives (ISA) in Jerusalem for permitting me access to documents concerning Shīʿī villages in Galilee in 1948 and for authorizing me to use them in this book. Special thanks go to Dr. Moran Zaga from the University of Haifa for her important contribution in preparing the maps for this book, based on the information gathered in this study.

I would like to thank Farhad Daftary, the head of the Department of Academic Research and Publications at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. At his encouragement I contacted Mustafa Abdullhussein from the Dāwūdī Bohrā community in London. I am grateful to the latter for a fascinating interview, which appears in appendix 7. I also thank Aḥmad Ḥusayn Khaṭīb from Ghajar, for sharing his views about the background of the ʿAlawīs in the Golan.

I owe a special debt to my English editor, Valerie Joy Turner, for her rigorous editing of the manuscript.

I would like to express my appreciation to the late Margaret Owen, a friend and a gifted editor of my previous publications. Her professional contribution and her wonderful personality will always be remembered.

Last but not least, I thank my wife Dorit and my children Itamar, Noa, and Michal, who supported me during long periods of study.

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Note on Translations, Dates, and Transliteration

English translations from Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian are by the author unless otherwise noted.

Specific dates and centuries prior to the eighteenth century are given in *hijrī* (AH) and common era (CE) years or centuries.

Arabic transliteration follows the system used in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* with contraction of the article (al- and l) and *tā' marbūṭa* indicated only in the construct state. Modern terms, names, and organizations with commonly accepted forms are presented with their modern spellings. Place names are generally Anglicized (e.g., Baghdad, Gaza, Medina). Historic dynasties and groups appear with diacritics (e.g., 'Abbāsids, Fāṭimids, Ismā'īlīs), while more modern groups are Anglicized (e.g., Druzes, Ottomans).

Introduction

Today, the largest Shīʿī community in the region of al-Shām (greater Syria) is located in Lebanon, mainly in the south of the country, in the Biqāʿ Valley in the east, and in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Smaller Shīʿī communities in this region live in western Syria, and less significant Shīʿī minorities can be found in Egypt and Jordan. It is commonly accepted in academic research that there is no significant Shīʿī community in Palestinian society today, neither in the state of Israel, nor the Gaza Strip, or in the West Bank. In comparison, we find that small Shīʿī minorities remain in each of the neighboring countries: in Syria there are some two million Shīʿīs (including ʿAlawīs and Ismāʿīlīs), in Lebanon there are approximately two million, in Egypt several hundred thousand and in Jordan several thousand. In light of this, the almost complete absence of Shīʿīs in Palestine seems particularly unusual.

To date no monograph on Shīʿī history in the region of Palestine has been published, although there are primary Arab sources, medieval as well as modern, that shed light on this important issue. In this study, I focus on three main goals: reconstructing medieval Shīʿī life in Palestine, explaining the disappearance of the Shīʿīs from this specific region, and ultimately, describing Shīʿī history in Palestine from the Ottoman period to the present. In the last part, I include current Shīʿī groups that have emerged in recent years in northern Israel, and those that are active in the Gaza Strip, in an effort to explain the circumstances of their advent and the difficulties that they face.

In dealing with the medieval period, I draw on several Arabic genres that mention Shīʿīs in Palestine: *taʾrīkh* (history), *riḥla* (works of travelers and geographers), and works of religious scholars in diverse fields, such as *ḥadīth* (traditions), *nasab* (genealogy), *faḍāʾil* (merit, or praise, usually of towns), and *firaq* (sects in Islam). Late medieval sources from the Mamlūk and Ottoman periods include Sunnī and Shīʿī historians, travelers, and geographers who described the region of Palestine or traveled in Palestine.

Although sources on Shīʿī history in Palestine do exist, researchers encounter some difficulties in relation to sources dealing with the medieval period. This is due to the fact that the period of Shīʿī rule in greater Syria, including Palestine, was limited to approximately two centuries (that is, the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries), which was then followed by a long period of Sunnī dominance in this territory. While Shīʿī sources are abundantly available for Iraq, in greater Syria most of the Shīʿī chronicles and history books have been lost, censored, or destroyed by the Sunnī authorities that ruled Palestine from the sixth/twelfth century on. In a recent article, Carole Hillenbrand

deals with the phenomenon of lost Syrian Shīʿī chronicles, such as that of the seventh-/thirteenth-century Aleppan historian Ibn Abī Ṭayy.¹ Apparently, the most important medieval Shīʿī sources covering Palestine that have survived to the present, were preserved by the neighboring Imāmī scholars of Jabal ʿĀmil (southern Lebanon) and copied by their colleagues in Najaf (Iraq). This seems to be the case of the jurist Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Karājukī's anthology, *Kanz al-fawā'id* and that of the genealogist ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿUmarī's *al-Majdī fī ansāb al-ṭālibiyyīn*. Both scholars passed through Palestine during the fifth/eleventh century. It would seem that their works have subsisted because they were not history books; thus, they survived Sunnī censorship. These sources contain few, but valuable historical details from the periods of their composition. The fall of the Fāṭimid Empire and the persecution of Shīʿīs by the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks had the same results in Egypt and in Syria, where some historical works were destroyed. It is reasonable to assume that lost Fāṭimid sources could shed light on the Shīʿī history of Palestine. Paul E. Walker states that most of the available sources on the Fāṭimid period are problematic because they were collected and preserved by later Sunnī historians, such as Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), and al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442). In most cases, with the exception of al-Maqrīzī's *Ittiʿāz al-ḥunafāʾ* that focuses on the Fāṭimids, these later historians wrote universal history books. In addition, most of these Sunnī historians were hostile to the Shīʿīs and to the Ismāʿīlī Fāṭimids in particular.² Nevertheless, these books still contain reliable information about the region of Palestine, which can be cross-checked with or confirmed by Shīʿī sources.

From the eleventh/seventeenth century onward, historians from southern Lebanon and Jabal ʿĀmil become relevant to this study, since they considered the Galilee a part of their territory.³ When covering the history of the Shīʿīs in Palestine during the first half of the twentieth century, I used the work of Lebanese historians, Palestinian *nakba* literature (describing the events of 1948), and Israeli archives. With regard to recent Shīʿī groups in Israel and Gaza,

1 Carole Hillenbrand, "The Shīʿīs of Aleppo in the Zengid Period: Some Unexploited Textual and Epigraphic Evidence," in *Differenz und Dynamik im Islam. Festschrift für Heinz Halm zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hinrich Biesterfeldt and Verena Klemm (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2012), 163–179.

2 Paul E. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 1–14, 152–169.

3 See, for example, Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Khīṭat Jabal ʿĀmil* (al-Dār al-ʿĀlamiyya li-l-Ṭibāʾa wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1983), 51–61. Muḥsin al-Amīn claimed that the Qarn river (in Hebrew: Kziv) in the upper Galilee was the exact border between Jabal ʿĀmil in the north and Palestine in the south, and that the Ḥūla Valley and Safed were not part of Jabal ʿĀmil.

the available research in this field is insufficient, and the subject is ongoing; for these reasons, I have included new Arabic materials that are available online.

When studying the issue of the Shī'īs in Palestine, it is important to define the geographic frame of the research.

Medieval and Modern Palestine

Before dealing with the Shī'ī history of Palestine, it is necessary to describe the territory that we have included, in order to avoid discrepancies, confusion, or anachronisms. In the Arab world, the territory that I deal with in this study is defined as Palestine (Filasṭīn). The same territory is defined by the state of Israel and the Jewish people as the 'Land of Israel' (Eretz Isra'el).⁴

Given the discrepancies between the definitions and partitions of the region of Palestine throughout the long period of Muslim rule (from the first/seventh century to the twenty-first century), it is important to define the geographic choices I have made.

a. The medieval period (first/seventh century to ninth/fifteenth centuries)

What is Palestine/Israel today was, for the most part, included in the two medieval districts of Jund Filasṭīn and the southern part of Jund al-Urdunn. Medieval Muslim geographers defined Jund Filasṭīn and Jund al-Urdunn as the two southern districts of the five districts (*jund*, pl. *ajnād*) of Bilād al-Shām (greater Syria). This Muslim partition of Palestine was inherited by the Muslim caliphate from the previous Byzantine partition of the diocese of the eastern province into Palaestina Prima and Palaestina Secunda, two military administrative territories.

The traditional Muslim division was briefly interrupted, when most of these two districts (*ajnād*), Filasṭīn and Urdunn, were temporarily united by the crusaders, under the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (493–583/1099–1187); these were divided again at the end of the sixth/twelfth century when they were returned to Muslim hands. Jund Filasṭīn, whose capital was Ramla, included most of what is known today as Judea and Samaria, or the West Bank, and the coast between Mount Carmel in the north to Gaza in the south (nowadays most of

4 For the borders of Palestine according to medieval geographers in previous studies, see, for example, Shukrī 'Arrāf, *Jundā Filasṭīn wa-l-Urdunn fī l-adab al-jūghrafī al-Islāmī* (Kafar Qana': Dār al-Shafaq, 1992). As to the Christian borders of the holy land, also defined as Canaan, and including Galilee, Samaria, and Judea based on the New Testament and the Jewish Bible, see Heinrich Bünting, *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae. Das ist, ein Reisebuch über die ganze heilige Schrift* (Magdeburg: Kirchner, 1585), esp. maps on 14–15.

Israel's Mediterranean Sea coast). Jund Filasṭīn included the desert of Judah as well.⁵

Jund al-Urdunn, whose capital was Tiberias, included Galilee, the region of Tyre in today's southern Lebanon and in some medieval maps also the territory that is the eastern part of the Kingdom of Jordan (Transjordan or the East Bank). Nevertheless, while medieval geographers included Galilee in Urdunn, the inclusion of Transjordan in this territory varied from time to time and from one geographer to another. Transjordan and the regions south of Lebanon (Jabal ʿĀmil excluding northern Galilee, and the regions of Jezzin and Tyre), which were never considered part of Muslim Palestine, remain outside the frame of this study.⁶ This medieval geographic framework corresponds roughly to the definition of Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveler from the sixth/twelfth century. He considered Acre “the beginning of Eretz Israel [Palestine] from [the] northwest is Qadesh in the region of Naftali [eastern Galilee] and its southern end is in Ashkelon, next to the edge of Egypt. They [the borders of Palestine] are limited between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.”⁷

b. The Ottoman period (tenth/sixteenth to twentieth centuries)

The region of Palestine discussed in this period includes the sanjaks of Safed, and Acre (i.e., Galilee excluding Jabal ʿĀmil), Nablus, Jerusalem, Gaza, located within the vilayet of Damascus; in the nineteenth century, these became the sanjaks of Acre, and the sanjak of Jerusalem, which was in the southern part of the vilayet of Beirut.

c. The modern period (twentieth century to the present)

Modern Palestine includes the British Mandate borders to the borders of the state of Israel, including the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Some changes to the Lebanese-Palestinian border took place during British-French negotiations in 1923; these were tremendously significant for the Shīʿī community.

Within the borders of the territory defined as Palestine, I deal only with towns and villages in which Shīʿīs dwelled or those which appear in Shīʿī sources. As an exception, I treat Gaza briefly because of its link to Hāshim, the great grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad and, in the modern period, because of the new Shīʿī presence in the Gaza Strip. The inclusion of the Golan Heights is another exception, since it was occupied by Israel and part of its population seems to originate from the region of Tiberias.

5 D. Sourdel, “Filasṭīn,” *EI*² (1991), 2:910.

6 P.M. Cobb, “al-Urdunn,” *EI*² (2000), 10:882–883.

7 M.N. Adler, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Critical Text, Translation and Commentary* (New York: Philip Feldman Inc., 1907), 21, 29, 30 (Hebrew text).

The following towns appear in this study by their English names; their Arabic names appear transliterated in the maps, from north to south:

Safed (Şafad); Acre (‘Akkā); Tiberias (Ṭabariyya);
 Nablus (Nāblūs); Ramla (al-Ramla);
 Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis/al-Quds);
 Hebron (al-Khalīl); Ashkelon (‘Asqilān), Gaza (Ghazza).

Shī‘ī villages in Galilee, which I discuss in this research, comprise the following (from west to east):

al-Baṣṣa; Tarbīkha (or Ṭirbīkha); Şaliḥa/Şalḥa; al-Mālkiyya; Qadas; al-Nabī Yūsha‘; Hūnīn; Ābil al-Qamḥ.

The Negev desert in the north and Eilat, which were part of the Byzantine Palaestina Tertia prior to the Muslim period, was not considered by medieval geographers as part of Filasṭīn. In addition, there was no Shī‘ī presence in this region during the period of Muslim history; thus, this region is not considered in this study.

Note that Shī‘ī and Sunnī sources share the same definition of the territory of Palestine. For example, in *Biḥār al-anwār*, the prolific Shī‘ī scholar al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699) cites the Sunnī historian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) in the following geographic description:

Filasṭīn [Palestine]: The well-known territory between al-Urdunn [i.e., Galilee] and the land of Egypt and the mother [i.e., the most important] of its land is Jerusalem.⁸

Elsewhere in the same book, al-Majlisī provides the following description:

... and Gaza, Ashkelon, Caesaria, Ramla, and Jerusalem are all [part] from the land of Palestine....⁹

8 Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Wafā‘, 1983), 15:260; 44:87. al-Majlisī also refers to the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as Filasṭīn. See, for example, *ibid.*, 12:279; 13:178. In Sunnī and Shī‘ī commentaries, the holy land promised to the people of Moses in the Qur‘ān (5:21) is called Filasṭīn. See *ibid.*, 13:198–199.

9 *Ibid.*, 57:134.

From Immigration to the Golden Age

1 The First Shī'īs in Palestine

The main difficulty in dealing with the oldest sources on Shī'īs in Palestine is the shortage of information prior to the fifth/eleventh century; this is probably because the community was too small to occupy historians and geographers. Shī'ī historiography describes the journey of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 32/652), one of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's most dedicated supporters, to the region of al-Shām (greater Syria). While Abū Dharr's presence in Syria and Lebanon is mentioned by several medieval sources, the account of his journey to Palestine is more legendary than historical.¹

The oldest information concerning Shī'īs in Palestine dates from the Umayyad period, though it remains vague and lacks details. These references appear in Arabic Shī'ī sources dealing with a "convoy from Palestine" that came to Iraq to consult the fifth Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir in the second/eighth century:

... From Wahb b. 'Abdallāh al-Qurashī: I heard [the Imām Ja'far] al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) peace be upon him, say: a convoy from Palestine came to [my father Muḥammad] al-Bāqir (d. 114/732), peace be upon him, and asked him about several matters. Then they asked him about the [chapter of] *al-ṣamad* [Qur'an, Surāt al-Ikhlāṣ (112)] ... It continues with the Imām's allegorical explanation to the verse²

The Shī'ī geographer Aḥmad al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897) left an important indication of a tribal Shī'ī settlement in Palestine during the ninth century. In his *Kitāb al-Buldān* [The Book of the Countries], al-Ya'qūbī mentions the Arab tribes settled in this district:

1 Al-Amīn al-Āmilī (1865–1952) describes the immigration of the 'Āmila tribe to southern Lebanon and northern Palestine: "If it is true that its people embraced Shī'ism in the period of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, the companion of the Prophet Muḥammad, as is described by the famous transmission from one transmitter to another and based on the existence of the mosques named after him, [then] its inhabitants are the earliest people to embrace Shī'ism; [they are] only preceded by the people of Medina." See Muḥsin al-Amīn al-Āmilī, *A'yān al-Shī'a* (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Inṣāf, 1960), 1:240.

2 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 25:285, 318.

And the population of Filastīn is a mixture of tribes, from Lakhm, Judhām, ʿĀmila, Kinda, Qays, and Kināna.³

From his list, the ʿĀmila tribe is clearly identified with the Shīʿīs (today they are settled in Lebanon, on Jabal ʿĀmil). Elsewhere, al-Yaʿqūbī provides a more specific location:

From the district of Damascus [there is] the Galilee mountain and its population is from ʿĀmila.⁴

In sum, by the third/ninth century a Shīʿī tribe had settled in Palestine, mainly in Galilee.

1.1 *The Murder of al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī's Descendant in Tiberias*

Shīʿīs are first mentioned in detail in Palestine in a description of a respected Shīʿī family in Tiberias, the capital of Jund al-Urdunn, at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. The history of Shīʿīs in Palestine begins with injustice, a murder, and the confiscation of their lands. These Shīʿīs, who lived in Tiberias, were descendants of al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī, who had died with Ḥusayn in the battle of Karbalāʾ (61/680). The most respectable and wealthy person of that family in Tiberias was Abū al-Ṭayyib Muḥammad b. Ḥamza, who was murdered by Ṭughj b. Juff al-Farghānī, father of the Sunnī founder of the Ikhshidid dynasty in the year 271/884 (or in 291/903). Ṭughj accused Abū l-Ṭayyib of backing the rebellious Qarmaṭīs, a violent Shīʿī Ismāʿīlī sect that tried to invade Palestine. Nevertheless, the real purpose of Abū l-Ṭayyib's murder was probably to take over the family's lands and property:⁵

3 Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1988), 88. The actual Jabal ʿĀmil, the center of Shīʿism in southern Lebanon, is probably named after the ʿĀmila Arab tribe that emigrated from Yemen.

4 *Ibid.*, 90.

5 al-Amin al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, 44:294. I do not share Gil's assumption that Abū l-Ṭayyib indeed collaborated with the Qarmaṭīs, as this is only claimed by hostile Sunnī sources, see, for example, the Sunnī genealogist ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Andalūsī, *Jamharat ansāb al-ʿArab* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, [n.d.]), 67. Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 313. The true motives of the Ikhshidids is evident in Ibn Zūlāq's biography of Muḥammad b. Ṭughj. According to Ibn Zūlāq's description, it was Muḥammad Ikhshid, the son of Ṭughj, who murdered Abū al-Ṭayyib called "the Shīʿī." His goal was to remove this respectable Shīʿī man with noble lineage, who became an obstacle to his rule in Tiberias, when his father Ṭughj ruled in Damascus. See Iḥsān ʿAbbās, *Shadharāt min kutub mafqūda fi l-taʾrīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988), 226.

Abū l-Ṭayyib Muḥammad b. Ḥamza b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-‘Abbās b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Abbās, son of the commander of the believers ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be on them both [‘Alī and his son, the martyr], whose mother was Zaynab, daughter of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī al-Kirām al-Ja‘farī, was in Tiberias. He was one of the most perfect people in terms of manhood, honor, generosity, devotion to family, and good deeds. He had much grace and was greatly respected. He purchased land in the main city of Urdunn, which is Tiberias and its suburbs and accumulated goods. Then Ṭughj b. Juff al-Farḡhānī envied him and sent warriors to him in secret; they killed him in one of his gardens in Tiberias in Ṣafar [the second month in the *hijrī* calendar] of the year 271 [/884].⁶

The Shī‘ī genealogist Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Alī l-Ḥasanī (d. 828/1425) added important information concerning Abū l-Ṭayyib, after providing the same report: “The poets mourned him, and he had descendants in Tiberias who were called Banū l-Shahīd (the children of the martyr).”⁷

As I note below, some later geographers report seeing a tomb attributed to ‘Ubaydallāh b. al-‘Abbās b. ‘Alī, another member of this Shī‘ī family in Tiberias. This is further confirmation that the descendants of al-‘Abbās b. ‘Alī remained in Tiberias after the assassination of Muḥammad b. Ḥamza.⁸ The simplicity of the murder of such a respected representative of the ‘Alid family demonstrates the weakness of this isolated and defenseless Shī‘ī minority in Palestine under the Sunnī ‘Abbāsīd and Ikhshīdīd rule. This example in Tiberias is the only case in which Shī‘īs gained territories by purchasing land, rather than by immigration or settlement.

Another town that attracted Shī‘ī scholars and respected members of the *ahl al-bayt* (People of the House) was Ramla, the capital of Jund Filasṭīn. As a prominent religious and cultural center, Ramla is sometimes called (in Shī‘ī sources) al-Ramla al-Bayḏā’ (‘the white land covered with sand’); this was contrasted with Kūfa in Iraq, one of the holiest Shī‘ī towns and ‘Alī’s capital

6 ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-‘Umarī, *al-Majdī fī ansāb al-Ṭālibīyyīn* (Qumm: Setareh, 2002), 444.

7 al-Ḥasanī provides a later date for Abū l-Ṭayyib’s death, that is, 291/903, see Aḥmad b. ‘Alī l-Ḥasanī, *‘Umdat al-ṭālib fī ansāb āl Abī Ṭālib* (Najaf: al-Maṭba‘a al-Ḥaydariyya, 1961), 359–360.

8 See, for example, Shihāb al-Dīn Abī ‘Abdallāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muḥjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1990), 4:19; Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-ishārāt ilā ma‘rifat al-ziyārāt* (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘a al-Kāthulikiyya/Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1953), 19. The tomb of ‘Ubaydallāh b. al-‘Abbās still appears in modern papers on the *waqf* dealing with Tiberias, see Adnan Melhem, “Sukina Bint El-Hussein’s Tombstone in Tiberius (358H./968A.D.–1368H/1948A.D.) A Historical Documentary Study,” *An-Najah University Journal for Research* 22, no. 6 (2008), 1709–50 (in Arabic), 1711, and n. 3.

during his caliphate. Kūfa was called al-Ramla al-Ḥamrā' ('the red land covered with sand').⁹ In medieval sources there are indications that as early as the third/ninth century scholars emigrated between the two Ramlas, from Iraq to Palestine. One of these emigrants was the Kūfan scholar Yaḥyā b. ʿĪsā l-Tamīmī al-Nahshalī al-Fakhūrī (d. 202/817), who was accused of *tashayyu'* (Shīʿi tendencies or efforts to spread Shīʿism). He is mentioned among the earliest Shīʿis to settle in Ramla, Palestine.¹⁰ It seems that Shīʿi emigration to this region intensified in the fourth/tenth century, since sources mention the names of famous Iraqi scholars in Palestine during this century. For example, the respected Persian Shīʿi scholar and poet Abū l-Faṭḥ Maḥmūd b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 350/961 or 360/970), called Kushājim, found a patron in the Ḥamdānid dynasty in northern Syria and lived part of his life in Ramla, hence his epithet, al-Ramli.¹¹ The main reason for this increasing immigration seems to be the capture of Palestine by a new Shīʿi dynasty, which could provide protection to the community.

2 Palestine under Shīʿi Rule

From the beginning of Muslim rule in the first/seventh century, the region that is now defined as Palestine was dominated by Sunnī dynasties: direct ʿAbbāsīd rule (133–274/750–877), the Ṭulūnids (from 265/878), and then the Ikhshīdids (from 324/935). Following the conquest of the region in 360/970 by the Fāṭimid Caliphate, the situation changed dramatically. The Fāṭimids ruled in Palestine, with some interruptions, from the fourth/tenth to the end of the fifth/eleventh century and in Ashkelon as well, during most of the sixth/twelfth century. Although the new rulers were Ismāʿīlīs, they encouraged Imāmī (also called: Twelver, which

9 Muḥammad Murtaḍā l-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs fī jawharat al-qāmūs* (Kuwait: Maṭbaʿat Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 1972), 24:340.

10 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 2001), 10:242; Safwat ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Maḥmūd, *al-Mughnī fī maʿrifat rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥayn* (Amman: Dār ʿAmmār, 1987), 270.

11 Abū l-Faṭḥ Maḥmūd b. al-Ḥusayn was the poet of Sayf al-Dawla the Ḥamdānī Shīʿi ruler of Aleppo and that of his father before him. The nickname Kushājim (or Kishājim) is an acronym of his many talents: K for *kitāba* (writing), sh for *shīʿr* (poetry), alif for *inshāʾ* (composition and styling), j for *jadal* (debate), and m for *mantiq* (logic) or *munajjim* (astrologer). For his biography, see P.F. Kennedy, "Kushājim," in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 2:458. According to this entry, Kushājim was born in Ramla, but this is not supported by Shīʿi sources. See al-Amīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, 47:166. Concerning his *dīwān* and other compositions, see Aghā Buzurg al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-Shīʿa* (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 1975), pt. 3, 9:911.

are today mainstream Shī'ī) and Bāṭinī (esoteric Ismā'īlī Shī'īs) religious and cultural activities in the region under their rule, including Palestine.

In the year 359/969, the Fāṭimids, who had already established their rule over North Africa, conquered Egypt; the following year they began to invade Palestine. They continued north to al-Shām and even succeeded in capturing Damascus in 360/970. This accomplishment encouraged the Fāṭimid leaders to continue their advance to Baghdad, the seat of the Sunnī caliph. But in the fifth/eleventh century, Fāṭimid troops were drawn back to Palestine by several rivals: local Sunnī Bedouin tribes, rival Shī'ī dynasties, and later by Seljuk and Turcoman troops who were loyal to the caliph in Baghdad. In some cases, border agreements were reached by negotiation, rather than in battle, as in the case of Fāṭimid relations with the neighboring Shī'ī power in northern Syria, that is, the Ḥamdānids of Aleppo. During the golden era of the Fāṭimid Caliphate at the end of fourth/tenth century, it ruled over North Africa, greater Syria, and the western Arabian Peninsula. Their caliphate included Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, the three holiest sites in Islam.¹²

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maqdisī (d. 381/991), a Sunnī geographer, confirmed the Shī'ī emigration to Palestine and complained about the demographic situation in the region:

... From Palestine¹³ [northward] to Tiberias, you will not find any Majūs [Zoroastrians] and Sabians¹⁴ [another heterodox group]. All their beliefs are righteous, people of consensus and Sunna, but the people of Tiberias and half of Nablus and Qadas and the majority of Amman are Shī'īs.¹⁵

Al-Maqdisī complains that during the Ikhshīdid period (until 358/968) the region of Tiberias belonged to Sunnis of the Shāfi'ī school, but in his period, he concludes:

Today the majority of this province follows the Fāṭimid school.¹⁶

12 Gil, *History of Palestine*, 336–357. The name of the fourth Fāṭimid caliph al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh was mentioned in the *khuṭba* (sermon) in Mecca and Medina during the *hajj* of 363/973, confirming his rule in this territory. See 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1982), 8:647.

13 Al-Maqdisī's use of Palestine to refer to this place may indicate that he meant Ramla, which was the capital of Jund Filastīn.

14 T. Fahd "Sabi'a," *EI*² (1993), 8:675–678.

15 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rīfat al-aqālīm* (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 179.

16 *Ibid.*, 180.

Al-Maqdisī also describes what he considered the bleak situation among the Sunnī scholars of Jerusalem:

It [Jerusalem] has few religious scholars and many Christians ... and the jurists are abandoned, the men of letters are not noticed; there is no assembly for debate or for teaching. The Christians and the Jews took over and the mosque is empty of groups and assemblies.¹⁷

Al-Maqdisī's description clearly reflects his frustration as a Sunnī scholar; the Shī'ī settlement and Ismā'īlī propaganda in Palestine, which in his time were encouraged by the regime, led him to protest the Sunnī crisis and the situation in his hometown of Jerusalem in particular.

2.1 *The Rebellion of the 'Alid Sharīf of Mecca in Ramla*

During the Fāṭimid period, Ramla became the center of Shī'ī cultural and religious activity, but also a center of violent Shī'ī rebels in Palestine. In the year 386/996, several historians reported a messianic Shī'ī rebellion headed by the 'Alid *sharīf* of Mecca, Abū l-Futūḥ Ḥasan b. Ja'far al-'Alawī, a descendant of Ḥasan b. 'Alī. He rebelled against the Fāṭimid rulers, proclaimed the title of caliph and named himself al-Rāshid bi-Llāh (lit., 'the righteous by [the help of] God). The rebel Abū l-Futūḥ claimed that he possessed the two famous swords, *al-qaḍīb* (the sword of the Prophet Muḥammad) and *dhū l-fiqār* (the sword of 'Alī). He came to Palestine with his uncles and chose Ramla as his headquarters, from which to take over all of Syria. Abū l-Futūḥ's ambitious plan was to appoint his uncles as governors of his future caliphate. Abū l-Futūḥ was backed, temporarily, by the local Banū l-Jarrāḥ, Sunnī Bedouins in Palestine who hoped to be rid of Fāṭimid rule.¹⁸

The Banū l-Jarrāḥ were not Shī'īs. Thus, their loyalty to the 'Alid rebel was based on economic and political opportunism. However, there seems to have been a potentially loyal Shī'ī community in Ramla. Indeed, Abū l-Futūḥ had followers there, who admired him and even gave him the title *amīr al-mu'minīn* ('commander of the faithful'). Nevertheless, Abū l-Futūḥ's rebellion lasted less than a year. The Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (d. 411/1021) eventually

17 Ibid., 167.

18 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Alī b. al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-umam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), 14:357.

succeeded in drawing him back to Mecca without a fight by paying his allies to buy their loyalty:¹⁹

In this year Abū l-Futūḥ Ḥasan b. Jaʿfar al-ʿAlawī the *amīr* of Mecca appeared and claimed that he is a caliph; he called himself al-Rāshid bi-Llāh. The people of Mecca supported him, and he received money from a man who left it to him as an inheritance. With it, he strengthened his position. He wore a sword on his belt that he claimed was the *dhū l-fiqār* and he took in his hands the *al-qaḍīb*, a sword that he claimed had belonged to the messenger of God [the Prophet Muḥammad]. Then he headed to the land of Ramla in order to gain the support of the Bedouins of Syria; they welcomed him and kissed the ground on which he stood, and greeted him as the “Commander of the Faithful.” He openly established enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and the performance of the set punishments. Then, al-Ḥākīm, ruler of Egypt, who ruled after his father al-ʿAzīz, sent words of conciliation to the Bedouins of Syria and swore to provide them hundreds and thousands in gold. He did the same with the Bedouins of the Hijaz where he appointed a governor as his representator in Mecca and sent him fifty thousand dinars. The position of al-Ḥākīm was settled, while the situation of al-Rāshid felt apart; he withdrew to his country the same way he came and returned to it as he had left it. He vanished, his camp dispersed, and his people left him.²⁰

While Shīʿism developed in Tiberias, Ramla, and Acre under Fāṭimid domination, Sunnī scholars in Palestine continued to focus their religious activity on Jerusalem, which remained mainly a Sunnī religious center.

2.2 *Anti-Shīʿī “Merits of Jerusalem”*

During the Fāṭimid period, Sunnī scholars dealt with what they considered a very difficult situation, namely, the Shīʿī domination of Palestine; this circumstance was completely new to them. Shīʿī control of one of the holiest sites of Islam produced a Sunnī theological reaction. It is in this light, under Fāṭimid

19 Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar b. Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya fī l-tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1988), 11:354; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar wa-dīwān al-mubtadaʾ wa-l-khabar fī ayyam al-ʿarab wa-l-ʿajam wa-l-barbar wa-man ʿāsharahum min dhawī al-sulṭan al-akbar* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Miṣriyya, 1867), 4:101–102.

20 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 11:354. The date noted in this source, 381/991, is a mistake, since according to it, the events took place in the first year of al-Ḥākīm’s caliphate, that is, 386/996. Gil dates this event later in the year 403/1012. See Gil, *History of Palestine*, 382–383.

rule that the earliest compositions in the genre of *faḍā'il bayt al-maqdis* (The Merits of Jerusalem) were written. Two Sunnī scholars of the fifth/eleventh century, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī and al-Musharraf b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī²¹ were the pioneers of this genre. Although studies in this field propose that the original motive behind its composition was to propagate *jihād* (religiously sanctioned war) to liberate Jerusalem from Christian rule, it should be noted that Jerusalem was captured by the crusaders later, in 493/1099.²² Hence, this thesis can be justified only for later *faḍā'il* books, those composed during the crusades after the fifth/eleventh century.

The need for local Sunnī scholars to collect traditions in praise of Jerusalem specifically in this period indicates a crisis among the Sunnī majority in Palestine, who were threatened by Fāṭimid rule, open Shī'ī propaganda, and the increase in Shī'ī immigration to Palestine. Indeed, anti-Shī'ī polemics can be found in the early *faḍā'il* books. For example, al-Wāsiṭī's book contains a *ḥadīth*, which could be identified as a Shī'ī tradition, that also belongs to the *Faḍā'il al-Kūfa*²³ (The merits of Kūfa, 'Alī's capital in Iraq and the place of his tomb):

'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may God be pleased with him, said, "The earth was [covered] with water, then God sent the wind which scoured the ground. Then butter appeared on the ground, then He [God] divided it into four pieces. He created Mecca from one piece, Medina from the second, Jerusalem from the third, and Kūfa from the fourth."²⁴

It is not surprising to find this tradition in the first pages of al-Wāsiṭī's book. The author chose to cite this particular tradition there because it proves the superiority of Jerusalem over Kūfa, one of the holiest cities for Shī'īs, based

21 See Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979); al-Musharraf b. al-Murajjā l-Maqdisī, *Faḍā'il bayt al-Maqdis wa-l-Khalil wa-faḍā'il al-Shām* (Shfaram, Israel: Dār al-Māshriq li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 1995).

22 Concerning the *faḍā'il* of Jerusalem, see "Ofer Livne-Kafri, "Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis (The Merits of Jerusalem): Two Additional Notes," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 19 (2001), 61–70; Isaac Hasson, "Muslim Literature in Praise of Jerusalem: Fadail Bayt al-Maqdis," *The Jerusalem Cathedra* (1981), 168–184; Emanuel Sivan, "The Beginnings of the Faḍā'il al-Quds Literature," *Oriental Studies* 1 (1971), 263–272.

23 Concerning this genre, see Yaron Friedman, "'Kūfa is Better': The Sanctity of Kūfa in Early Islam and Shī'ism in Particular," *Le Museon* 126, nos. 1–2 (2013), 203–237.

24 al-Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*, 8 and see Hasson's ("Muslim Literature," n. 5) concerning this tradition in other sources. The source of this tradition may have originated from Hinduism, where the primal being (Purusha) became butter that created all the human and divine beings in the world, see the ancient Indian epic narrative, the Mahābhārata, book 1, section 77.

on their order of importance. As a typical tactic of polemics, this tradition is put in the mouth of ‘Alī himself. The tradition also appears at the beginning of al-Maḡdisī’s book on the merits of Jerusalem.²⁵ By contrast, Shī‘ī medieval literature presents several traditions on the importance of Kūfa (and its suburbs of al-Najaf) where the tomb of ‘Alī is situated, as superseding the importance of Jerusalem.²⁶

2.3 *Fāṭimid Investments in Jerusalem*

The Sunnī *faḍā’il* literature was also a reaction to Fāṭimid investments in Jerusalem; these investments were part of Fāṭimid efforts to transform Jerusalem into an attractive site for all Muslim pilgrims. This endeavor, which probably also threatened Sunnī religious dominance in Jerusalem, was based on these religious and economic interests. During the fifth/eleventh century, the Fāṭimids invested in massive reconstruction projects and in the restoration of the holy sites in Palestine, which had been damaged by earthquakes and wars in Palestine, including Jerusalem.²⁷

One of the most important reconstruction projects took place in the *ḥaram* (sanctuary) of Jerusalem, the site of al-Aqṣā Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, during the reign of the caliph al-Zāhir, who ruled between the years 412/1021 and 428/1036. According to Grabar, these renovations were aimed at legitimating Fāṭimid authority in the eyes of the entire Muslim world.²⁸ Most historians accept that it was the caliph al-Zāhir who reconstructed al-Aqṣā Mosque after its destruction in the 425/1033 earthquake that hit the region of Palestine.²⁹

Understanding the religious and economic importance of this region, the Fāṭimids transformed Palestine into an important station on the pilgrimage

25 al-Maḡdisī, *Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maḡdis*, 11. The editor, O. Livne-Kafri, notes that the transmitter of this tradition, Abū ‘Umar al-Shaybānī is a first-/seventh-century Shī‘ī scholar from Kūfa. See *ibid.*, 11, n. 5. Al-Maḡdisī cites other traditions that clearly indicate the superiority of Jerusalem over Kufa. In a *ḥadīth* cited at the beginning of the book, Salmān al-Fārisī, ‘Alī’s loyal companion, hearing the Prophet Muḥammad saying that the first mosque built on earth was the Ka’ba and after forty years al-Aqṣā was erected and Kūfa is not mentioned at all. See *ibid.*, 8. In another place in his *Faḍā’il*, a Muslim considered the best the *tābī‘ūn* (followers of the Companions of the Prophet) from Kūfa (a place known as the center of Alid followers) asks the permission of the caliph ‘Umar to pray in al-Aqṣā following the *ḥajj*. See *ibid.*, 178.

26 Friedman, “Kūfa is Better,” 221–217.

27 Yaacov Lev, *State and Society in Fāṭimid Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 50–53.

28 Oleg Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 149–156. Grabar claims that the Fāṭimids invested in Jerusalem, because they failed to maintain their control in Mecca and Medina in the fifth/eleventh century. See *ibid.*, 162.

29 Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 43. See also his references in this page notes 91, 92 and 93.

(*hajj*) to Mecca. This policy had economic interests, but also religious implications. This can be clearly demonstrated in relation to the huge pilgrim caravan from Khurāsān (Iran) that visited Jerusalem on its return from the *hajj* in 414/1023. The Sunnī historian and scribe (*kātib*) al-Musabbihī (d. 422/1030) described this event and added his impression regarding its implications for the image of the Fāṭimids:

... And the people of the Syrian towns gained from them money and all of them [the pilgrims from Khurāsān] were satisfied by seeing Jerusalem and from their pilgrimage to it. What was known about the heresy and corrupted religion of the people of this blessed [Fāṭimid] dynasty disappeared and the people [from Khurāsān] returned to their lands thankful and with appreciation....³⁰

These massive Fāṭimid investments in Palestine were also recorded in Nāṣir Khusraw's Persian book of travel, the *Safar-name*.

2.4 *Nāṣir Khusraw's Travel to Palestine*

The travel of the Persian Ismā'īlī Nāṣir Khusraw from Balkh to Palestine, on his way to Mecca for the *hajj*, is one of the most important sources for the study of the history of Fāṭimid Palestine. Khusraw's travel account begins with his description of the north, of the town of Tiberias. According to his description, the town was dominated by Shī'īs, to the point that it became impossible to visit the shrine of Abū Hurayra (a Companion and learned traditionalist from the first/seventh century cited in Sunnī sources) without being stoned by the crowd.³¹

... And the tomb of Abū Hurayra is there [in Tiberias] outside the city toward the south [the *qibla*, i.e., the direction of the prayer]. But no one can go there for the *ziyāra* [pilgrimage] since the people there are Shī'īs. Hence anyone who goes there for the purpose of *ziyāra*, children come [to make an] uproar, to attack that person, to annoy him, and pelt him with stones. For this reason, I could not visit there ...³²

30 Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh al-Musabbihī, *Akhbār Miṣr fī sanatayn (414–415)* (Cairo: al-Hay'a l-Miṣriyya l-'Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1980), 43. According to al-Musabbihī, 200,000 pilgrims riding 60,000 she-camels passed through Palestine. Note that, in this period, Iran's population was mostly Sunnī; its massive embrace of Shī'ism only began after the rise of the Ṣafavid dynasty the tenth/sixteenth century.

31 Nāṣir Khusraw Qubādiyānī, *Safar name* (Tehran: Zavvār, 1961), 30–31.

32 See text (in Persian), *ibid.*

When he arrived in Jerusalem in 438/1047, he was impressed by the Fāṭimid constructions at the holy sites, mainly in al-Aqṣā Mosque, which he explained was the site of the *isrāʾ* (the night journey of the Prophet Muḥammad) and the Dome of the Rock, which was “the *qibla* (direction of the prayer) of Moses” and also the site of Solomon’s temple. Khusraw noted that the name of the Fāṭimid ruler was engraved on several monuments in the town.³³ The same description was given by al-Harawī, a Sunnī traveler from the thirteenth/seventeenth century, who noted that on the roof of al-Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem he read the name of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ẓāhir (d. 428/1036), who had ordered his vizier to renovate its golden dome, a project that was completed in 426/1034.³⁴ Khusraw was also impressed by the Fāṭimids’ investment in the tomb of Abraham in Hebron, which was his next stop.³⁵

Interestingly, in most sites, with the exception of Tiberias, Khusraw did not mention any hostility between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, or toward himself as an Ismāʿīlī; this gives the impression that the Fāṭimids maintained a liberal atmosphere.

We must note an interesting point concerning Khusraw’s book. He makes the extraordinary statement that those who cannot reach Mecca can perform the obligatory pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Jerusalem.³⁶ This is the only account that indicates that the Fāṭimids may have intended to make Jerusalem an alternative site for the pilgrimage.

Khusraw’s description, which is based on his short experience, does not provide sufficient evidence of a significant Shīʿī presence in Palestine. However, Shīʿī scholars who settled in the region give us a better indication of the settlement of Shīʿī communities there during the fifth/eleventh century. The most famous of these Shīʿī scholars was al-Karājukī.

2.5 *Shaykh al-Karājukī in Ramla*

The jurist Abū l-Fatḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-Karājukī (d. 449/1057),³⁷ a student of the well-known prolific Iraqi scholar Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Shaykh

33 Ibid., 34, 50–51.

34 al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-ishārāt*, 25–26.

35 Ibid., 58–59.

36 Ibid., 34.

37 Concerning al-Karājukī’s biography and his theological contribution, see Devin J. Stewart, “An Eleventh-Century Justification of the Authority of Twelver Shiite Jurists,” in Q. Asad, Behnam Sadeghi, Robert G. Hoyland, Adam Silverstein (eds.), *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 477–486. With regard to his nickname al-Karājukī, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī states that Karājuk is a village near Wāsiṭ in Iraq (see Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 4:503). For al-Karājukī’s teachers

al-Mufid (d. 413/1022) was the most prominent medieval Imāmī Shī'ī figure who lived in Palestine. Al-Karājukī traveled from Iraq to Egypt and then settled in Ramla. His biography describes him as a charismatic figure and an expert in linguistics, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy. His travels in Palestine also included Tiberias, where he stayed for a short period.³⁸

The main source for al-Karājukī's years in Palestine is his own book on theology, the *Kanz al-fawā'id*, which contains traditions transmitted in Ramla between the years 410/1019 and 416/1025; this seems to be the period of his activity in Palestine. His book reflects Imāmī theological polemics with other groups in the region of Syria, mainly Ismā'īlīs, Sunnīs, Jews, and Christians.³⁹ In this book, he writes about his travels between Baghdad and Mecca, and his time in Palestine, mainly in Tiberias and Ramla, which are mentioned several times. From the traditions he transmitted in Palestine, we learn about other lesser-known Shī'ī scholars who lived in the region.

At the beginning of his *Kanz al-fawā'id*, al-Karājukī described his meeting in Ramla with a Persian called Abū Sa'īd al-Bardha'ī, whose identity is unknown. The latter disagreed with him and supported the views of the "heretics" concerning the question of the creator's precedence to the creation. After listening to al-Bardha'ī's doubts concerning this issue, al-Karājukī wrote to consult al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044). The latter provided him an answer, which he cited in the book.⁴⁰ Al-Murtaḍā was also a student of Shaykh al-Mufid.

The second scholar that al-Karājukī met in Palestine was Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. 'Uthmān b. Ḥimās (or Ḥammās). During their encounter, al-Karājukī transmitted traditions from Sunnī scholars (as in other places in his book) to support his thesis. He referred to these scholars as *al-āmma* (the

and books, see Aghā Buzurg al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Nābis fī l-qarn al-khāmis* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1971), 177–179.

38 al-Amīn al-'Āmilī, *A'yān al-Shī'a*, 46:160.

39 In several places, al-Karājukī also addresses what he considers the heretical views of theological streams as the Mu'tazila and their opponent Mujabbira. See Muḥammad b. 'Alī l-Karājukī, *Kanz al-fawā'id* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā', 1985), 1:44, 103, 111. al-Karājukī also examined Jewish and Christian beliefs, see *ibid.*, 204–205, 225–227, 232, 235 as well as Zaydī and Ismā'īlī views, and stressed that there is one true Shī'ī belief in twelve infallible (*ma'ṣūmūn*) Imāms.; he attacked the *ghulāt* (extremists) veneration of the Imāms when he says that they were human beings. See *ibid.*, 245–246.

40 al-Karājukī, *Kanz al-fawā'id*, 1:42–43. Shaykh 'Abdallāh Ni'ma, who commented on the book and claimed (42 n. 1) that this Bardha'ī may be the same Bardha'ī attacked by Ḥamza b. 'Alī (the founder of the Druze religion), seems wrong. The person cursed in Ḥamza's epistles (see below) 16 and 19 is called Abū Maṣṣūr and the one that al-Karājukī met was Abū Sa'īd. See Daniel de Smet, *Les Épitres sacrées des Druzes Rasa'il al-Hikma*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 1:619, 641. In addition, Bardha'ī's views do not fit Ismā'īlī or Druze beliefs.

masses, or ordinary people). For example, in a tradition he took from Sunnī sources, the angel Gabriel tells the Prophet Muḥammad that the Muslim community will experience a *fitna* (a religious conflict), shortly after the Prophet's death. The *isnād* (chain of transmission) of this tradition is particularly interesting since it contains two locations in Palestine: 'Abdallāh b. 'Uthmān b. Ḥimās in Ramla > Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Maḥbūb > Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Quṭayba in Ashkelon.⁴¹

Another interesting encounter took place in Ramla when al-Karājukī met a *sharīf* (a descendent of the Prophet Muḥammad) called Abū Maṣṣūr Aḥmad b. Ḥamza al-Ḥusaynī l-'Uraydī and received from him a tradition concerning Abū Dharr's praise of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁴²

Al-Karājukī received some traditions in Ramla in the year 410/1019 from Asad b. Ibrāhīm b. Kulayb from Ḥarrān, a Shī'ī judge (*qāḍī*). This tradition, which dates to the end of the first/seventh century, concerns the story of a cruel governor of Iraq named Ziyād b. Abīhi who demanded that 'Alī be cursed in public.⁴³

Al-Karājukī also dedicated several books to the Fāṭimid commander (*amīr*) Ṣārim al-Dawla in Tiberias. These include two books on the *ḥajj*, a book entitled *al-Mansak al-'aḍbī* (The pilgrimage which is as sharp as a sword),⁴⁴ another

41 al-Karājukī, *Kanz al-fawā'id*, 1:145. See also al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 31:146. Another example for Sunnī sources is a tradition from 411/1020, that al-Karājukī received from Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Nawḥ b. Muḥammad al-Ḥanbalī l-Shāfi'ī in Ramla a tradition concerning the *mu'ammarrūn* (namely, people during his time who were believed to be old enough to see Imām 'Alī). al-Karājukī, *Kanz al-fawā'id*, 2:154.

42 al-Karājukī, *Kanz al-fawā'id*, 2:67. Although we do not have a lot of information about Aḥmad b. Ḥamza, it seems that he was a great scholar, since his biography mentions that he was a teacher of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Tūsī (d. 460/1067), one of the founders of Shī'ī jurisprudence. See al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Nābis fī l-qarn al-khāmīs*, 16, 177.

43 al-Karājukī, *Kanz al-fawā'id*, 1:146–147. Concerning Asad b. Ibrāhīm's biography, see al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Nābis fī l-qarn al-khāmīs*, 29, 177; al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān*, 2:88. The year of his death is unknown, it is only stated that it is after 400/1009. Al-Karājukī wrote that Asad b. Ibrāhīm transmitted traditions from the Sunnīs. He added to his name "may God have mercy upon him," which indicates that Asad b. Ibrāhīm was no longer alive when al-Karājukī wrote the book.

44 al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharī'a*, 23:22. Ṣārim al-Dawla 'Alī b. Ma'rūf was called *dhū l-faḍīlatayn* or *dhū l-fakhrayn* ("one with two honors") probably because he received two concubines from the Fāṭimid caliph; they were the mothers of his daughters. See Ḥamza b. Asad b. al-Qalānisī, *Ta'rikh Dimashq* (Damascus: Dār Ḥssān li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 1983), 127. A mosque named after him appears in one description of Ashqelon, see Aḥmad b. 'Alī l-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998), 3:354. According to the historian Ibn Khaldūn, Ṣārim al-Dawla was Badr al-Jamālī's governor in Ashkelon during the rule of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mustanshir (d. 487/1094). See 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Khaldūn, *Diwān al-mubtada' wa-l-khabar fī ta'rikh al-'Arab wa-l-barbar wa-man 'Asharahum min dhawī l-sha'n al-akbār* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 4:82.

entitled *al-Minhāj ilā maʿrifat manāsik al-ḥajj* (The method of knowing the duties of the pilgrimage); and two other books, one on the science of theology (*kalām*), *al-Majālis fī šināʿat al-kalām*, and one on asceticism (*zuhd*), *al-Zāhid* (The ascetic).⁴⁵

While in Ramla, al-Karājukī also wrote a book entitled *Mukhtaṣar al-bayān ʿan dalālat shahr Ramaḍān* (A summary of the clarification on the meaning of the month of Ramaḍān) dedicated to the chief judge (*qāḍī l-quḍāt*).⁴⁶ Al-Karājukī's relationships with official Fāṭimid judges is particularly interesting, since apparently most of the judges in Palestine at the time applied Ismāʿīlī *fiqh* based on the teachings of al-Qāḍī l-Nuʿmān (d. 363/974). Although, like Imāmī Shīʿī law, Ismāʿīlī jurisprudence was based mostly on the Qurʾān and the Sunna, it differed from Imāmī *fiqh* in some points, such as inheritance and marriage.⁴⁷

2.6 Medieval Shīʿī Scholars in Palestine

Several Shīʿī scholars in Palestine were not mentioned by al-Karājukī, but do appear in other Shīʿī literature. For example, a Shīʿī scholar named Taqī b. Najm Abū l-Ṣalāḥ from Aleppo, a pupil of al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, returned from his *ḥajj* to Mecca and arrived in Ramla, where he died in 446/1054.⁴⁸ A certain Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Qazwīnī appears in *Kitāb al-Amālī* as a scholar from Ramla.⁴⁹ In medieval Shīʿī literature, several scholars appearing in chains of transmission (*isnāds*) of Muslim traditions, or in descriptions of travelers and historians, are associated with towns in Palestine. These scholars use the epithet Ramlī, Ṭabarī, and rarely ʿAkkī and Ṣafadī. Their affiliation provides an additional indication that these Shīʿī scholars were mainly located in Palestine.

45 al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Nābis fī l-qarn al-khāmis*, 93. The books appear separately as follows: *al-Zāhid* is mentioned in al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, 12:12–13; *al-Majālis* in *ibid.*, 19:356; *al-Minhāj* in *ibid.*, 23:171.

46 al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, 20:185–186. In this book, al-Karājukī maintains an older numeric or calculation (*ʿadad*) system to establish precisely what time one should begin the fast; he later changed this, based on Shaykh al-Mufīd's decision to base the fast on moonsighting (*ruʿya*) to establish the beginning of each lunar month (the moonsighting system is similar to that used by the Sunnīs).

47 For a comparison between al-Qāḍī l-Nuʿmān's Ismāʿīlī law and Zaydī and Imāmī *fiqh*, see Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 167–172.

48 al-Amīn al-Āmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, 3:635.

49 Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-Amālī* (Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-Nuʿmān, 1965), 232. I disagree with Gil's claim (*History of Palestine*, 426) that al-Ṭūsī (*Kitāb al-Amālī*) refers to Muḥammad b. Zuhayr, a Shīʿī judge as being in the city of Eilat. This is an error in copying, the original word was Ubulla ابلة (in Iraq), not Ayla ايلة (in Palestine). This copying error is evident when the manuscript is compared with other sources, see for example, ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. ʿAsākīr, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 51:124.

2.6.1 Ramla

Appart from al-Karājukī's milieu, the most oft-repeated name is Abū 'Abdallāh Aḥmad b. 'Alī l-Ramlī. He seems to have specialized in traditions concerning the life of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁵⁰ Another religious scholar named 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Bandalījī (or Bandanījī), mentioned in Ramla, was considered an unreliable *ḥadīth* transmitter.⁵¹ The Shī'ī literature mentions other local scholars, sometimes without specifying their dates, such as Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ramlī, who appears in a chain of transmissions in several Imāmī traditions.⁵²

2.6.2 Tiberias and Acre

Although scholars from these towns are not mentioned in Shī'ī *isnāds*, the Shī'ī presence in Tiberias is well established, mainly from the accounts of Nāṣir Khusraw, al-Karājukī, and by the presence of Shī'ī sects and the account of Ibn al-'Arabī from the fifth/eleventh century (see below). Ibn al-'Arabī's description refers to a person he considered the most important Imāmī figure in Acre in his time, a certain Abū l-Faṭḥ al-'Akkī, though he is not mentioned in Shī'ī sources. The scarcity of the epithet 'Akkī in Shī'ī sources indicates that the presence of Shī'īs in Acre was probably much less significant than it was in Ramla and Tiberias.

2.6.3 Safed

We rarely find the epithet Ṣafadī to confirm affiliations to Safed; in fact, we have only a few sources from Shī'ī medieval scholars there. The most repeated names are Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṣafadī, who is described as a man of Yemeni origin who lived in Baghdad and Safed.⁵³ In addition, a certain Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣafadī appears in a Shī'ī *isnad* for one tradition, but we do not have any information concerning this scholar.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, since the information from these sources is weak and often lacks specific years, it is difficult to prove a Shī'ī presence in this town in the medieval period. The fact that the later geographer Yāqūt b. 'Abdallāh al-Rūmī l-Hamawī (d. 627/1229) included Safed in the territory of Jabal 'Āmil does not necessarily indicate that it was

50 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 37:273; 38:90; 39:174; 67:151. All the traditions he transmitted deal with the biography (*sīra*) of the Prophet Muḥammad.

51 'Ādil Ḥasan al-Asadī, *al-Ḍu'afā'min rijāl al-ḥadīth* (Qumm: Dār al-Ḥadīth li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 2005), 2:364–364.

52 Ḥusayn Taqī l-Nūrī al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il* (Qumm: Mu'assasat Ahl al-Bayt, 1987), 2:37.

53 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 4:267; 89:601. The tradition that he transmitted deals with curing effect of the Qur'ān.

54 *Ibid.*, 3:368.

seen as a city or region populated by Shī'īs in his time, only two centuries after the Fāṭimid era.⁵⁵

To sum up, in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, during the Fāṭimid rule, Shī'īs were attracted to the region of Palestine. Later, from the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, Palestine was a refuge for Shī'īs who were persecuted by Sunnī Seljuks and Turcomans, who captured Baghdad and Aleppo. Thus, it should come as no surprise to find medieval sources describing Imāmī scholars as well as Bāṭinis and Nuṣayrīs arguing and debating theology in Palestine under Fāṭimid rule.

During the Fāṭimid period, Palestine not only became a center of Shī'ī intellectual life, but it was also a place where some of the living representatives of the *ahl al-bayt*, or the close family of the Prophet Muḥammad, chose to settle. Due to their respectable *nasab*, they were honored by the title *sharīf* (pl. *ashrāf*) and respected by both Shī'īs and Sunnīs. The *ashrāf* who lived in Palestine were descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, and many of them were also *ṭālibiyyūn*, that is, direct offspring of the Shī'ī Imāms.⁵⁶

2.7 The Ṭālibiyyūn

The major sources for the descendents of the *ahl al-bayt* belong to genealogy (*nasab*) genre. Three works provide a clear picture of the *ṭālibiyyūn* in Palestine. Two are Sunnī scholars and one is an earlier Shī'ī scholar. The first is the famous Sunnī Persian scholar named Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1208), author of *al-Shajara al-mubāraka* (The blessed family tree), and the second is al-Rāzī's student, 'Azīz al-Dīn Abū Ṭālib Ismā'īl b. Ḥusayn al-Marwazī (d. after 614/1217), author of *al-Fakhrī fī ansāb al-ṭālibiyyīn* (The honorable in the *ṭālibī* genealogy).⁵⁷ Although both were Sunnī scholars, their books focused on the *ṭālibiyyūn*. Both genealogists cited the earlier Shī'ī genealogist Najm al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-'Umarī (d. 460/1067), author of *al-Majdī fī ansāb al-ṭālibiyyīn* (The praised-one in the genealogy of the *ṭālibīs*). This title is derived from the dedication of the book by al-'Umarī to the Būyid governor of Rayy, Abū Ṭālib Rustam Majd al-Dawla, son of Fakhr al-Dawla, who ruled Rayy

55 Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muḥjam al-buldān*, 3:412. Interestingly, Muḥsin al-Amīn did not include Safed in the Jabal 'Āmil district. See Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil* (al-Dār al-'Ālamīyya li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 1983), 67.

56 The Imāms of most of the Shī'ī sects are descendants of five people: Muḥammad, his cousin 'Alī, married to his daughter Fāṭima, and their two children Ḥasan and Ḥusayn; they are considered the *ahl al-bayt*. See Arendonk A. Tritton, "Ahl al-bayt," *EI*² (1986), 1:257–258.

57 Ismā'īl b. Ḥusayn al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī fī ansāb al-ṭālibiyyīn* (Qumm: Setareh, 1988); Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Shajara al-mubāraka* (Qumm: Setareh, 2001). See details in appendix 1.

between the years 387/997 and 420/1029.⁵⁸ Although his book was written in Persia, it reveals that al-ʿUmarī sojourned in Palestine and knew some of the *ṭālibiyyīn* personally.

It is noteworthy that these three sources do not mention any descendant of the Imāms in Safed, Nablus, Acre, or Ashkelon; they only refer to descendants in Jerusalem, Tiberias, and Ramla. These *nasab* books reveal that the members of the Imāms' family had a significant presence in Palestine, they included seven of the *ahl al-bayt*, six of whom were descendants of the twelve Imāms and one of Zayd b. ʿAlī (the fourth Imām followed by Zaydī Shīʿīs).

2.7.1 Imāmī Families

1. Descendants of ʿUmar, son of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (the first Imām), in Ramla and Tiberias.
2. Descendants of Ḥasan, son of the second Imām, Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, in Ramla. Another descendant of the latter's son, Ḥasan b. Ḥasan (the grandson of ʿAlī), was a butcher in Ramla (this is important information, as it indicates the existence of Shīʿīs as part of the everyday life in the town).
3. Descendants of ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī, the martyr (*shahīd*) of Karbalāʾ, who died together with his brother (the third Imām), Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī; they lived mostly in Tiberias, but also in Ramla. We already mentioned a member of this family who owned land in Tiberias in the third/ninth century.
4. Descendants of Ḥusayn al-Aṣghar, the son of the fourth Imām (ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿAbidīn), in Tiberias, Ramla, and Jerusalem. Al-ʿUmarī met some of these descendants in person.
5. Descendants of the sixth Imām, Jaʿfar al-Šādiq; they dwelled in Tiberias and Ramla.
6. Descendants of Hārūn, the son of the seventh Imām (Mūsā l-Kāzīm); they lived in Ramla and Jerusalem.

2.7.2 Zaydī Families

7. Descendants of Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn 'the martyr' (*al-shahīd*); they lived in Ramla and Jerusalem. Al-ʿUmarī had good relations with these descendants as well.

58 The editor of the book seems to have mistakenly connected this ruler to the Fāṭimids in Egypt, see al-ʿUmarī, *al-Majdī*, 38. Al-ʿUmarī (ibid., 184–185) clearly dedicates the book to Majd al-Dawla. The editor's error seems to derive from al-ʿUmarī's earlier description of his visit to Egypt during the reign of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mustanṣir bi-Llāh (d. 487/1094), see ibid., 183. Al-ʿUmarī was not the only Shīʿī genealogist who passed through Palestine. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-ʿUbaydalī was a lesser-known genealogist (and also a *ṭālibī* and an old *sharif* (d. 436/1044)) who lived in Baghdad and traveled to Tiberias, Damascus, and Cairo. See al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān*, 7:483–484.

The members of these families were *ashrāf* and other religious men and intellectuals who enjoyed special status and held honorable titles, such as *raʿīs* (head of the community), *qāḍī* (judge), *khaṭīb* (who delivered the sermon in the mosque).⁵⁹

In addition to the description of the *ṭālibīyyūn*, which reveal the presence of Imāmī and Zaydī Shīʿīs in Palestine, we have several sources on other Shīʿī sects in the same region.

2.8 *Shīʿī Sects in Palestine*

The protection of the Fāṭimids seemed to encourage the activity of Shīʿī sects in Palestine. Yet, the history of their advent in Palestine began a century earlier; given its distance from the ʿAbbāsīd authorities in Baghdad, it was a place of refuge for sects that were considered heretical or rebellious.

2.8.1 Ismāʿīlīs

The Ismāʿīlīs seem to be the earliest Shīʿī sect to emerge in Palestine after the arrival of the first Imāmī scholars. Halm reconstructed the secret Ismāʿīlī activity that took place in Palestine during the fourth/tenth century. At the beginning of the century, Saʿīd b. al-Ḥusayn (considered the *mahdī* of Salamiyya), known as ʿAbdallāh al-Mahdī, escaped from the ʿAbbāsīd authorities and went to Ramla, after receiving word (by carrier pigeons) that the ʿAbbāsīds sought to arrest him. Passing through Tiberias, Ismāʿīlī sources mention that a *dāʿī* (propagator) of the sect, was waiting for him and when he arrived in Ramla, he was hidden in several houses in the town from the years 289/902 to 290/903. Then he continued his journey to Egypt and North Africa. During these years in Palestine, Saʿīd b. al-Ḥusayn remained in contact with other members of the sect and with rebels in Syria and Iraq. Interestingly, the governor of Palestine, a Turkish officer in Ramla, converted to Ismāʿīlism before the arrival of the *mahdī*; this enabled the latter to hide. In order to save Saʿīd b. al-Ḥusayn, the officer sent false reports in response to the arrest warrant from the ʿAbbāsīds; he claimed that he had never seen anyone answering the *mahdī*'s description. In the same year, 289/902, a meteor shower served as a proof for the advent of the *mahdī*. The latter comforted the governor who was loyal to him, saying: "our horses' hooves will trample on their [the Abbasid's] corpses."⁶⁰

59 For more on this list of the *ṭālibīyyūn* in Palestine, see appendix 1.

60 Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdī: The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. Michael Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 72–88. Halm's description is based on the history book written by Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn al-Qurashī (d. 876/1471), the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī mutlaq* (absolute/highly-ranked missionary). Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn al-Qurashī, *Uyūn al-akhbār wa-funūn al-āthār fī faḍl al-aʿimma l-aṭhār* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1973), 5:92–94.

This description supports the thesis that the Ismāʿīlīs planned to overthrow the Muslim caliphate. Nevertheless, the *mahdī*'s personality, as reflected in this description, is prudent and patient. He was invited to join other major Ismāʿīlī rebellions that were underway in Syria, for example, the revolt of “The man with the she-camel” in Damascus in 290/902, and the rebellion of “the man with the mole” in Salamiyya in 291/903. These two rebellions failed and their leaders were killed by ‘Abbāsīd authorities. The *mahdī* Saʿīd b. al-Ḥusayn was kept informed of the uprisings that were launched in his name, but he did not join them; rather he remained in Ramla. As a result, he (together with his son and household) was saved and, in 292/904, was able to escape to Egypt and later to North Africa, where he prepared to establish the Fāṭimid state.⁶¹

The *mahdī*'s ability to hide in Tiberias and Ramla can be explained by the fact that these towns were hubs of Ismāʿīlī propaganda. This is confirmed by a later source, written by the chief *qāḍī* (and Muʿtazilī) of Rayy, ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1024), who wrote a list of *duʿāt* (propagators). One of them is a certain Abū Muḥammad al-Ṭabarānī and others were active in Ramla, Acre, and Ashkelon.⁶²

2.8.2 Qarmaṭīs

The Qarmaṭīs (pl. Qarāmiṭa), an Ismāʿīlī faction from Kūfa, were characterized by their violent revolts against the authorities, most of which were centered in Bahrayn. The Qarmaṭīs most dramatic act was their attack on Mecca in 317/930, during which they stole the Black Stone of the Kaʿba.⁶³

The Qarmaṭīs had more ambitious plans and later also attacked Iraq and Syria. Their invasion of Palestine took place during the reign of two great Fāṭimid caliphs, Abū Tamīm Maʿadd al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh (d. 365/975), the conqueror of Egypt, and his successor Abū Maṣūʿ Nizār al-ʿAzīz bi-Llāh (d. 386/996).⁶⁴ According to the historian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), the

61 Halm, 72–88.

62 ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, *Tathbūt dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿArabiyya, 1966), 2:595–596. As to the epithet al-Ṭabarānī, it is unclear if this indicates that he was from Tiberias or from Ṭabaristān in Iran.

63 Concerning the Qarmaṭī split, see Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 116–121. On the transfer of the Black Stone of the Kaʿba to Bahrayn and its religious reasons, see Friedman, “Kūfa is Better,” 224–227.

64 According to the historian al-Dhahabī, the invasion took place earlier, in the year 357/967, when after capturing Damascus the Qarmaṭīs took over Ramla, plundered the town, and planned to invade Egypt, but their advance was eventually stopped by the Fāṭimids. See Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām wa-wafiyāt al-mashahīr wa-l-aʿlām* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1989), 26:41.

Qarmaṭī invasion of Syria was backed by the Shīʿī Būyid ruler of Iraq, ʿIzz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār who provided the Qarmaṭīs in Kūfa with weapons. Bakhtiyār's purpose was probably to keep the Fāṭimids away from Iraq and weaken his opponents in Syria. The Qarmaṭīs, headed by al-Ḥusayn b. Bahrām, captured Damascus and from there continued and captured Ramla in the year 360/970. Jawhar the Sicilian, the Fāṭimid commander, sent his fleet after the Qarmaṭīs and to secure his Maghribī soldiers in Jaffa, but his efforts were in vain. The Qarmaṭīs occupied a large territory, including Palestine between Ramla and Damascus.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the rule of the Qarmaṭīs did not last long. Most of Syria and Palestine were recaptured by the Fāṭimids by 363/973. In the same year, a new Qarmaṭī invasion came from al-Aḥsāʾ in Bahrayn, headed by Ḥasan b. Aḥmad. This time the sect sought to take over Egypt and the Būyids were eager to back them. The local Arab tribes of Syria, most of them Sunnī, joined the Qarmaṭīs as well, hoping to share in the booty. The Fāṭimid caliph al-Muʿizz sent Ḥasan b. Aḥmad a letter, trying to prevent the conflict by explaining that the Fāṭimids and the Qarmaṭīs share similar beliefs and the same *daʿwa* (Ismāʿīlī propaganda). Nevertheless, the Fāṭimid efforts were in vain, as Ḥasan continued his journey toward Egypt.⁶⁶

A strong army headed by the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿAzīz and his general Jawhar came to Ashkelon, the main Fāṭimid stronghold (*thaghr*, pl. *thughūr*) in Palestine, to block the invasion. In 364/974 the Fāṭimids attacked the Qarmaṭīs in Ramla. With the Būyid Turkish commander Alptakīn backing the Qarmaṭīs, the battle continued until 367/977, when the Fāṭimids were victorious, after the siege of Ramla. Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, the leader of the Qarmaṭīs, escaped to Tiberias. Then al-ʿAzīz paid him twenty thousand dinars to persuade him to leave without a battle and return to Bahrayn.⁶⁷ The Qarmaṭīs never again returned to Palestine. Their presence in the region was limited, with a few interruptions, to the years 360/970 to 367/977.⁶⁸

65 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, 8:614–616; see additional details about the Qarmaṭī invasion in Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṭākī, *Taʾrīkh al-Anṭākī* (Tripoli/Lebanon: Gross Press, 1990), 128, 334–335, 454. The Fāṭimid's final attempt to capture Iraq came after the fall of the Būyids to the Seljukūqs, during the revolt of the Turkish general al-Basāsīrī in 448/1056. During the *khuṭba* in Baghdad in 450/1058, the name of the Fāṭimid caliph was even mentioned, but this was shortly before the Seljukūqs captured Iraq. See Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 139, 195–197.

66 al-Anṭākī, *Taʾrīkh*, 343.

67 Ibid., 357–358.

68 See also Gil, *History of Palestine*, 348–351.

2.8.3 Nuṣayrīs

The Nuṣayrīs (called ‘Alawīs from the twentieth century) are mentioned as a group dwelling in northern Palestine. According to the Sunnī scholar Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (d. 456/1064), the region of Tiberias was dominated by the Nuṣayrīs (though this was probably an exaggeration):

... And there is a sect called Nuṣayriyya who took control over Jund al-Urdunn in Syria and [took] over the town of Tiberias in particular....⁶⁹

Indeed, Nuṣayrī sources provide information about one of the most prolific scholars of the sect, Maymūn b. al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, who was from Tiberias and was the leader of the sect in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century. However, the sect’s internal sources indicate that most of al-Ṭabarānī’s studies from his master Muḥammad b. ‘Alī l-Jillī took place in Aleppo, and his activities are recorded in Tripoli (today in northern Lebanon), rather than in Tiberias.⁷⁰ Nuṣayrī sources from the sixth/twelfth century no longer mention the community in the region of Tiberias, and we presume that it probably disappeared. The ‘Alawīs of the village of Ghajar (today on the border between Israel and Lebanon) are probably the last remnant of the sect in the region between Tiberias and the Golan Heights.⁷¹

2.8.4 Druzes

The birth of the Druze religion is relevant to this study, although today they are not considered Shi‘īs. Nevertheless, the Druze sect (also called Ḥākimiyya) began as an offshoot of Shi‘ī Ismā‘īlīs; at the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century, its *da‘wa* (propaganda) spread in Egypt, Syria, and also in northern Palestine. In these regions, intense religious polemical arguments arose between the followers of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (d. 412/1021).⁷²

69 ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *al-Faṣl fi l-milal wa-l-ahwā’ wa-l-niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1996), 4:143.

70 The Nuṣayrī sources mention Tiberias as early as 391/1000, see Yaron Friedman, *The Nusayri-Alawis: History, Religion and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 39. On the fifth-/eleventh-century Maymūn al-Ṭabarānī, whose exact death date is unknown, see *ibid.*, 40–42.

71 *Ibid.*, 50–51.

72 According to the Druze faith, al-Ḥākim did not die, but disappeared. On the Druze faith and its roots in Ismā‘īlism, see David R.W. Bryer, “The Origins of the Druze Religion,” *Der Islam* 52 (1975), 47–84, 239–262, and 53 (1976), 5–27; Kais Firro, *A History of the Druzes* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 8–17; and Nejla M. Abu-Izzeddinn, *The Druzes: A New Study of their History, Faith and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 101–121. Bryer defines the Druzes as *ghulāt* of Ismā‘īlism, since they exaggerated the cult of the caliph al-Ḥākim and considered him

The main hostility was between the two propagandists (*du'āt*), Ḥamza b. 'Alī and Nashtākīn al-Darazī. The latter, who was later rejected and cursed by the Druzes, had supporters in Acre. The epistles of Ḥamza mention two of his opponents; the first was a certain Mu'ānid, who was accused of planning a coup against al-Ḥākim together with around five hundred members of the "people of Acre" in 410/1019. Most of them were killed, others were arrested and jailed.⁷³ The second opponent of Ḥamza was Khamār (or Khumār) b. Jaysh al-Sulaymānī l-'Akkāwī who was also called "the liar and infidel" from Acre, who claimed that he was the caliph al-Ḥākim's brother, or his father's brother. Since the Druze consider al-Ḥākim a manifestation of the divinity, this means that the divine is human, which is a heresy. In one of his epistles, Ḥamza warned Khamār to stop spreading this lie, or harm will come to him and his followers.⁷⁴

We do not find other references to the Druzes in Acre, so we can assume that there was a cell of the followers of Darazī there, not the Druze leader and founder Ḥamza, who later disappeared. The Druzes of Palestine only appear in later sources once they became a crystalized and separate religion in the eighth/fourteenth century in the region of Safed and in upper Galilee.⁷⁵

2.9 *Persecution of Sunnī Offenders*

While Sunnīs considered most Shī'ī sects heretical, Sunnī scholars maintained some contacts with Imāmī Shī'īs, as reflected in the writings of al-Karājukī and his contemporary scholars. Although this atmosphere of toleration seems to have prevailed under the Fāṭimids, Sunnī acceptance of the Shī'īs, who were a minority of the population in Palestine, was not unlimited. Reports of the persecution of Sunnīs under Fāṭimid rule are rare, yet, some medieval sources recorded severe cases, in which Sunnīs from Palestine were executed by Fāṭimid authorities or were ordered to follow Shī'ī religious obligations.

In one case, an ascetic shaykh named Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nābulī (that is, from Nablus), who was a leader of the Sunnī community

divine. About the Ḥākimīs accusation that the Fāṭimids were heretics, and the persecution of the Fāṭimids, see Bryer, 50–52, 65–66, 73.

According to Firro, the new *da'wā* of the Druze, which was made public in 408/1017 and included the abolition of the hereditary *imāma* system, placed them beyond orthodox Ismā'ilism. See Firro, *History*, 10, 15. The history book of al-Anṭākī, patriarch of Alexandria, defines the Druzes as a religion that deviated from Islam. According to his description, in the time of Ḥamza b. 'Alī, who was supported by the caliph, al-Ḥākim, all the obligations of Islam were abandoned and scorned by the Ḥākimī sect, which became the Druze.

73 De Smet, *Les Epîtres sacrees*, 28–29, 353, 377 (text in Arabic: 640–642).

74 *Ibid.*, 377 (in Arabic, 661–662).

75 Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-dahr fī 'ajā'ib al-barr wa-l-baḥr* (Petersburg: Imperial Academy, 1865), 211–213.

in Ramla, fled to Damascus after calling for a rebellion against the Fāṭimid warriors (the *maghāribā* from North Africa). He declared publicly that if he had ten arrows, he would shoot one at the Byzantines and the rest at the ‘Ubaydis (that is, the Fāṭimids). He was accused of cooperating with the Qarmaṭīs and inciting rebels against the Fāṭimid rulers, then detained in a wooden cage and executed in a horrible way. His body was crucified in Cairo in 363/973 at the time of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mu‘izz.⁷⁶

The next examples are more significant, since they reveal Fāṭimid efforts to impose Shī‘ī obligations on Sunnīs in Palestine, as described by the historian al-Dhahabī (d. 749/1348):

... Then the Maghribīs [north Africans i.e., the Fāṭimids] took over Syria and the evil religion was unveiled, and he propagated it and canceled and the *ḍuḥā* prayer, and he ordered the *qunūt* during the noon prayer in the mosque.⁷⁷

Al-Dhahabī mentions another event that took place in Jerusalem, in which explicit public cursing of the Companions (who opposed ‘Alī, that is, *sabb al-ṣaḥāba*) was required:

These [Fāṭimids] ordered a huge ordeal for the Muslims [that is, Sunnīs] and when they took over Syria, the righteous and the Sufis escaped from Jerusalem. The ascetic Abū l-Faraj al-Ṭarsūsī stayed in al-Aqṣā, since he feared them and preferred to stay inside, then the Maghribīs entered [the mosque], whipped him and said: curse so and so, naming the Companions of Muḥammad, while he said: “There is no god but Allāh” all the rest of his day....⁷⁸

76 Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Itti‘āz al-hunafā’ bi-akhbār al-a‘imma al-Fāṭimīyyīn al-khulafā’* (Cairo: Lajnat Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1996), 1:210–211; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *al-‘Ibar fi khabar man ghabar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1985), 2:116.

77 al-Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, 26:311. The *tarāwīḥ* are prayers that Sunnīs pray following the night prayer (*‘ishā’*) during Ramaḍān; it is prohibited by the Shī‘a. The *ḍuḥā* prayer is a voluntary mid-morning prayer Sunnīs pray; prohibited by the Shī‘a. In this context, the *qunūt* are extended supplications, in which the Shī‘īs cursed the enemies of the Imāms during the noon prayer in the mosque. As to the Shī‘ī practice of cursing the enemies of the Imāms during this prayer, see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 82:209–235; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Wasā’il al-Shī‘a ilā taḥṣīl masā’il al-sharī‘a* (Beirut: Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1991), 4:912–913.

78 al-Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, 26:312. Abū l-Faraj al-Ṭarsūsī was a Sufi shaykh who lived in Jerusalem, see ‘Umar b. Aḥmad b. al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fi tārikh Ḥalab* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 4:368.

Another case of persecution took place in 364/974. The shaykh al-Ṣāliḥ Abū l-Qāsim al-Wāsiṭī was present in Jerusalem during the first night of Ramaḍān, when the Fāṭimid authorities stopped the *tarāwīḥ* prayers. Then al-Wāsiṭī dared to complain and shouted in dismay, *wā-Islāmāh, wā-Muḥammadāh* (Oh Islam! Oh Muḥammad!). He was detained in Jerusalem, where he was tortured and bound to a cross. Miraculously, he survived and succeeded in escaping to Iraq.⁷⁹

Although these cases are severe examples of oppression, the fact that medieval Sunnī sources mention so few cases, supports the thesis that the Fāṭimids were generally tolerant. While sources reveal several aspects of Shīʿī-Sunnī relations, we have fewer examples of Shīʿī-Jewish relations, yet these rare examples raise some logical hypotheses.

2.10 Possible Jewish Influence

Palestine was a cultural and religious center during the Fāṭimid period. It seems that Shīʿī scholars came in contact with the Jewish community and it is very possible that they were influenced by Jewish ideas. We make this assumption based on the fact that Ramla was an important center of both Shīʿī and Jewish religious life in Palestine.⁸⁰

2.10.1 The Fāṭimid Imāms and the Davidic Line

In comparison with other places in which Shīʿīs and Jews coexisted, the Iraqi case is the most striking example. It is reasonable to ask whether Shīʿism in Iraq was influenced by Jewish ideas, since Iraq was the heart of Jewish religious life during the period of the Geonim (first/seventh to fifth/eleventh centuries).⁸¹

The most prominent example of theological similarities is reflected in the case of the two sacred lines of ancestry, the Jewish Davidic line from the *beit David* (the house of David) and that of the ʿAlid line, derived from the *ahl al-bayt*. In both cases, a single family was considered the only legitimate ruling group, and both Shīʿīs and Jews believed that the Messiah who will appear

79 al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, 26:259–260; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 67:136–138. With regard to the Shīʿī prohibition of *tarāwīḥ* prayers in the first evening of Ramaḍān, see al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa*, 3:191–194.

80 Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 291–293.

81 See, for example, Mordechai Nisan, *Identity and Civilization: Essays on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 28–31; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, “Shīʿism and Judaism: A Relation Marked by Paradox,” in Abdelwahab Meddeb, Benjamin Stora (eds.), *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 816–827.

at the end of time, will belong to this family.⁸² The Jewish *nasi* (also entitled *nagid* and *ga'on*, that is, the head of the Jewish community), seated in Ramla and sometimes in Jerusalem, was, occasionally, a descendant of the house of David. The rival Karaite Jews also claimed that their *nasi* (seated in Ramla) was from the Davidic line.⁸³ Moreover, the idea of a living representative of the sacred line of the Imāms was developed by the Ismā'īlīs, who ruled Palestine, rather than by the Shī'īs in Iraq. The Ismā'īlīs developed this idea because the Fāṭimid dynasty appointed a caliph, who was also a living Imām from the 'Alid line. At the same time, Imāmī Shī'īs believed that the Imām was in a state of occultation (*ghayba*) since his disappearance in Samarrā' in 260/873. Hence, we can say that in fact, in the discussed period the idea of the living Davidic line was parallel to the Ismā'īlī 'Alid line, rather than the Imāmī line.

2.10.2 The Promotion of Jews under the Fāṭimids

Palestine was a scene of peaceful coexistence between Jews and Shī'īs. Both were minorities, threatened by Sunnīs, the apparent majority in Palestine. Based on the Qur'ān, Sunnīs considered Jews *dhimīs* (protected subjects), while they saw non-Imāmī Shī'īs as heterodox foreign settlers. In other words, Sunnīs in Palestine considered Ismā'īlīs both conquerors and as a heretical group. Under Fāṭimid rule, which had a positive attitude toward Jews, an atmosphere of Shī'ī-Jewish coexistence easily developed. This phenomenon can be explained by the hostility the Fāṭimids faced from the Sunnī population, and the reality that they needed the support of other local religious groups. This would seem to be one of the reasons that the Fāṭimids promoted Jews and Christians in Egypt and Palestine. With the exception of the short caliphate of al-Ḥākim (386–412/996–1021), under Fāṭimid rule, Jews achieved high governmental positions.

One of the most prominent examples is that of the Jew Ya'qūb b. Killis (d. 380/991), who apparently converted and was appointed vizier (*wazīr*) during the Fāṭimid caliphate of al-Mu'izz and his son al-'Azīz in the second half of the fourth/tenth century. It seems that it was on his advice that the army

82 Moshe Sharon, "Ahl al Bayt—People of the House," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 18 (1986), 169–184.

83 Arnold E. Franklin, *This Noble House: Jewish Descendants of King David in the Medieval Islamic East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 131–137; Mark R. Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt: The Origins of the Office of Head of the Jews, ca. 1065–1126* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 6–9; Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine Under the Fāṭimid Caliphs: A Contribution to Their Political and Communal History Based Chiefly of Genizah Material Hitherto Unpublished* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970), 153–165.

commander Jawhar set out from Egypt to conquer all of Palestine. Earlier examples under the Fāṭimid caliphate include that of the *nagid* Paltiel of Sicily (d. 357/967), who became an influential courtier of the caliph al-Muʿizz in Cairo, and Menashe b. Ibrāhīm al-Qazzāz, who was governor of Syria at the end of the fourth/tenth century. Jews achieved high positions in the Fāṭimid army as well: Faḍl b. Šāliḥ commanded the forces in Palestine until his execution in 400/1009 by the new caliph al-Ḥākim. Both al-Qazzāz and Faḍl were appointed by Ibn Killis. Under Fāṭimid rule, the Jewish communities (Rabbinic, Karaite, and Samaritans) in Palestine were financially supported by the authorities and their coreligionists in Egypt. As a result, the Jewish community in Palestine survived.⁸⁴

2.10.3 An Alternative Caliph and Alternative Gaon

The Fāṭimids chose to appoint a *gaon* in Jerusalem to head the Jewish community in Palestine and Egypt. Only later, after the Frankish conquest of Palestine, did they transfer the seat of the appointed Jewish leader, then called *raʾīs al-yahūd*, to Cairo. This appointment of the *gaon* from the *yeshivah* of Palestine is comparable to the situation in Iraq. Mark Cohen considers this an imitation of the Baghdadi appointment of the *gaon* from Babylonian Jewry.⁸⁵ This thesis seems logical, based on the fact that the Fāṭimid caliph in Cairo sought to become an alternative to the caliph in Baghdad.

The Jewish approach toward Palestine (*eretz Israel*) as a Holy Land and the adoration of the Davidic line in Palestine may have influenced Fāṭimid leaders and their scholars. However, the documents available at present, in the Geniza and the Shīʿī literature, do not provide a decisive answer to the question of possible Jewish influence on the Fāṭimids in the context of their rule in Palestine. The issue demands further study.

By the fourth/tenth century, Palestine had several tombs of Jewish patriarchs and rabbis, Christian saints, and Sunnī shaykhs and leaders, but it lacked shrines of saints from the *ahl al-bayt* that would attract the Shīʿī population. After their capture of Palestine, the Fāṭimids filled this void.

84 Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine*, 16–21; Gil, *History of Palestine, 634–1099*, 348–366; Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 176–177. The advantageous Jewish-Fāṭimid relations included those with the Rabbinic and Karaite communities. Some Sunnī historians mocked the Fāṭimids, claiming that they were ruled by Jews and Christians, see Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community*, 120–128.

85 Mark R. Cohen, “Administrative Relations between Palestinian and Egyptian Jewry during the Fatimid Period,” in Amnon Cohen and Gabriel Baer (eds.), *Egypt and Palestine: A Millennium of Association (868–1948)* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), 113–135.

3 Giving Palestine a Shī'ī Identity: Tombs of the *ahl al-bayt*

The Fāṭimid period was characterized by an endeavor to give the region a Shī'ī identity; this was done in several ways—political, demographic, and most importantly, religious. These three aspects are closely related; their political dominance enabled the flow of immigrants from other Shī'ī regions, mostly Iraq. The creation of religious sites, mostly shrines, was a crucial tool to encourage this immigration. In order to transform Palestine into an attractive territory for Shī'ī immigrants and scholars, new religious sites related to Shī'ī Islam in particular had to be created, since general holy sites (*ḥarams*), such as those of Jerusalem (al-Aqṣā Mosque and the Dome of the Rock) and that in Hebron (the tomb of Abraham), were mainly Sunnī sites and managed by Sunnī religious authorities. Since there was no Shī'ī legacy or long Shī'ī history in Palestine, the task of giving this territory a Shī'ī identity was complicated and demanded a great deal of creativity.

3.1 *Bringing Karbalā' to Palestine: the Head of Ḥusayn*

At the end of the fourth/tenth century, Fāṭimid victories expanded the borders of their caliphate and gave them hope that they would eventually rule the entire Muslim world. Nevertheless, after several defeats during the fifth/eleventh century and the loss of key cities, like Damascus, Mecca, and Medina, Fāṭimid rulers realized that the overthrow of the caliph in Baghdad was more challenging than they had anticipated. As Shī'īs, their original goal was to rule Iraq, the location of the most important Shī'ī sites, mainly Kūfa and Najaf, the tomb of Imām 'Alī and Karbalā', the tomb of his son Ḥusayn, who was also the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad. In the middle of the fifth/eleventh century, when the Sunnī Seljuks invaded Iraq and Syria from the east, this dream was shattered and the “Shī'ī century” came to an end.

During the same period, the western coast of Syria was frequently attacked by Christian Byzantine armies. In addition, major disasters, including droughts, earthquakes, and Bedouin revolts weakened the Fāṭimid grip on Palestine.⁸⁶

During these crises, the Fāṭimids sought to create a major pilgrimage site for Shī'īs, one that would attract the Shī'ī community to the region. Since their armies could not reach Karbalā', they decided to bring Karbalā' to their territory, albeit symbolically.

The martyrdom of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad, was a shocking event in Islam in general and to the followers of 'Alī and his family in particular. This episode shaped Shī'ism into a religion of martyrdom and grief. This tragic event took place on the tenth of Muḥarram in the year

86 Gil, *History of Palestine*, 386–408.

61/680, long before the Fāṭimids came to power and far from Palestine. Given its relevance, I describe this event briefly.

Following the death of the Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (d. 61/680) and the appointment of his corrupt son Yazīd (d. 64/683), the people of Kūfa called Ḥusayn to lead a rebellion and return the leadership of the caliphate to the *ahl al-bayt*. Aware of Ḥusayn's journey from Medina to Kūfa, the Umayyad troops caught Ḥusayn and his close family in Karbalā' near the Tigris River and prevented them from advancing or drinking water. While weak from thirst, the camp of Ḥusayn was attacked; the Umayyad warriors showed no mercy, although they were confronting the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad. From Ḥusayn's family all the men were slaughtered and he was beheaded. The women were humiliated and taken to Kūfa and then to the capital Damascus as captives. It was this journey to Syria, in which the Umayyad troops took the survivors of the massacre, together with the head of Ḥusayn, to Damascus, that brought the issue of Karbalā' closer to Palestine.⁸⁷ Indeed, some medieval geographers located the site of the head of Ḥusayn in the caliph's palace in Damascus.⁸⁸ The Fāṭimids continued the legend that the head of Ḥusayn had been taken further south to Palestine.

The creation of a new Shī'ī sanctuary coincided with the loss of the holiest Muslim town in Palestine—Jerusalem, first to the Turcomans, then to the Crusaders. According to several medieval sources, it was Badr al-Jamālī, the Fāṭimid general and vizier (*wazīr*) of the caliph al-Musta'li (d. 495/1101), who miraculously revealed Ḥusayn's head in 484/1090. Seven years later, in 491/1097, just two years before the crusaders captured Jerusalem, al-Afḍal the son of Badr al-Jamālī reconquered the town from the Sunnī Turcomans. The same year, al-Afḍal came to Ashkelon and completed the mausoleum project that his father Badr al-Jamālī began, to honor the head of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī. After perfuming the head, al-Afḍal kept it in a case. When the site of the Mashhad al-Ra's (lit., 'the mausoleum of the head') was completed, al-Afḍal himself carried it on foot from the site in Ashkelon where it was found and placed it in the mausoleum he built in the same town. Later, in 549/1153, when Ashkelon was captured by the crusaders, the head is said to have been transferred to Cairo to its present location in Cairo.⁸⁹

87 For a detailed description of the events of Karbalā' from a Shī'ī point of view, see, for example, al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 43 (complete), and from a Sunnī point of view, see Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-umam wa-l-mulūk* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2003), 3:1024–1058.

88 D. Talmon-Heller, Benjamin Z. Kedar, and Yitzhak Reiter, "Vicissitudes of a Holy Place: Construction, Destruction and Commemoration of Mashhad Ḥusayn in Ascalon," *Der Islam* 93, no. 1 (2016), 183–185.

89 Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, 3:22; Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Muyassar, *Akhbār Miṣr* (Cairo: al-Ma'had al-'Ilmī l-Faransī, 1981), 66. Ibn al-Muyassar notes that the tomb of

When Jerusalem was captured, Ashkelon took its place as the holiest town in Palestine. Until then, Ashkelon was considered a border stronghold (*thaghr*, pl. *thughūr*), in the *jihād* (holy war), but with the completion of the mausoleum and the discovery of head of Ḥusayn, it became a holy Shīʿī town for the first time. Prior to that point, as it did not have any religious importance in Shīʿism, it did not attract Shīʿīs the way that Ramla, Tiberias, and Acre did.

An examination of Sunnī and Shīʿī medieval texts clearly shows that the myth of the transferral of the head of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī to Ashkelon in southern Palestine does not appear in any source prior to the fifth/eleventh century, that is, before Fāṭimid rule in Palestine. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1109/1698), summing up medieval Shīʿī sources, presented four versions for the location of the head of Ḥusayn:⁹⁰

- a. In Karbalāʾ with the rest of his body.
- b. In Bāb al-Farādīs in Damascus, close to the Umayyad caliph's seat.
- c. In al-Baqīʿ graveyard in Medina with his mother Fāṭima.
- d. In Cairo, as claimed by the “community of Egypt.”

Al-Majlisī added that the most reliable version, based on several sources, was that it was returned to Karbalāʾ and that the least reliable account was that it is located in Egypt—he presents this as a local legend.⁹¹ This view was also shared by Sunnī scholars; Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256) provided five possible locations for the head of Ḥusayn, identical to those mentioned above, with another in al-Raqqa in northern Syria. In addition, Ibn al-Jawzī presented the option that the head was transferred to Egypt as the least likely possibility. Interestingly, he described this unreliable tradition differently. He states that the head was not found in Ashkelon, but was transferred directly from Bāb al-Farādīs in Damascus to Ashkelon by the Fāṭimid caliphs.⁹²

Ḥusayn's head was neglected even before al-Afḍal returned to Ashqelon. See also Moshe Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 5:28–30. According to the inscription found in Hebron, the site was erected by Badr al-Jamālī in 484/1091 in honor of the caliph al-Mustanshir. This is supported by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khalikān, *Wafiyāt al-aʿyān wa-abnāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1972), 2:450. See also Talmon-Heller, Kedar, and Reiter, “Vicissitudes of a Holy Place,” 194; Andrew Petersen, *Bones of Contention: Muslim Shrines in Palestine* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 108–110.

90 For a complete list of locations of the head, see Khalid Sindawi, “The Head of Husayn Ibn Ali: Its Various Places of Burial and the Miracles that it Performed,” in Marshall J. Breger, Yitzhak Reiter, and Leonard Hammer (eds.), *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Confrontation and Co-existence* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009), 265–273.

91 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 45:140, 144–146.

92 Yūsuf b. ʿAbdallāh Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirat al-khawāṣ* (Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1964), 265–267. Historically, this could be possible only in 360/970–361/971, during the

While we do not have early sources confirming that the head of Ḥusayn was in Ashkelon, most travelers after the period of the Fāṭimid rule over Palestine mention that it was there. Later geographers who visited Ashkelon left accounts of Ḥusayn's head, although the Fāṭimid Caliphate had long since fallen. For example, the Persian traveler 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī (d. 612/1215) visited Ashkelon in 570/1174 (thirteen years before it was captured by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn while it was still under the crusaders' rule) and described it as a *mashhad* (mausoleum) of Ḥusayn. But he did not mention that Shī'īs or other Muslim pilgrims visited the site.⁹³ Then the Persian geographer Zakariyyā b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283) described a monumental mosque in which Ḥusayn's head was located, and added that it was still venerated and that "people make pilgrimages to it from all across the countries". Unfortunately, he does not specify whether they were Shī'īs or Sunnīs.⁹⁴ Then the well-known geographer, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 771/1369) mentioned a large, tall mosque built by the 'Ubaydī Fāṭimid dynasty, situated on the site; he explains that it was the tomb of Ḥusayn's head in Ashkelon, before the head was transferred to Cairo.⁹⁵

3.1.1 Motives behind the Erection of the Mausoleum in Ashkelon

From a religious point of view, the inscription on the wooden *minbar* (pulpit) of the mausoleum, dated 484/1091, explains the revelation of the head as:

From His[God's], the exalted's, miracles, the revelation of the head of our master the Imām, the martyr Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may God bless him, his grandfather, his father and the rest of the *ahl al-bayt*, in a site in Ashkelon, where the tyrants, may God curse them, have hidden it to conceal his light ... and now it is revealed, honoring his partisans....⁹⁶

short period during which the Fāṭimids captured Damascus, and before it was taken by the Qarmaṭīs. Nevertheless, this seems unreliable.

93 al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-ishārāt*, 28, 32–33. On the several tombs of Ḥusayn, see Josef Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 191–195.

94 Zakariyyā b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-'ibād*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1848), 148; D., Talmon-Heller, "Job (Ayyub), al-Husayn and Saladin in Late Ottoman Palestine: the memoirs of Nu'man al-Qasatli, the Arab scribe of the Survey of Western Palestine." In Gurevich D., Kidron A. (eds), *Exploring the Holy Land—150 Years of the Palestine Exploration Fund* (Sheffield/Bristol: Equinox, 2019), p. 133.

95 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Baṭṭūṭa, *Rihlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* (Rabat: Maṭbū'at Akādimiyyat al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya, 1997), 1:252.

96 For the full text, translation and notes, see Sharon, *Corpus*, 5:29–38.

As Sharon demonstrates, the text contains several mistakes in form and in Arabic and in fact, it shows the influence of colloquial Arabic. This might be a result of the pressure and rush in its preparation, in light of the difficult circumstances of the period, when Palestine was under Seljuk attack.

With regard to the motives behind the erection of the mausoleum in Ashkelon and the other Shī'ī tombs in Palestine, several historical explanations had been proposed. Brett suggests that the cult of 'Alid saints reflects the Fāṭimids' effort, at the end of the fifth/eleventh century and the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century, to enlist all Muslims—Sunnī and Shī'ī alike—against the Christian threat (from Byzantines and later crusaders). The new policy was to shift peoples' allegiance to the Fāṭimid Imāms, which served as alternatives to the Sunnī caliphs in Baghdad, with a popular cult of 'Alid saints that were venerated by all Shī'ī Muslims. But this endeavor eventually failed and most of Palestine was captured by the crusaders. The remaining Fāṭimids in Egypt fell into the hands of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who took Egypt in 567/1171.⁹⁷

De Smet put forward another thesis, that the "miraculous revelation" of Ḥusayn's head in Ashkelon was meant to support Fāṭimid forces in the town, and create a new religious motivation to defend it. Badr al-Jamālī's success in turning Ashkelon into a Shī'ī holy town is proved by the cult of Ḥusayn that developed from that time.⁹⁸ Talmon-Heller notes that all the *faḍā'il* literature about Ashkelon, which was called *'arūs al-Shām* (lit., 'the bride of Syria'), was composed by Sunnīs who never mentioned the head of Ḥusayn; this proves that locating the head of Ḥusayn to Ashkelon was an original Fāṭimid idea.⁹⁹

In 548/1153, fearing that Ashkelon would fall into the hands of the Franks, the vizier al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'i' b. Ruzziq had the head of Ḥusayn transferred to Cairo, where it is located today.¹⁰⁰ De Smet provides an interesting suggestion, namely, that the cult around the head of Ḥusayn may be Christian in origin; he compares it with the legend of the head of John the Baptist in Damascus, and notes that the tradition of venerating heads of religious figures existed in this region before Islam.¹⁰¹

97 Michael Brett, "The Battles of Ramla (1099–1105)," in Urbain Vermeulen and Daniel de Smet (eds.), *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras* (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 30; Talmon-Heller, Kedar, and Reiter, "Vicissitudes of a Holy Place," 191–192.

98 Daniel de Smet, "La translation du 'ra's a-Husayn au Caire fatimide," in Vermeulen and De Smet (eds.), *Egypt and Syria*, 38–39.

99 Talmon-Heller, Kedar, and Reiter, "Vicissitudes of a Holy Place," 189–190.

100 For several versions of the transfer of the head to Cairo, see Sindawi, "The Head of Husayn Ibn Ali," 267–268.

101 De Smet, "La translation," 33–34, 38.

De Smet prefers to seek an explanation for the revelation of Ḥusayn's head within the court of the last Fāṭimid rulers, rather than in external motives, as presented by Brett. De Smet explains that some of the last viziers to serve the Fāṭimid state in the caliph's place because the caliph was too young, were Imāmī Shī'īs, not Ismā'īlīs Shī'īs. For example, in 525/1130 the visir al-Afḍal, Abū 'Alī Aḥmad Kutayfāt, grandson of Badr al-Jamālī, changed the official religion of the Fāṭimid caliphate to Imāmī Shī'ism.¹⁰² Brett adds that the choice of Ḥusayn (the third Imām and a figure common to all Shī'īs) for the mausoleum was designed to reinforce the Fāṭimid's control in Palestine by unifying all the Shī'ī groups (Imāmīs, Zaydīs, and Ismā'īlīs).¹⁰³

A combination of the theses of Brett and de Smet explain the promotion of the cult of saints and Ḥusayn's head in Ashkelon. By revealing the head of Ḥusayn, the Fāṭimids brought some of the sanctity of Karbalā' to Palestine. The idea was innovative and, ultimately, even seems to have persuaded the local population that Ḥusayn's head was really located in this town. Nevertheless, the Fāṭimid project to give Palestine a Shī'ī character was irreversibly halted by the invasion of the crusaders.

3.2 *The Shī'ī Cult of Saints*

The mausoleum in Ashkelon was not the only holy site the Fāṭimids created in Palestine. Several lesser-known sites, which did not have the same importance, were not mentioned by fifth-/eleventh-century historians and travelers.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, we know of their existence from later sources, mainly from the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods, when, after almost a century of Christian Frankish rule, Palestine returned to Muslim hands and Muslims were strongly motivated to return the holy sites to their original Muslim identities. Since the ruling dynasty prior to the conquest of Palestine by the crusaders was that of the Fāṭimids, several sites preserved their Shī'ī identity. Hence, paradoxically, Sunnī dynasties restored Shī'ī mausoleums since Sunnīs also had great respect for these figures from the *ahl al-bayt*.

From the seventh/thirteenth century onward, Sunnī dynasties transformed these mausoleums and tombs into popular sites for local Sunnīs, while the Shī'ī population, who used to make pilgrimages to them, seem to have disappeared. The following were sites of major tombs from the Fāṭimid period.

102 al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, 3:140.

103 Ibid., 43–44; Talmon-Heller, Kedar, and Reiter, "Vicissitudes of a Holy Place," 193.

104 As Meri notes, the Fāṭimids institutionalized the veneration of the Imāms in greater Syria during the fifth/eleventh and the sixth/twelfth centuries. See Meri, *The Cult of Saints*, 80–81. See also the well-developed Shī'ī literature on the *zīyāra* to these sites in *ibid.*, 157–161.

3.2.1 The Tomb of ʿĀlī b. Abī Tālib in Acre

Passing through Palestine, al-Harawī described a mausoleum of ʿĀlī b. Abī Tālib in Acre that the crusaders had turned into a church:

The town of Acre deserves to be mentioned in [the chapter of] tomb sites of the *sāhil* [a plain by the sea] but we mention it because of its nearness to this place. Inside it [Acre] is the ‘fountain of the cow,’ where it is said that the cow came out of it for Ādam, then he used her to plow, and above this fountain there is a mausoleum attributed to ʿĀlī b. Abī Tālib, may God be pleased with him. However, the Franks turned it into a church, and a supervisor was appointed for its drawings and its service. [One day] when he woke up he said: “I have seen a man telling me [in my dream]. I am ʿĀlī b. Abī Tālib. Tell them [the Franks] to turn this place back into a mosque or anyone who dwells in it will die!” They did not believe his story and appointed another person [in charge in the church]. The following morning, they found him dead. So, the Franks turned it back into a mosque, [and it remains so] to this day. But God knows best.¹⁰⁵

The tradition transmitted by al-Harawī clearly links this site in Acre to the Fāṭimid period, when it was a Shīʿī site, prior to the crusaders’ transformation of it into a church. The existence of this tomb fits the information we have about the Shīʿī presence in Acre under Fāṭimid rule and was probably important for those who could not afford to or were not able to undertake a visit (*ziyāra*) to ʿAlī’s shrine in Najaf, in distant Iraq.

3.2.2 The Tombs of Sukayna the Daughter of Ḥusayn and of ʿUbaydallāh b. ʿAbbās

In his description of Tiberias, al-Harawī describes a shrine of Sukayna, the daughter of Ḥusayn b. ʿĀlī, located outside the town.¹⁰⁶ Although this is the earliest report on this site (al-Harawī died in 612/1215), there are several reasons

105 Abū l-Ḥasan ʿĀlī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-ishārāt*, 19. The ʿAyn al-Baqar is located a kilometer east of Acre. The site was also mentioned by Evliya Chelebi, the eleventh-/seventeenth-century traveler, see Evliya Tshlebi, trans. St. H. Stephan, *Travels in Palestine 1648–1650* (Jerusalem: Ariel, 1980), 43. The same story about the crusaders appears in the *riḥla* book of the twelfth-/eighteenth-century Sufi traveler ʿAbd al-Ghanī b. Ismāʿīl al-Nābulṣī, *al-Ḥaḡiqa wa-l-majāz fī l-riḥla ilā bilād al-Shām wa-Miṣr wa-l-Ḥijāz* (Cairo: al-Hayʾa l-Miṣriyya l-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1986), 99.

106 al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-ishārāt*, 22. As in the case of Ḥusayn’s head, most historians and geographers agree that Sukayna’s real tomb is located elsewhere, in Medina. See Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 4:22.

to believe that this site dates to the Fāṭimid period.¹⁰⁷ At the site of the Sitt Sukayna, recent archeological excavations revealed a weight mentioning the names of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim.¹⁰⁸ In addition, al-Harawī describes the site during its transfer from Frankish to Ayyūbid rule, which took place during his lifetime, following Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's triumph at the battle of Ḥaṭṭīn in 572/1187. This means that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn returned the site to its original identity during the Fāṭimid period, prior to the Christian rule of Jerusalem. This same policy of returning religious sites to their pre-Frankish Muslim identities characterized the Ayyūbid treatment of the site where the head of Ḥusayn was located in Ashkelon.

Two inscriptions on marble tablets that were situated on the wall of this site during the Mamlūk period also support the thesis that the Fāṭimids built the shrine of Sukayna. The first five-line inscription dates from 694/1294 and describes the building of the mausoleum by the Mamlūk governor of Safed in the seventh/thirteenth century. It begins with a citation from the Qur'ān that is not characteristic to Sunnī Mamlūk inscriptions, rather it is a citation that is typically used in Shī'ī inscriptions, the *āyat al-taḥīr* ('verse of purification,' in al-Aḥzāb 33:33).¹⁰⁹ This logical assumption was proposed by Adnan Melhem, in his paper on the site of Sitt Sukayna's tomb.¹¹⁰ This Qur'ānic verse is often cited in Shī'ī texts to explain the purity of the *ahl al-bayt* and their descendants, the Imāms. As such, it fits the context of inscriptions honoring Sukayna and 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abbās, two members of the family of 'Alī.

The five-line inscription includes the following text:

In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate: God wishes to remove all impurity from you, the family of the house [of the Prophet Muḥammad] and to purify you. The poor worshiper yearning for God the

107 This assumption was already raised by Moshe Sharon, though with some doubt, see (in Hebrew): Moshe Sharon, "The Cities of the Holy Land under Islamic Rule," *Cathedra* 40 (1986), 119.

108 See the site of Israeli Antiquities Authorities: http://www.antiquities.org.il/t/item_en.aspx?CurrentPageKey=16&indicator=124.

109 "God wishes to remove all impurity from you, oh members of the family [of the Prophet Muḥammad] and to purify you."

110 Melhem, "Sukina Bint El-Hussein's Tombstone," 1713–1714. I do not share Melhem's view that the Mamlūk renovations were, in part, designed to bring about a reconciliation with the Shī'īs of Tiberias, since we do not have any evidence of a Shī'ī community in this region after the fifth/eleventh century.

exalted, Fāris al-Dīn al-Bakkī, the cupbearer¹¹¹ al-ʿĀdilī al-Manṣūrī¹¹² governor of Safed Ordered to build this blessed mausoleum, which is the tomb of the Sitt Sukayna, daughter of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and that of ʿUbaydallāh b. Abbās b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, may the blessings [of God] be upon them ... the year 694 [/1294].¹¹³

The Mamlūks were committed to restoring the Muslim nature of Palestine after the Christian Frankish rule. They renovated Muslim pilgrimage sites (*mazār*, pl. *mazārāt*) that were destroyed or neglected under Christian rule. This project, which later encouraged a popular cult of Muslim saints, was mostly undertaken by Sufi Muslims.¹¹⁴

The study of Tawfik Canaan (1882–1964), *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*, sheds light on the remains of the Shīʿīs in Palestine and explains how these Shīʿī remains became part of popular local Palestinian folklore. Canaan was aware of the reconstruction of ʿAlid tombs by the Mamlūks after almost a century of Frankish rule in Palestine. His explanation for this phenomenon was that the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks had a common goal of resettling the local population and discouraging them from leaving the region, which had suffered from destruction and poverty following the great battles between Muslims and Christian powers. They reconstructed the neglected mausoleums and shrines at strategic points and created sites for the feasts (*mawsim*, pl. *mawāsīm*), which occurred on special dates during the year. These sites were well protected and enabled religious activities and pilgrimages, along with trade and business. The local governor, the *walī*, attended the feasts and made these sites endowments (*waqf*), thus supporting them economically and covering the expenses of the ceremonies. The *walīs* also restored the roads to these shrines in order to ease the transport of the army, the traders, and the pilgrims.¹¹⁵

111 This was a title of honor for someone who, during his career, served drinks to the Mamlūk sultan.

112 The title ʿĀdilī refers to the vizier who appointed him, al-Malik al-ʿĀdil b. Sallār; Manṣūrī refers to the Manṣūriyya, the first Mamlūk sultanate, which reigned between 678/1279 and 741/1341.

113 See the photos of the complete inscription and its translation in appendix 2.

114 Melhem, “Sukina Bint El-Hussein’s Tombstone in Tiberius,” 1713. It is interesting that when the contemporary Sunnī caliph al-Mustanṣir renovated the tomb of the seventh Shīʿī Imām, Mūsā b. Jaʿfar, at the Kāzimiyya in Baghdad in the year 624/1226, he built a wooden box and had the same verse from the Qurʾān carved on it. See (in Arabic), B. Fransīs and N. Naqshbandī, “al-Āthār al-Khashab fī Dār al-Āthār al-ʿArabiyya” *Summer* (1949), 5:55–64.

115 Tewfik Canaan, *Muhammedan Saints and the Sanctuaries in Palestine* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1927), 299. Canaan acknowledges that his thesis, as presented here, was

The text of the two marble inscriptions at the Sukayna site supports Cnaan's thesis. The first five-line inscription mentioned above represents the return of the site, after the long period of Frankish rule, to its Islamic original status as a sanctuary honoring two of the *ahl al-bayt*, Sukayna and 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abbās. In the second eight-line inscription, the Mamlūk governor declared the tomb and its surrounding lands and gardens as *waqf*:

In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate, these places are endowed for the benefit of the mausoleum of the Sitt Sukayna, based on the legalization of the assembly of judgment the honorable, which is exactly two faddan of the land of Tiberias....¹¹⁶

This inscription may have been added later by the same governor, al-Bakkī, though the date is missing. In the second inscription, situated next to the first one, the Shī'ī nature of the site seems to have been minimized. In contrast to the earlier inscription, the name Sukayna appears alone, without mentioning her ancestors, specifically, the name 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib has been omitted. The name of the second person buried at this site, 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abbās, was also omitted. This last omission is probably because the original owner of the site, the Shī'ī members of the 'Abbās b. 'Alī family, no longer lived in the region; they left Tiberias together with the rest of the Shī'īs in the town.

While relating the site of Sukayna's tomb with the Shī'ī Fāṭimid period is challenging, it is much easier to establish the link between the Fāṭimids and 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abbās, the second person who is said to be buried at this site near Tiberias. The location of his tomb is linked to the Shī'ī family of 'Abbās b. 'Alī, who had properties in Tiberias. The history of this family in Tiberias goes back to his descendant, Abū al-Ṭayyib Muḥammad b. Ḥamza. As noted, the latter was murdered in Tiberias at the end of the third/ninth century. Nevertheless, as we know from the genealogical literature, several members of the family remained in Tiberias until the fifth/eleventh century. This site was neglected and the Shī'īs probably left after the crusader invasion, since they no longer appear in any of the sources.

Over the course of time, it seems that after the initial Mamlūk renovation, the site was neglected for long periods of the year, when there were no *mawsim* (an annual feast) or pilgrimage taking place. This neglect may explain

originally that held by Aḥmad Zakī Pasha (1867–1934), an Egyptian politician and a prominent scholar, a philologist and fellow of the Institut d'Égypte, the Royal Geographical Society, and the Royal Asiatic Society in London.

116 See the full translation in appendix 2.

the presence of Jewish pilgrims to the same site, who visited because of its Jewish background. Indeed, Tiberias was surrounded by Jewish tombs of rabbis and their students. Jewish sources from the tenth/sixteenth century onward attribute this site to Rachel, the wife of rabbi Akiva, who was also buried in Tiberias.¹¹⁷ The first Jewish source to report that the Sukayna site was the same as that of Rachel is the travel book written by the Italian rabbi Moshe Bāsola (d. 968/1560) who visited the region between the years 928/1521 and 930/1523. In his description of Tiberias, he wrote the following:

... The Muslims have also a mosque with a high white minaret, it is said that the wife of rabbi Akiva, the daughter of Kalba Savu'a is buried there and she is called 'the old woman' [in Hebrew: ha-zekena, compare with the similar Arabic name Sukayna] ...¹¹⁸

It seems that visiting (*ziyāra*) the tomb of Sukayna, a practice initiated by the Shī'īs of Tiberias, became a popular local cult after the disappearance of the Shī'īs. The site was venerated until the twentieth century by both Sunnī Muslims and Jews.¹¹⁹

117 See (in Hebrew) Avraham Yarei, *Travels of Jewish Pilgrims to the Land of Israel: From the Middle Ages to the Beginning of the Return to Zion* (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1946), 157. Jewish travelers who passed through Tiberias prior to this period did not mention the tomb of Rachel. See, for example, Binyamin Metudela, from the sixth/twelfth century, *ibid.*, 44; Petachiah of Regensburg from the seventh/thirteenth century, *ibid.*, 51. A student of Maimonides mentions rabbi Akiva and his followers' tombs in Tiberias, but there is no mention of a tomb of his wife Rachel, *ibid.*, 91–92; Ashtori ha-Parhi from the eighth/fourteenth century, *ibid.*, 112.

118 *Ibid.*, 157. This line was copied by the nineteenth-century rabbi Horovitz, with the addition: "and also nowadays there is a building called after the old woman." See (in Hebrew), Ḥayim ha-Levī Horovitz, *Khibat Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem: Rabi Zvi Mashkavitsh Print, 1963), 129. I do not share Rivka Gonen's view, that the site was mentioned by the Jewish traveler Ashtor ha-Parḥi in the eighth/fourteenth century; this error became widespread in online and printed publications. See Rivka Gonen, "How is a New Saint's Tomb Created? The Case of the Tomb of Rachel, Wife of Rabbi Akiva," in Rivka Gonen (ed.), *To the Tombs of the Righteous* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1999), 75.

119 It is worth mentioning that the nineteenth-century Sunnī traveler, a shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Jawwād al-Qāyānī visited a site in south Tiberias "which is said that is the tomb of Sukayna," he said skeptically. See Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Jawwād al-Qāyātī, *Nafḥat al-bashām fi rihlat al-Shām* (Beirut: Dār al-Rā'id al-'Arabī, 1981), 110.

I visited the site located in southern Tiberias on 18 March 2017 (see the photo in appendix 2) and saw several Jewish and Muslim graves surrounding the mosque of Sukayna, which is now a Jewish site. On one of the tombs there is an inscription referring to a Muslim woman from Nablus, who died in the year 1359 (/1940). This indicates that there were Palestinian Muslims who still believed in the holiness of this site and asked to be buried there, in order to have the blessing of Sukayna. Today it is also the site of a Jewish graveyard.

3.2.3 The Tomb of Fāṭima (Daughter of Ḥusayn)

Several sources mention a tomb of Fāṭima, the daughter of the third Imām Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (that is, great-granddaughter of the Prophet Muḥammad), in a cave in Hebron. The tomb had a marble inscription praising her. The sources also mention a poem in honor of Fāṭima, one that was engraved on two marble tablets by a certain Muḥammad b. Abī Sahl from Egypt. Unfortunately, the marble inscriptions have not survived to our time. The contents of the engraving leave no doubt as to its Shī‘ī nature. The texts describe this site and clearly indicate its history dates to the Fāṭimid period and cannot be attributed to later Sunnī dynasties:

Near this mosque [al-Yaqīn Mosque in Hebron] is a cave containing the tomb of Fāṭima, daughter of the Imām Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, peace be upon them both, and in the upper part of the tomb and its lower part are two marble tablets. On one of them an inscription is written in a wonderful script: “In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate, the power and eternity belongs to God and everything that He created, but He decided that his creatures will perish and that the messenger of God is [their] example. This is the tomb of Umm Salma Fāṭima, daughter of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with her.” And on the other tablet there is an inscription made by Muḥammad b. Abī Sahl. Under this are these poetic lines:¹²⁰

You brought peace to those who dwell in the interior [the dead]
 although I am [still] between the tombs and the stones
 Oh tomb of Fāṭima, daughter of the son of Fāṭima
 daughter of the Imāms, daughter of the lightening stars
 Oh tomb, how much religion and piety you bear
 and modesty, respect, and purity.¹²¹

The presence of a Shī‘ī site in Hebron is particularly interesting, since we do not have any source mentioning Shī‘īs in this town. We could assume that the Fāṭimids created this site to serve Shī‘ī pilgrims visiting the tomb of the Prophet Abraham in Hebron.

120 In this part of his description, it seems that the sources changed the blessing on Ḥusayn to the Sunnī formula *رضي الله عنه* (may God be pleased with him) but left the typical Shī‘ī formula *عليهما السلام* (peace be upon them both) for the blessing on the *ahl al-bayt* at the beginning of the text.

121 See two identical descriptions in later sources: Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab*, 6:2562; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-‘Abdarī, *Riḥlat ‘Abdarī* (Damascus: Dār Sa’d al-Dīn, 1999), 466–467. See also in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat*, 1:243 and an eleventh-/seventeenth-century source: ‘Abd al-Ghanī b. Ismā‘īl al-Nābulṣī, *al-Ḥaḍra al-unsūyya fī l-riḥla al-qudsiyya* (Beirut: al-Maṣādir, 1990), 286.

3.2.4 The Tomb of Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf: A Shī‘ī Site?

Al-Maqdisī, a fourth-/tenth-century Sunnī geographer mentioned above, lived in Palestine at the beginning of the Fāṭimid rule, and mentioned a tomb of Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf in Gaza. The latter was the Prophet Muḥammad’s great-grandfather and a holy figure for Shī‘īs. Al-Maqdisī’s description was short; he defined the site as a *qabr* (tomb), not as a *mashhad* (mausoleum), which indicates that it was a modest shrine.¹²² Another, much later traveler, the Sufi ‘Abd al-Ghanī b. Ismā‘īl al-Nābulī (1143/1731) described a tomb of Hāshim in a cave in the town.¹²³ None of the travelers revealed details about this site or the religious identity of its pilgrims. Since we do not have any information on Shī‘ī pilgrimages to this site or a Shī‘ī population in Gaza in the medieval period, we cannot determine whether this tomb had any significance to the Fāṭimids. However, analyzing the significance of Hāshim in Shī‘ī sources (see below chapter 4) may indicate that this tomb was important in the Fāṭimid period. The tomb is of some importance to modern Ismā‘īlī-Shī‘īs, namely the Bohrās.¹²⁴

3.3 Tombs in Palestine Commemorating Karbalā’

The four famous tombs discussed above are connected by the family bond of the *ahl al-bayt*. Excluding ‘Alī, all of these figures were present in the battle of Karbalā’. The site of Ḥusayn’s head in Ashkelon is clearly linked to the shrine of Sukayna (in Tiberias) and the tomb of Fāṭima (in Hebron), since they were his daughters. ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Abbās’s site in Tiberias is linked to the last two tombs, since he was the cousin of the two daughters. Ḥusayn was ‘Ubaydallāh’s uncle; he was the brother of his father ‘Abbās. In Karbalā’ ‘Ubaydallāh was still a baby, Sukayna was a small child, and Fāṭima was an adult.

The two daughters shared the same father, but were born to different mothers, both of honorable tribes: Fāṭima was the daughter of Umm Ishāq of the Taym tribe, a clan of Quraysh;¹²⁵ Sukayna was the daughter of Rabbāb, who was

122 al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 174.

123 al-Nābulī, *al-Ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz*, 154.

124 See the interview in appendix 7. The actual site seems to have been reconstructed twice, once in the Mamlūk period and again during the Ottoman era. Its *minbar* was last reconstructed in 1266/1850. The actual tomb is located inside the Hāshim mosque in the city of Gaza, in the Daraj neighborhood, inside a room in its southwest corner. According to ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Abū Hashim, a *mawsim* took place in the Ottoman period, following the construction of the new tomb. See ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Abū Hashim, *al-Masājid al-athariyya fī Madinat Ghazza* (Gaza: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu‘ūn al-Dīniyya fī Qitā‘ Ghazza, 1995), 60–63 and photos on 64–69.

125 After Karbalā’, Fāṭima married her cousin Ḥasan al-Muthannā and inherited his property. Then she remarried a grandson of the Caliph ‘Uthmān, against the demand of her first husband to never marry an “enemy” of his clan (i.e., an Umayyad). See al-‘Umarī, *al-Majdi*, 281–282.

the daughter of the famous poet Imru' l-Qays, son of the king of Yemen from the tribe of Kinda.¹²⁶ 'Ubaydallāh seems to be the only survivor of 'Abbās family in Karbalā'.¹²⁷ His mother was Lubāba from the Hāshim clan.¹²⁸ According to Shī'ī tradition, these three young members of the family—Sukayna, Fāṭima, and 'Ubaydallāh, were present in Karbalā' during the notorious massacre of Ḥusayn's family on the tenth of Muḥarram 61/680 (that is, *āshūrā'*). They were among the young survivors who were spared by the Umayyad troops and taken as captives to the caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya in Damascus.¹²⁹

Interestingly, the other daughters of Ḥusayn who appear in some sources, Ruqayya and 'Ātika, did not have tombs in the region of Palestine. However, the fifth-/eleventh-century genealogist al-'Umarī refuted this claim and insisted that Ḥusayn had only two daughters—Sukayna and Fāṭima.¹³⁰ It is worth noting that a tomb of Ruqayya, daughter of Ḥusayn, does exist in Damascus. While the most important Shī'ī tombs in the neighboring countries are those of Ḥusayn's sisters,¹³¹ Sayyida Zaynab and Umm Kulthūm in Damascus and another tomb of Zaynab in Cairo, the following generation of the *ahl al-bayt* can be found among the Shī'ī tombs in Palestine, with the exception of the tomb of Sukayna (who was also known as Ruqayya) which is also buried in Damascus.

Historically, none of the Shī'ī figures mentioned in Palestine (or in Damascus and Cairo), were really buried in these places; in fact, they are probably located in al-Baqī' graveyard in Medina or in Karbalā'. Their appearance in Palestine during the Fāṭimid dynasty proves that the Fāṭimids sought to create a Shī'ī environment in this region.

126 al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 45:329.

127 Ibid., 45:39. It is noted that he was the only heir of his father's property.

128 Very little information is available about 'Ubaydallāh. He is described as a generous, learned, and religious man. The fourth Imām, 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn, used to cry when he saw him, remembering his father's cruel death. See al-'Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 436; al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 22:274; 42:75.

129 In Damascus, it was said that Ḥusayn and his mother Fāṭima were revealed to Sukayna in her dreams, asking her to stop crying for the loss of her family. See al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 45:140–141. Sukayna told every one in Syria cynically: "we are the captives of Muḥammad's family," see al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 45:155, 169. Sukayna married several times and lived in Medina. For her biography, see al-'Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 282; A. Arazi, "Sukayna," *EI*² (1997), 9:802–803. Sukayna and Fāṭima were considered *murdifāt*, i.e., women who married several men one after the other, because of their honor and beauty. See 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā'nī, "Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh," in 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, *Nawādir al-makhtūṭāt* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Ta'ālif al-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1951), 1:64–69.

130 al-'Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 281. There seems to be confusion between Ruqayya, the daughter of 'Alī, and 'Ātika, the daughter of Ḥusayn's cousin Muslim b. 'Aqil.

131 Ibid., 193.

Figure 1 describes the members of the *ahl al-bayt* and the location of their tombs in Palestine:¹³²

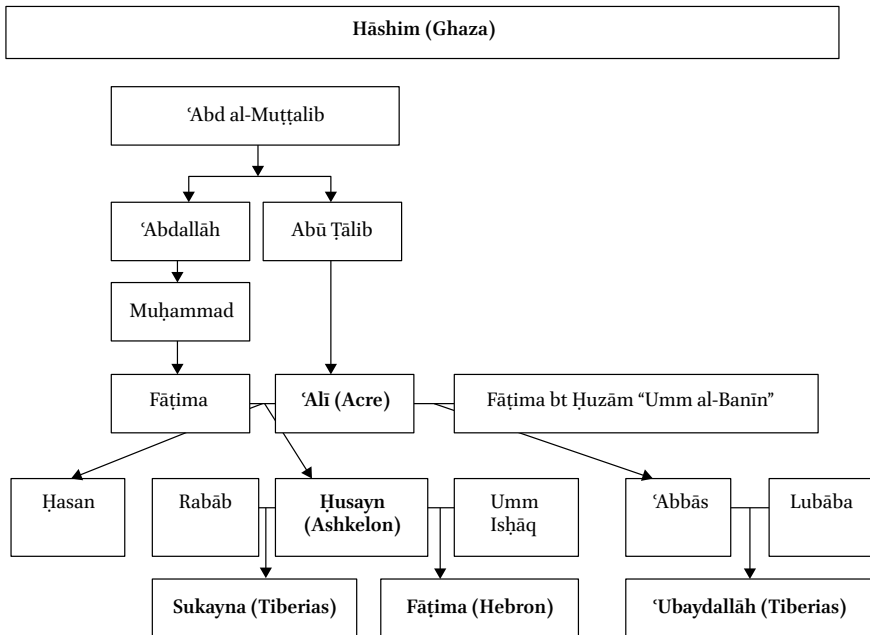


FIGURE 1 The *ahl al-bayt* and the location of their tombs in Palestine

3.3.1 A Strategic Rectangle?

From a geographical point of view, we cannot exclude the possibility that the Fāṭimids planned these locations for the tombs in Palestine in an almost symmetrical order. The locations of the four most important Shīʿī tombs in Palestine create four corners of a rectangle: two tombs in northern Palestine—ʿAlī in the northwest (Acre); Sukayna and ʿUbaydallāh b. ʿAbbās in the northeast (Tiberias); and two in southern Palestine—the head of Ḥusayn in the southwest (Ashkelon) and Fāṭima in the southeast (Hebron). This order may have had the strategic goal of protecting the territory of Palestine, a Fāṭimid strategy that seems to have been embraced later by the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk dynasties.

¹³² Umm al-Banīn (“mother of the children”) was the second wife of ʿAlī after the death of his first wife, Fāṭima, the daughter of Muḥammad. All her children were murdered in Karbalāʾ. The most famous of them was ʿAbbās who was given command and tried to bring water to their thirsty family. In addition to his elder brother Ḥasan, Ḥusayn had two sisters who do not appear in this diagram: Zaynab and Umm Kulthūm. The two sisters are buried in Damascus; nevertheless, the Fāṭimids claimed that Zaynab died in Egypt and built a tomb for her in Cairo.

Figure 2 illustrates this religious-strategic rectangle:



FIGURE 2 The religious-strategic rectangle

4 Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Shī‘īs of Tiberias and Acre

During the last decade of Fāṭimid rule, scholars from different sects and groups enjoyed quite a liberal atmosphere. A Sunnī text gives us some insight into religious life in Palestine shortly before the invasions of the crusaders. Two important Sunnī scholars, the young Andalusian judge Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī and the great philosopher Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) passed by Jerusalem, one after the other (though without meeting), on their journeys to Mecca. The first left a detailed description of Shī‘īs in northern Palestine, while the second wrote a polemic (entitled *Faḍā’ih al-bāṭiniyya*, The infamies of the Bāṭinī sect) against Ismā‘īlī propaganda.¹³³ The first document is the most relevant to our discussion.

The Mālikī scholar and judge Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-‘Arabī of Granada (d. 543/1148)¹³⁴ left a detailed description of the Imāmī and Bāṭinī Shī‘ī communities in Palestine during his journey to the region, when he passed through Acre and Tiberias between the years 485/1092 and 488/1095.¹³⁵ In his polemical book *al-‘Awāšim min al-qawāšim* (the protections from the divisions), the Andalusian scholar wrote his personal memories of his trip to Syria, where he met Shī‘ī scholars for the first time and confronted their “heretical theology.”

His journey to the region of Syria on his way to Mecca for the *ḥajj* probably reflects the longings of the Andalusian Muslims for what used to be the center of the Umayyad Caliphate.¹³⁶ This assumption may explain his shock at the increasing Shī‘ī influence in this region that was once the heart of the Sunnī world. His description of Palestine provides a rare glance into the theological polemics of the late Fāṭimid period in Palestine (the end of the fifth/eleventh century), shortly before the Frankish conquest of this region:

133 Concerning this polemic document, see Farouk Mitha, *al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 19–20.

134 He should not be confused with the Sufi philosopher Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī ‘Ibn al-‘Arabī,’ (d. 638/1240), also an Andalusian.

135 We assume that Ibn al-‘Arabī was born in 469/1076 if he was in Palestine when he was approximately twenty years old. See Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-‘Arabī, *al-‘Awāšim min al-qawāšim* (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 1997), 44–53. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s journey is also cited (inaccurately) by Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā l-Shāṭibī from Granada, a Mālikī scholar of the eighth/fourteenth century, see Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā l-Shāṭibī, *al-‘Itisām* (Riyadh: Dār al-Khānī, 1996), 1:203–210.

136 Concerning Andalusians’ longings for their Umayyad ancestors, see (in Hebrew), Joseph Drori, *Ibn el-Arabi of Seville: Journey to Eretz Israel (1092–1095)* (Jerusalem: Graf Press, University of Bar Ilan, 1993), 88–91. Drori provides a Hebrew translation of parts of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s journey, including meetings with Shī‘īs in Palestine, see *ibid.*, 113–115.

This is the first heresy¹³⁷ I have encountered in my journey, since I left my country in a period of religious excitement. On my way I only met people that followed the righteous path, [they] strengthened my belief and increased my conviction; [this was] until I reached the land of this faction¹³⁸

[the following lines include a description of Jerusalem, where he saw twenty-eight Sufi orders and two *madāris* [sing. *madrasa*, teaching institutions], one Shāfiʿī *madrasa* and a Ḥanafī one, Jews and Christian religious leaders and many famous Sunnī shaykhs] ...¹³⁹

Then I came down to the coastland for some purposes, which I have chronicled in my account of the journey. The above-mentioned coastland was full of these heretical sects, the Bāṭinī [Ismāʿīlī] and the Imāmī schools. I traveled around the coastal towns for those religious purposes around five months. I stayed in Acre, where the head of the Imāmī Shīʿīs was Abū l-Faṭḥ al-ʿAkkī and the head of the Sunnīs was a shaykh, considered a jurist [named] al-Daybaqī.¹⁴⁰ I met Abū l-Faṭḥ in his religious assembly when I was twenty years old. When he saw me, young and learned, rich in opinions and sharp, he became fond of me. [I swear] by God, that although they [the Shīʿīs] are wrong in their beliefs, they appreciate and treat with justice a person who proves his ability. He [Abū l-Faṭḥ] did not leave me and kept questioning and debating me quickly and did not restrict me. So, I talked about the wrongness of the Imāmī schools and the claim that one should study from the infallible Imām, which I explain in detail in these chapters [of the book]. [The next lines contain Shīʿī claims about the mystical nature of the Imām and God's communication with humanity by incarnation in the infallible Imām].¹⁴¹

The rumors concerning this [debate] spread and the head of the Bāṭinīs, who are called Ismāʿīlīs, asked to meet me. So Abū l-Faṭḥ [the

137 The author uses the term *bidʿa* (i.e., a prohibited innovation in Islam); here he defines what he considered heretical Shīʿī beliefs. See J. Robson, "Bidʿa," *EI*² (1986), 1:1199.

138 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Awāṣim*, 44. In al-Shāṭibī's version Ibn al-ʿArabī adds, after "this faction" the explanation: "that is, the Imāmiyya and the Bāṭiniyya [the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿīs] from the Muslim sects." See al-Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām*, 204.

139 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Awāṣim*, 44–45.

140 Abū l-Faṭḥ al-ʿAkkī does not appear in any source. We might mistakenly assume that the scholar mentioned in this text is the most prominent Shīʿī figure in Palestine in the fifth/eleventh century, Abū l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-Karājukī (d. 449/1057); However, the date of the latter's death seems too early. The Sunnī scholar is ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Daybaqī, who settled in Acre in the fifth/eleventh century. See Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ madīnat Dimashq*, 58:205.

141 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Awāṣim min al-qawāṣim*, 45–47; al-Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām*, 1:204–205.

Imāmī shaykh from Acre] took me to the religious assembly of the jurist al-Daybaqī and told me, the head of the Ismāʿīlīs wants to have a discourse with you.¹⁴² So [while traveling to Tiberias] I said: I am worried, so he said: Here it is, this place is nearby. He [the head of the Ismāʿīlīs] had already arrived there. It is a watchtower of the [Ismāʿīlī] Tiberians, a mosque in a castle by the sea, a tall building and he [their leader] was hostile to me, but I was modest and restrained. The above-mentioned castle had a long fenced passage, I crossed it and entered the castle's watchtower with reverence, and we climbed up to it. Then we found them [the Ismāʿīlīs] already assembled in the eastern corner of the watchtower.¹⁴³

Then I saw the rejection in their faces. So, I greeted them and turned to the *mihrāb* [the niche indicating the direction of the prayer] and prayed two *rakʿas* [units of prayer]. There was nothing for me to do in this place but plan my discussion with them and finish with them. I swear that [God] granted me the good fortune to be able to tell you that I was hoping to leave this assembly [alive]. I was watching the sea hitting the sharp black stones under the tower's windows and said [to myself]: they will bury me [here] ...

[In the following lines, he explains that he had learned from a similar situation that happened to a Sunnī Shāfiʿī scholar named Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Jurjānī, who also attended a hostile assembly of Ismāʿīlī and Qarmaṭī opponents in Iran].¹⁴⁴

In the following paragraphs, Ibn al-ʿArabī describes his fear among the Ismāʿīlīs and his success in leaving the assembly alive. Before he left it, he heard one of the Ismāʿīlī participants say these words to the Imāmī shaykh Abū l-Faḥḥ:

This young man is a surging sea of knowledge. We have never seen such a person [Ibn al-ʿArabī comments] and indeed they [the Ismāʿīlīs] never saw someone with such abilities [without eliminating him¹⁴⁵] since they

142 In this specific context, *yurīdu l-kalām maʿaka*, can be translated as “He wants to have a discourse of *kalām* with you,” referring to the *ʿilm al-kalām* (“science of discourse”) mentioned in the same source. *Kalām* is Islamic scholastic theology, in which each person defends the tenets of his belief. See L. Gardet, “ʿIlm al-Kalām,” *EI*² (1993), 3:1141.

143 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-ʿAwāšim*, 48; al-Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām*, 1:205.

144 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-ʿAwāšim min al-qawāšim*, 48–49. al-Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām*, 1:205–208. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Jurjānī (d. 371/982) was a Shāfiʿī scholar.

145 See this addition in al-Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām*, 1:208.

own the country. Without our honorable status with the dynasty of the king of Syria [i.e., the Fāṭimid ruler], the governor of Acre would have sentenced us, but we brought to him a letter proving how much he respects us. Normally I would never get rid of them [the Ismāʿīlīs]. When I heard these words [of the Ismāʿīlī attendant] praising me, I turned to the people in front of me and said: “This is a wonderful assembly and it is a long discussion that demands [that we] delve into details, but we will promise each other [to continue] on another day ...”

[Ibn al-ʿArabī concludes that he feared death and escaped from the assembly and never kept his promise to attend another one].¹⁴⁶

4.1 *Shīʿī Influence in Jerusalem*

The later Andalusian al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) reported an additional but shorter description of Shīʿī influence in Palestine. A report, apparently against Shīʿī scholars in Palestine, brought by al-Shāṭibī, and transmitted from Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Tartūshī (an Egyptian Mālikī scholar from the sixth/twelfth century); it concerns the celebration of *niṣf shaʿbān* (mid-Shaʿbān, the eighth month in the Hijrī calendar) in Jerusalem. It seems that this was a Shīʿī custom.

On the authority of Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī [a Ḥanbalī scholar from the fifth/eleventh century], who said: In Jerusalem there was neither the prayer for requests (*raghāʾib*), which is prayed during the [first Friday of] Rajab, nor the prayer in the middle of Shaʿbān. It was created in the year 448 [/1056], when a man known as Ibn Abī l-Ḥamrāʾ came to us from Nablus; he was good at [Qurʾānic] recitation and he stood and prayed in al-Aqṣā Mosque in the night of mid-Shaʿbān, then someone after him turned it into a sacred tradition. Then a third and a fourth joined these and eventually they became a large group. Then he [Ibn Abī l-Ḥamrāʾ] came the next year and many people prayed with him, and it [the custom] spread to al-Aqṣā Mosque and the prayer became widespread in al-Aqṣā Mosque and in private houses. Then it continued as if it is an [original] Sunna [Muslim tradition] until our days.¹⁴⁷

146 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-ʿAwāṣim min al-qawāṣim*, 52–53; al-Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām*, 1:208–209.

147 al-Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām*, 1:221. As to the controversy among Sunnī Muslims over this prayer, see the source of this tradition, including the objection to the innovation (*bidʿa*) of mid-Shaʿbān, in Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Tartūshī, *Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa-l-bidaʿ* (al-Aḥṣāʿ, Saudi Arabia: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1990), 128–133. See also D. Talmon-Heller and R. Ukeles, “The Lure of a Controversial Prayer: *Ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* (The Prayer of Great Rewards) in

Although it is not certain that the source of these two innovations, the prayer for requests (*raghā'ib*) and the prayer in mid-Sha'bān, are Shī'ī in nature, there are certain indications that they are. First, it was added to the Sunnī prayer in Jerusalem, specifically under Shī'ī Fāṭimid rule. Second, while Sunnī writings characterize these as controversial, Shī'ī literature consistently recommends that believers follow these two customs because of their benefits, in terms of forgiveness and purity.¹⁴⁸ Shī'ī traditions on mid-Sha'bān are mostly attributed to the great Imāmī shaykh from Najaf, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), who lived in the same period.¹⁴⁹

5 The End of the “Shī'ī Century”

The events that took place in the Muslim world in the middle of the fifth/eleventh century marked the end of the “Shī'ī century” and had a tremendous effect on the fate of the Shī'ī community in Palestine. The Shī'ī Būyids in Iran and Iraq and the Ḥamdānids of northern Syria, were defeated by the Turkish invasion led by the Seljuks and the Turcoman armies, who brought about a Sunnī restoration to the caliphate. After Iran and Iraq were returned to the Sunnī fold, Syria was next. The most detailed description is given by the historian Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), who described the Turcoman conquest of Palestine in 464/1071 and the situation of Ramla as a deserted and demolished town, whose market doors were left open. The Turkish army resettled the town with local farmers, most likely Sunnīs.¹⁵⁰

Later, in 467/1074, Atsiz b. Uwaq al-Khwarizmī (called Aqṣīs, d. 471/1078), a brutal Turkish commander who was hired by the Fāṭimids then rebelled against them, captured Jerusalem and returned the *khutba* to the Sunnī caliph. He captured Tiberias and had its population massacred, because he claimed they collaborated with the Fāṭimids. It is not clear whether his victims were

Medieval Arabic Texts and from a Socio-Legal Perspective,” *Der Islam* 89, nos. 1–2 (2012): 141–166. The *raghā'ib* prayer, which is recommended by Shī'īs, takes place on the first Friday of the month of Rajab. See al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 3:232–234. As to the importance of the mid-Sha'bān prayer, see al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 3:237–241.

148 al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 3:395–396 (*al-raghā'ib*); 3:408–418 (*niṣf sha'bān*). With regard to this particular night in mid-Sha'bān, all the Shī'ī traditions concerning this night are attributed to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.

149 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 94:409, 411, 416, 417.

150 Yūsuf b. Qizughlī Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān* (Beirut: Dār al-Risāla al-Ālamiyya, 2013), 19:249. The destruction of Ramla is confirmed also by the sixth/twelfth-century Jewish traveler Benjamin of Toledo, see (in Hebrew), Adler, *Itinerary*, 28.

Sunnī or Shīʿī.¹⁵¹ In 471/1078, a Fāṭimid army on its way to Damascus succeeded in recapturing Palestine.¹⁵² But this Fāṭimid recovery was short. Twenty years later the crusaders came and conquered Palestine, ending Fāṭimid rule there.

5.1 *The Lost Shīʿī Library of Haifa*

Although the sources are silent as to the fate of the Shīʿīs under Frankish rule¹⁵³ in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, it seems that the Shīʿī community was deeply harmed, since we hear nothing about it from any source for the next two centuries. A rare report of the Shīʿī historian Ibn Abī Ṭayy may characterize the fate of the Shīʿīs left under Frankish rule. This report is cited by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī in his *Lisān al-mizān*, in the biography of Asʿad b. Abī Rawḥ Abū l-Faḍl. Asʿad was an Imāmī Shīʿī judge in Tripoli (Lebanon) serving the local Banū ʿAmmār *amūrs*; he wrote several Shīʿī books of theology, jurisprudence, and anti-Sunnī polemic. He is described as a learned scholar and a pious Imāmī ascetic and instructor in the regions of Tripoli (today northern Lebanon), Syria, and Palestine. He was appointed as the judge of Tripoli after the death of his teacher, the judge ʿAbd al-ʿAziz b. Barrāj (d. 481/1088). Asʿad b. Abī Rawḥ moved to Haifa, where he founded a library that contained more than four thousand books. He died when the crusaders took over Haifa. Ibn Abī Ṭayy believed that he died sometime before the year 520/1126, but it would be more logical to assume that it took place earlier, since the crusaders conquered the town in 495/1101 and massacred its population.¹⁵⁴ There is no mention of any Shīʿī presence in Haifa in the medieval period, apart from this short biography. The most important information in the biography of Asʿad b. Abī Rawḥ concerns the *dār lil-kutub* (lit., a house for books, i.e., a library) in Haifa, which was intended to serve the Shīʿī scholars in Palestine, just as the library of Tripoli served the Shīʿī scholars in the region of Lebanon.¹⁵⁵ Asʿad may have

151 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʿat al-zamān*, 19:275, 297–298; Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 197–198.

152 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʿat al-zamān*, 19:342.

153 It seems that the crusaders had very limited knowledge concerning the difference between Sunnī and Shīʿī Islam, or the difference between Imāmīs and Ismāʿīlīs, apart from distorted information concerning the Assassins that they confronted. See Etan Kohlberg, *Belief and Law in Imāmi Shīʿism* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991), 17–24.

154 al-Maqrīzī, *Ittīʿāz al-ḥunafāʾ*, 3:26.

155 al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān*, 2:94–95. Five of Asʿad b. Abī Rawḥ's books are mentioned in his biography. Two of these books treat Sunnī jurisprudence: *al-Tabṣira fī maʿrifat al-madhabayn al-Shāfiʿiyya wa-l-Imāmīyya* and *al-Nuʿmān wa-l-muqtabas fī l-khilāf maʿa Mālik b. Anas*. Their titles indicate the author's attitude toward Sunnī schools of law, the first is aligned with the Shāfiʿī school and the second is a polemic against the Māliki school.

survived a short period after the Frankish conquest, but he would have been among the last few Shī'īs living under the crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. A scholar named Ibn al-Suruji al-Ḥusayn b. Tamīm from Qinnisrīn near Aleppo is another rare example, also reported by Ibn Abī Ṭayy. He traveled to Iraq in order to study the great *ḥadīth* compilation, the *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* by the famous fifth-/eleventh-century scholar Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī from its author's son, then died in Nablus in 518/1124.¹⁵⁶

At the end of the fifth/eleventh century, the golden age of the Shī'īs in Palestine ended with the withdrawal of the Fāṭimid Caliphate from most of this region, apart from Ashkelon.

Figure 3¹⁵⁷ summarizes the golden age of the Shī'ī settlement in Palestine in the medieval period.

Nevertheless, the fact that these titles and others by As'ad b. Abī Rawḥ are not mentioned in Shī'ī sources indicates that they were lost or destroyed together with his library and there were no other copies. See also al-Amīn al-Āmilī, *A'yān al-Shī'a*, 11:134–135. Muḥsin al-Amīn assumed that the library was destroyed by the crusaders. This is logical, considering the destruction of the Shī'ī library of Dār al-'Ilm in Tripoli (Lebanon) in 502/1108. See al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, 3:44.

156 al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān*, 2:316.

157 Background map source, Esri: <http://doc.arcgis.com/en/living-atlas/item/?itemId=014bb8b27fdd42a1a02e2feeb487feaa>.

Concerning the seas, lakes, and towns that appear in this map, note that in medieval texts and maps, the Mediterranean was referred to (from north to south) as Baḥr al-Rūm (the Byzantine Sea), and the lake of Ḥūla still existed (it was drained in the 1950s). The Lake of Tiberias (or the Sea of Galilee) was called (as today) Buḥayra Ṭabariyya, and the Dead Sea was called al-Buḥayra al-Muntina (lit., 'the stinking lake') or Baḥr al-Mawt (lit., 'the sea of death') and later al-Baḥr al-Mayyit ('the dead sea'). In most cases, the Arab names of the towns did not change: Ṣafad = Safed; 'Akkā = Acre; Ṭabariyya = Tiberias; Nāblus = Nablus; Ramla, Bayt al-Maqdis or al-Quds and from the fifth/eleventh century onward = Jerusalem; 'Asqilān = Ashqelon; al-Khalīl = Hebron; Ghazza = Gaza. See the detailed list in the introduction.

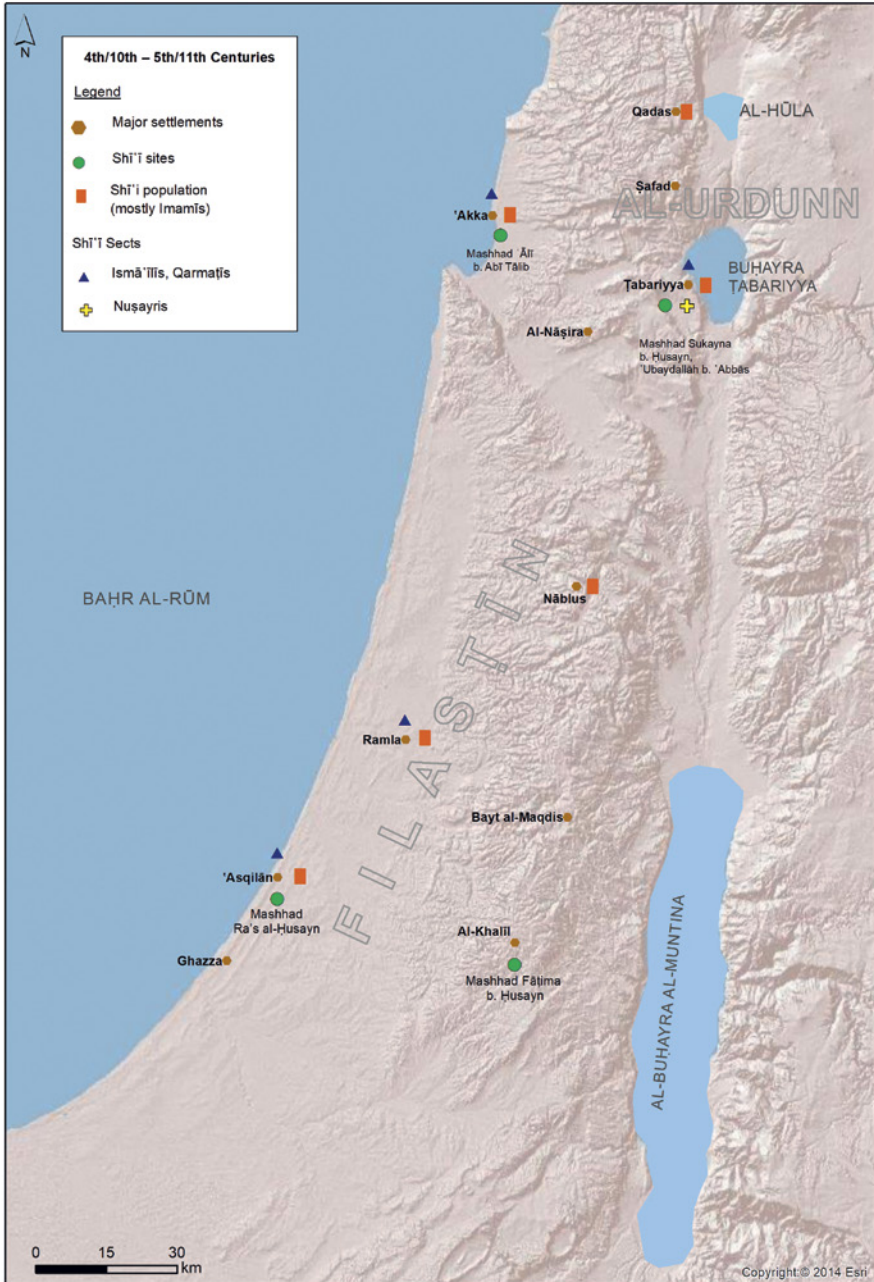


FIGURE 3 Shi'i settlement in Palestine: fourth/tenth to fifth/eleventh centuries

The Disappearance of the Shī'ī Community in Palestine

1 The Ayyūbid Restoration

Characterizing the situation of the Shī'ī community in Palestine during the Sunnī Ayyūbid period is a complicated task, given the lack of sources dealing specifically with this region. Nevertheless, we can draw some conclusions about the treatment of Shī'īs based on the attitude of Sunnī authorities to their Shī'ī coreligionists in neighboring regions, mainly Lebanon.

With Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's seizure of control over the Fāṭimid state, a process began, by which the Sunnī identity of Egypt was reinstated. The famous historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 804/1402) described him as “the Sulṭān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, king of power and *jihād*, eraser of the traces of trinity [that is, the crusaders] and the evil *rafḍ* [that is, Shī'ism] from this land.”¹ Although we do not have documentary evidence, it is logical to assume that the Shī'ī community in Palestine, if any remnant of it remained, felt unsafe. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the founder the Ayyūbid dynasty, destroyed the town of Ashkelon in 587/1191, then transferred the *minbar* of the mausoleum of head of Ḥusayn from this town, including the inscription of Badr al-Jamālī to Hebron.² This step indicates that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wanted to eliminate any trace of Shī'ism from this site.

The Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela, who passed through the region of Eretz Israel (Palestine) in the sixth/twelfth century, also described Ashkelon as a ruined town.³ He mentioned Shī'īs in Iraq and in Egypt, as well as sects in Syria, namely the Druzes in southern Lebanon (near Sidon) and Ismā'īlīs in northwest Syria (near Lādhiqiyya). Nevertheless, he did not mention any Shī'īs in Palestine.⁴

The Moroccan traveler and judge al-'Abdarī (d. 700/1300), who passed through Ashkelon at the end of the same century, saw a site of pilgrimage

1 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Khaldūn, *Riḥlat Ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 2003), 319.

2 De Smet, “La translation,” 36 and see the bibliography on this matter in note 36; Moshe Sharon, *Corpus*, 29; Talmon-Heller, Kedar, and Reiter, “Vicissitudes of a Holy Place,” 187, 195. See also the picture of the Ashkelon *minbar* that was taken to Hebron in 188.

3 Adler, *The Itinerary*, 28 (in Hebrew).

4 *Ibid.*, 18–19, 20–21, 28, 35, 53 (in Hebrew).

(*mazār*), namely, a tall mosque honoring the head of Ḥusayn. According to al-ʿAbdarī, the site also had a well built by “one of the ʿUbaydīs [Fāṭimids]”; this he based on the script written on the wall. Yet, he did not mention any Shīʿīs in Palestine.⁵

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who was eager to return the regime to Sunnī hands, abolished the Fāṭimid Caliphate in 511/1117. He and his successors ensured the supremacy of the Sunnī school by establishing Shāfiʿī *madrasas* and making al-Azhar University in Cairo a Sunnī, rather than an Ismāʿīlī institution (it remains as such to our time).⁶ Nevertheless, he did not seem to have had a systematic policy of exiling or purging Shīʿī communities. In the neighboring Syria, Ayyūbid leaders occasionally negotiated with Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs, and even, one occasion, collaborated with them against the crusaders.⁷

Nevertheless, the rise of the Mamlūk dynasty in the seventy/thirteenth century marks a significant deterioration of the authorities' attitude toward the Shīʿīs in the region of greater Syria. The new Sunnī radicalization is reflected in the writings of the prolific Ḥanbalī scholar Taqī l-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 729/1328), who served the Mamlūks.⁸

2 Mamlūk Oppression

The Sunnī restoration was eminent in the judicial field before the Mamlūks. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn abolished the mixed Sunnī-Shīʿī judicial system of the Fāṭimids, which included judges from Imāmī, Ismāʿīlī, Mālikī and Shāfiʿī schools, and replaced it with a Shāfiʿī and Mālikī (that is, Sunnī) system. Then the Mamlūks created the fourfold Shāfiʿī-Mālikī-Ḥanbalī-Ḥanafī judicial system and appointed four chief judges (*qāḍīs*) from the four Sunnī schools, and completely neglected the Shīʿī Jaʿfarī school.⁹ As Rapoport notes, the Mālikī and Ḥanbalī schools that were introduced in Safed in 786/1384 probably had not existed in

5 Muḥammad al-ʿAbdarī, *Riḥlat ʿAbdarī*, 468; Talmon-Heller, Kedar, and Reiter, “Vicissitudes of a Holy Place,” 195; D., Talmon-Heller, “Job (Ayyub), al-Husayn and Saladin in Late Ottoman Palestine”, p. 132.

6 See, for example, Ibn Khallikān, *Waḥyāt al-aʿyān*, 2:206.

7 Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 112–121.

8 See, for example, his *fatwā* about this issue, in Taqī l-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿa fatāwā shaykh al-Islām Ahmad b. Taymiyya* (Medina: Mujaḥmaʿ al-Malik Fāhid li-Ṭibāʿat al-Muḥḥaf al-Sharīf, 2004), 28:468–500.

9 Concerning the Fāṭimid Sunnī-Shīʿī judicial system in Egypt and its abolition by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in 566/1170, see al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz al-ḥunafāʾ*, 3:142, 319–320. See also Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 197, 228. Yossef Rapoport,

the town prior to this period.¹⁰ Hence, the Mamlūk judicial system did not reflect the demographic composition of Palestine or other territories under their rule; it likely reflected what they considered the ideal situation, given their goal of transforming the realm into a purely Sunnī territory.

Al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars (d. 676/1277), the most charismatic Mamlūk leader, took control of Palestine after he defeated the crusaders and chased the Mongol army from Palestine. His next goal was to eliminate the Shīʿī presence in greater Syria. An example of Baybars' new policy in the region of Palestine specifically is reflected in an inscription from the seventh/thirteenth century that was located at the entrance of the al-Jāmiʿ al-Aḥmar (the red mosque) in Safed. In this inscription, Baybars was given titles that indicate his endeavor to eliminate the "heretical rebel", i.e., the Shīʿīs:

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, the erection of this blessed mosque was ordered by our master the sultan, pillar of the world and the religion, sultan of Islam and the Muslims, eradicator of the infidels, the heretics, and the rebels, Baybars the Ṣāliḥī, partner of the commander of the faithfuls (the Caliph) and that is in the year 674 [1275].¹¹

It is interesting that this formula, "the eradicator of the infidels, the heretics and the rebels," which was similarly engraved on several inscriptions during Baybars's period in the Mamlūk sultanate,¹² only appeared in the region of Palestine in the town of Safed; this seems to be the closest district in Palestine to the Shīʿī population in this period.

2.1 *Ibn Taymiyya and His Opposition to Shīʿī Claims in Ashkelon*

In his judicial document entitled *Ra's al-Ḥusayn* (The head of Ḥusayn), Ibn Taymiyya addresses the Shīʿī legend of the transfer of Ḥusayn's head to Ashkelon and from there to Cairo. In the request for a judicial opinion (*istiftā'*), an unnamed Muslim asked Ibn Taymiyya:

What is the opinion of the scholars, experts of religion, and leaders of the Muslims, may God be pleased with them all, concerning the mausoleum attributed to Ḥusayn, may God be pleased of him, in the city of Cairo,

"Legal Diversity in the Age of Taqlīd: The Four Chief Qāḍīs under the Mamluks," *Islamic Law and Society* 10, no. 2 (2003), 210–228.

10 Rapoport, "Legal Diversity," 213.

11 Evliya Tshlebi, trans. St. H. Stephan, *Travels in Palestine 1648–1650* (Jerusalem: Ariel, 1980), 22.

12 Sharon, *Corpus*, 2:80.

is it true or not? ... And what about what some of the people mention about the mausoleum that existed in Ashkelon, is it true or not? What about those who claimed that the head was transferred to the city of the prophet [Medina], not to Syria or Egypt?¹³

Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā* (judicial opinion) was clear: the entire story was an invention created by the "rāfiḍa (Shī'ī) liars." His answer begins with the following phrase:

The mausoleum attributed to Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, may God be pleased with them both, that [it is] in Cairo, is an invented lie.¹⁴

The end of the *fatwā* sums up his opinion concerning the two locations of the head, Ashkelon and Cairo:

The purpose was to ensure the location of the head of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him, and to clarify that the places that are well-known among the people in Egypt and in Syria as the tomb of Ḥusayn that contain his head are all a lie, invention, untrue, and false ...¹⁵

At the beginning of his *fatwā*, Ibn Taymiyya explained that the tomb in Cairo was transferred from Ashkelon. Yet, no one knew about this site in Ashkelon for some four hundred thirty years (since the murder of Ḥusayn in Karbalā' to the fifth/eleventh century) and there is no evidence that the tomb belonged to Ḥusayn. He explained that the revelation of this tomb may derive from a believer's dream, which is unreliable.¹⁶

In his *fatwā*, Ibn Taymiyya tried to answer the question, if it was not Ḥusayn's mausoleum, whose grave was in Ashkelon? He stated that it was not a Muslim, but a Christian buried in this tomb in Ashkelon, maybe one of Jesus's apostles (he may have been hinting at the legend of the head of John the Baptist in Damascus). He explained that the popular cult of saints, common in Judaism and Christianity, had penetrated Islam, and was especially prevalent among Shī'ī extremists (*ghulāt*) who exaggerate their adoration of the Imāms and

13 Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *Ra's al-Ḥusayn* (Maṭba'at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1949), 3.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

15 See appendix 3 for the Arabic text and its translation to English.

16 Taqī l-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *Ra's al-Ḥusayn*, 4–9.

spread this innovation (*bid'ā*). Ibn Taymiyya explained that the cult of tombs in general was a heresy and it was forbidden by the Prophet Muḥammad himself.¹⁷

Ibn Taymiyya claimed that no one ever went on a pilgrimage to visit Ḥusayn's head prior to the Fāṭimid 'Ubaydīs, and that no single scholar claimed that Ashkelon was the location of Ḥusayn's head, before the Fāṭimids revealed its location. Then he raised a logical question: "If the head of Ḥusayn really was in Ashkelon, how could the later [Shī'īs who claimed this] know better than their predecessors?"¹⁸ His next explanation concerned the real location of the head, which he thought was more likely in al-Baqī' graveyard, with the rest of the family of the Prophet, in Medina.¹⁹

In the conclusion of this *fatwā*, Ibn Taymiyya claimed that what he considered "the lie of the head of Ḥusayn," was invented for "corrupt motives" (*aghrād fāsida*), though he does not specify what these were. He stressed that it was important to beware of the spread of popular cults of tombs, as these practices were spread by Bāṭinī sects among ordinary Sunnīs (*al-ʿamma*). Ibn Taymiyya explained that this heretical innovation (*bid'ā*) was prohibited in all four schools of Islam, and that the head of Ḥusayn is not in Ashkelon or in Cairo.²⁰

2.2 *Blaming the Shī'a for Losing Palestine to the Franks*

Ibn Taymiyya is well-known for his rejection of the legitimacy of Shī'ism. He described them as ignorant people who were misguided and he accused them of *bida'* (innovations) and *ghuluww* (extremism) in their admiration of the prophets and the twelve Imāms, who they wrongly believed to be infallible (*maʿṣūm*). In some of his books, Ibn Taymiyya claimed that there is a controversy concerning whether or not Imāmī Shī'īs are Muslims. With regard to other Shī'ī sects, Ibn Taymiyya viewed them as heretical and outside the bounds of Islam. His accusation of heresy (*takfīr*) was mainly directed at the Ismāʿīlīs, the Druzes, and the Nuṣayrīs.²¹

17 Ibid., 10–15.

18 Ibid., 16.

19 Ibid., 30.

20 Ibid., 34–35. Interestingly, now Sunnī authorities present an entirely different view of this issue. Sayyid Ḥusayn Muḥammad al-Rifāʿī, a Shāfiʿī from al-Azhar, defends the claim that the head of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī was buried in Ashqelon then transferred to Cairo. This belief in the presence of Ḥusayn's head in Cairo was embraced by Sufi Egyptians. See, for example, al-Shabalanjī (a nineteenth-century Sufi Shāfiʿī Egyptian) who defends the idea that Ḥusayn's head was placed in Cairo after its transfer from Ashqelon. Mu'min b. Ḥasan al-Shabalanjī, *Nūr al-abṣār fī manāqib Āl Bayt al-nabī l-mukhtār* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Muyammaniyya, 1894), 121–126.

21 Concerning Ibn Taymiyya's attitude on the place of the Imāmīs in Islam, see Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, *Minhaj al-sunna* (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Qurtuba, 985/1406), 2:280–281;

Ibn Taymiyya insisted that the Shī'īs had betrayed the community of Muslims and collaborated with their enemies; in particular, he accused the Shī'īs of Acre of helping the crusaders capture the town from the Muslims.²² However, there is no evidence to support these accusations in any of the medieval sources.

Ibn Taymiyya was not the only Sunnī scholar to accuse the Shī'īs of betraying Islam in Palestine. The historian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) accused the Fāṭimids of intentionally allowing the crusader invasion of Palestine:

It is said that the 'Alawī [i.e., Shī'ī] rulers of Egypt, when they saw the power of the Seljuk dynasty and their ability to conquer al-Shām (greater Syria) to Gaza, and that there was no district remaining between them [the Seljuks] and Egypt to protect them, and that the penetration of [the Seljuk general] Aqṣīs into Egypt and its siege, they were terrified. They sent the crusaders a message, inviting them to attack Shām and take control of it, and [remain] between them [the Fāṭimids] and the Muslims [i.e., the Seljuks], and God knows best.²³

The Egyptian historian Ibn Taghribirdī (d. 874/1469) wrote about the first crusade to Jerusalem, and made the following accusation:

... And it is surprising that the Franks, when they attacked the Muslims were extremely weak from hunger and the lack of provisions, to the point that they even ate carrion, while the armies of Islam were at the peak of their power and numbers. Nevertheless, they [the Franks] beat the Muslims and divided their troops and the fastest horsemen were defeated, and they conquered the *mujāhidūn* [warriors in *jihād*] and disciplined [fighters]. Then Duqmāq, Riḍwān [sons of the Sunnī *amir* Tāj al-Dawla Tutush] and the *amirs* wrote to the 'Abbāsīd caliph, that is, al-Mustazhir [d. 512/1118] for help ... all of this happened and the Egyptian [Fāṭimid] armies did not prepare for any attack.²⁴

Yaron Friedman, *The Nusayri-'Alawis*, 198–199. On his attitude to the Druzes and the Nuṣayrīs, see Yaron Friedman, "Ibn Taymiyya's Fatāwā against the Nuṣayri-'Alawī sect," *Der Islam* 82, no. 2 (2005), 349–363.

22 Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), 3:546.

23 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, 10:273. This note is mentioned in the events of the year 491/1097.

24 Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b. al-Amīr Sayf al-Dīn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira* (Cairo: al-Hay'a l-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma li-l-Kutāb, 1972), 8:416.

However, the historian Mujīr al-Dīn (d. 861/1456) brought a more balanced attitude. He wrote that the Fāṭimid failure to defend Jerusalem was a result of the weakness of the caliphate of al-Mustaʿlī bi-Llāh (484–95/1094–1101) and not intentional.²⁵

Interestingly, some western historians nowadays embrace the theory that the Fāṭimids contributed to the fall of Palestine. For example, Ehrenkreutz provides a logical explanation, one based on the crucial difference between how the Fāṭimids thought of Jerusalem, as only one of a number of holy towns in Islam (along with Mecca, Medina, Najaf, and Karbalāʾ), and how the Byzantines and crusaders were focused on liberating Jerusalem in time for the second Christian millennium. While the Franks considered Palestine a holy land, for the Fāṭimids its importance was more strategic than religious. For them it served as a buffer zone between their center in Egypt and potential invaders from northern Syria.²⁶

3 Persecutions

Ibn Taymiyya's vehement accusations against the Shīʿa in general and his negative approach toward the cult of the head of Ḥusayn specifically, characterized the attitude of the Sunnī Mamlūk authorities toward the Shīʿī minorities under their control. Although we do not have tangible information about the oppression of the Shīʿī communities in Palestine, if any of them survived, there were several cases of persecution under Mamlūk rule in the neighboring regions of Syria and Lebanon.²⁷ Al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* (The dawn of the blind) includes an order by the Mamlūks prohibiting the practice of Shīʿism in Beirut and Sidon.²⁸

25 Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī l-ʿUlaymī, *al-Uns al-jalīl bi-taʾrīkh al-quds wa-l-khalīl* (Amman/Hebron: Maktabat Dandīs, 1999), 1:447.

26 Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, "The Fatimids in Palestine: The Unwitting Promoters of the Crusades," in Amnon Cohen and Gabriel Baer (eds.), *Egypt and Palestine: A Millennium of Association (868–1948)* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 66–72. According to Daftary, there were negotiations between the Fāṭimids and the crusaders, during which the Fāṭimids sought crusader aid against the Turkish invasion. Nevertheless, the Fāṭimids underestimated the Frankish threat. See Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 243.

27 The persecution was not only against the Shīʿīs, but also against scholars, mystics, or mad men considered heretics or suspected in rebelling, see E. Strauss, "L'inquisition dans l'état Mamlouk," *Rivista degli studi orientali*, 25 (1950), 11–26.

28 See, for example, the prohibition (in 764/1362) of Shīʿī faith in Beirut and Sidon and the order to return the population to the "right" Sunnī belief; this included a warning that otherwise they (the Shīʿī) would be killed. See Aḥmad b. ʿAlī l-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fi šināʾat al-inshāʾ* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya, 1918), 13:13–20.

At the end of the seventh/thirteenth century and at the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century, the Mamlūks made three deadly expeditions to the region of Qisrawān (Mount Lebanon, Junya) and Tripoli; these were aimed at eliminating the Shīʿī Imāmī and Nuṣayrī communities. Ibn Taymiyya himself took part in the last campaign, which took place in 705/1305.²⁹

The fate of Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Makkī “the first martyr (*shahīd*)” from southern Lebanon (Jizzīn), and that of other eighth-/fourteenth-century Lebanese and Syrian Shīʿī scholars serves as proof of Sunnī intolerance during this period.³⁰ Al-Makkī was executed for his Shīʿī beliefs in Damascus in the year 786/1384. Some years before his death, al-Makkī had taken trips to Palestine, and visited Jerusalem and Hebron, though the sources concerning his journey do not mention a Shīʿī presence in Palestine.³¹

Some years earlier, the Sufi geographer Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Dimashqī (d. 725/1325 or 728/1328) passed through the region of Palestine and mentioned Acre, Safed, Tiberias, and Ashkelon, but did not mention any Shīʿī population in these places. And we must also note that in his descriptions of Syria and Lebanon, al-Dimashqī mentioned the Nuṣayrīs near Lādhiqiyya (modern-day Lādhiqiyya), the Ismāʿīlīs in Jabal Summāq (in today’s northern Syria, Idlib district), and the Imāmīs in Jabal ʿĀmil. Yet, in Palestine al-Dimashqī did not mention a Shīʿī population; he only referred to the Druzes in Buqayʿa (west of Safed, today, this is the Druze village of Pqīʿin). This group is an offspring of the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa that had abandoned Islam, two centuries before the time of al-Dimashqī.³² This leaves us to wonder what happened to the Shīʿī community of Palestine.

3.1 *A Disturbing Silence*

Al-Makkī and al-Dimashqī are not the only examples of travelers who do not mention a Shīʿī presence in the context of their journeys to Palestine. Late medieval sources from the sixth/twelfth century onward remain silent about a

29 See, in detail, William Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600–2011* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 69–72.

30 Stefan Winter, “Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Makkī ‘al-Shahīd al-Awwal’ (d. 1384) and the Shīʿah of Syria,” *Mamluk Studies Review* 3 (1999), 159–182; Rapoport, “Legal Diversity,” 210–228. Rapoport provides a list of twenty-six trials, sixteen of which ended with execution, most were on decisions by Mālikī judges, see Rapoport, “Legal Diversity,” 224. See also Lutz Wiederhold, “Blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions (*sabb al-rasūl, sabb al-ṣaḥābah*): The Introduction of the Topic into Shafīʿī Legal Literature and its Relevance for Legal Practice under Mamluk Rule,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 42, part 1 (1997), 47–50.

31 al-Amīn al-Āmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, 10:57.

32 al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 211–213.

Shī'ī presence in this region. The Andalusian traveler Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217), who claimed that Shī'ī groups formed a majority in the region of Damascus, passed Acre during the period of the Frankish Kingdom of Jerusalem and did not mention any Shī'ī group.³³ This silence about any Shī'īs for a long period is problematic, and raises questions as to the reasons for the disappearance of their tribes (mainly the 'Āmila), their intellectual and religious centers (mostly Ramla, Tiberias, and Acre), and those who worshiped at their holy sites (the mausoleum in Ashkelon and the other sacred tombs).

We cannot explain the disappearance of the Shī'īs by a single reason, but by a combination of several factors. The first reason relates to the natural disasters that befell the region of Palestine. Ramla, which seems to have been the main center of Shī'ī activity, was destroyed by two earthquakes, one in 425/1033 and a second 461/1068; the town was almost completely deserted before its capture by the crusaders.³⁴

The second reason was the perpetual wars that took place in towns where Shī'īs lived, that is, mainly Ramla, Tiberias, and Acre.³⁵ If any Shī'īs survived in Ramla after the earthquakes and the town's repopulation by farmers and then they faced its conquest by the crusaders, they probably disappeared definitively after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn destroyed the town in 583/1187 to prevent it falling to the Franks.³⁶ In the same year, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn also burned Tiberias for the same reasons. Just a century earlier, Tiberias was the second most important Shī'ī center in Palestine.³⁷ Knowing he could not hold Ashkelon against Richard of England, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn sacrificed this town as well. Its Muslim population migrated to Syria and Egypt.³⁸

The calamities that devastated Palestine during these three centuries hurt the entire population of the region. These disasters included terrible earthquakes in the fifth/eleventh century, the invasion of Turks at the end of the same century, the invasion and conquest of Palestine by the crusaders during

33 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Jubayr, *Risālat i'tibār al-nāsik fī dhikr al-āthār al-karīma wa-l-manāsik* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1986), 227. When Ibn Jubayr mentioned the Shī'ī majority "in this land" in the context of his description of Damascus, he referred to northern Syria (i.e., the region which is today Lebanon and Syria), not to Palestine. His description of Acre (in Palestine) during the crusaders does not note any trace of Shī'ism, in Ibn Jubayr, *Risāla*, 248–256.

34 al-'Ulaymī, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, 1:443, 444; Andrew Petersen, "Ramla after the Crusaders," in Urbain Vermeulen and Daniel De Smet (eds.), *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 3:345–346.

35 See the destruction of Acre, Tiberias, and Ashkelon in the eighth/fourteenth century, in the descriptions of Ibn Baṭṭūta, *Rihla*, 1:252–257.

36 E. Honigmann, «Ramla,» *EI*² (1995), 8:424.

37 M. Lavergne, «Ṭabariyya,» *EI*² (2000), 10:19.

38 R. Hartmann [B. Lewis], «'Askilān,» *EI*² (1986), 1:711.

most of the sixth/twelfth century,³⁹ the invasion of the Mongols in the seventh/thirteenth century, the strategic destruction of coastal cities by the Ayyūbid Mamlūks in the same century (to prevent the return of the Franks),⁴⁰ and several plagues including the Black Death in the eighth/fourteenth century.⁴¹

The silence concerning the Shī'īs of Palestine cannot be a coincidence, since they do not appear in Palestine in any medieval source from the sixth/twelfth and the seventh/thirteenth century, that is, two centuries after the end of Fāṭimid rule in Palestine. Their disappearance seems to be the result of a combination of natural disasters and the Shī'īs escaping persecution by migrating elsewhere. If Shī'īs survived in Palestine, they escaped the perpetual wars, the natural calamities, and the anti-Shī'ī policy of the Mamlūks that were justified by Ibn Taymiyya and probably supported by the majority of the Sunnī population.

During the medieval history of Islam, the majority of the Muslims in Palestine were Sunnīs; the Shī'ī presence was noted mainly during the fourth/tenth and the fifth/eleventh centuries, but they were still a weak minority, and lacked the ability to perform Shī'ī rituals publicly. Thus, the sources do not mention public celebrations of Shī'ī feasts or the mourning of 'āshūrā' in Palestine.

We can assume that during the fifth/eleventh century, the Shī'ī population in Palestine had reached its peak; this was a result of Fāṭimid rule and the immigration of Shī'īs who fled to Palestine (which was still under Shī'ī control) from the Turkish invasion in Iraq and Syria. Later, as result of the crusades and the ongoing wars in Palestine and the Sunnī domination from the seventh/thirteenth century onward, the Shī'īs in Palestine remained defenseless; at that point, they immigrated north, where they joined the neighboring Shī'ī center in the region of Jabal 'Āmil (modern-day southern Lebanon).⁴²

39 Harris, *Lebanon*, 62–63. Harris claims that fugitives from Galilee in northern Palestine (i.e., those who escaped the Franks), joined their coreligionists in Lebanon. However, Harris does not provide references.

40 Concerning this policy, see David Ayalon, "Egypt as a Dominant Factor in Syria and Palestine during the Islamic Period," in Amnon Cohen and Gabriel Baer (eds.), *Egypt and Palestine: A Millenium of Association (868–1948)* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 33–37.

41 Ole Jørgen Benedictow, *The Black Death, 1346–1353: The Complete History* (Boydell Press, 2004), 64–65.

42 A biography of a Shī'ī scholar from the end of the fifth/eleventh century demonstrates this immigration. According to Ibn Abī Ṭayy, the genealogist and poet al-Ashraf b. al-A'azz who was born in Ramla in 482/1089, immigrated to Tyre and then settled in Aleppo because of the crusades. See, for example, al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 2:193; al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānif al-Shī'a*, 24:303.

The Shī'īs in Galilee

1 The Region of Safed

The first indication of the presence of Shī'īs in the district of Safed (though not in the town itself), appears during the Mamlūk period in the second half of the eighth/fourteenth century.

The historian al-'Uthmānī (d. 780/1378), repeated al-Dimashqī's description in *Ta'riḫ Ṣafad*, in which he explained that in the district of Safed, there was a village called Hūnīn (today in northern Galilee, Israel), which was inhabited entirely by Shī'īs.¹ In general, he noted, the district of Safed had a majority of Shī'īs and Druzes.²

A century later, the Egyptian historian al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418) explained that the population of Hūnīn in the region of Safed was Shī'ī.³ Nevertheless, neither al-'Uthmānī nor al-Qalqashandī mentioned any Shī'ī population elsewhere in Palestine. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 804/1402) mentioned the town of Safed in his *Riḥla*, but did not mention Shī'īs at all.⁴ Mujīr al-Dīn, the tenth-/sixteenth-century judge (*qāḍī*) from Jerusalem, mentioned in *al-Uns al-jalīl* the towns of Ashkelon, including what “the Fāṭimids claimed was the *mashhad* of Ḥusayn.” He also mentioned Ramla, which had been almost totally destroyed during the time of the crusaders and up to his period, and other towns in the region of Hebron and Jerusalem. Yet, his detailed description did not include any Shī'ī population in Palestine.⁵

Throughout most of the Ottoman period, the area was characterized by a certain amount of autonomy among the minorities, but Shī'īs suspected of collaborating with the Iranian Ṣafavids (a dynasty that transformed Iran into

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- 1 Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Uthmānī, *Ta'riḫ Ṣafad* (Damascus: al-Takwīn, 2009), 119.
 - 2 Ibid., 126. Like Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Dimashqī, al-'Uthmānī also mentions the Druzes in al-Buqay'a village. Interestingly, both al-Dimashqī and al-'Uthmānī describe al-Nabī Shu'ayb, the tomb of Jethro near Tiberias, though they do not mention a Druze cult in this location. See al-'Uthmānī, 123–124. Shī'īs are not mentioned in Tiberias or Acre.
 - 3 al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, 4:157.
 - 4 Ibn Khaldūn, *Riḥla*, 413–414.
 - 5 al-'Ulaymī, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, 2:128–131, 135; D., Talmon-Heller, “Job (Ayyub), al-Husayn and Saladin in Late Ottoman Palestine”, p. 131–132.

a Shī'ī power in the tenth/sixteenth century) were executed, sometimes. This was the case of the Lebanese Shī'ī scholar Zayn al-Dīn b. 'Alī l-Jubā'ī l-Āmilī “the Second Martyr” (executed in 965/1558). Al-Āmilī passed through Ramla during one of his trips from Damascus to Egypt, and stopped and prayed in the well-known white mosque (built during the Umayyad period), where he wrote of being alone in a cave in the year 960/1552. Nevertheless, as in the case of the first martyr (*shahīd*), the second martyr did not mention any Shī'ī presence in Ramla or elsewhere in Palestine.⁶ Like the Arab sources, the Turkish Ottoman documents that mentioned the *rafizi* (Shī'īs) were silent concerning most of Palestine. The only Shī'ī population that was mentioned in Palestine in this period, was located in northern Galilee, mainly in the district of Safed.⁷

1.1 *The Druze Decline: Shī'ī Crisis and Opportunity*

The decline of the Druze principality, which enjoyed a great deal of autonomy under Muslim authorities, was a significant development and dramatically influenced the Shī'ī population. First, from the sixth/twelfth to the ninth/fifteenth centuries, the Druze *amīrs* from Tanūkh tribal federations controlled parts of southern Lebanon and Galilee, including the region of Safed; then from the ninth/fifteenth to the late eleventh/seventeenth centuries, the Druze *amīrs* from the Ma'n tribal federations controlled the same areas.⁸

Until the end of the eleventh/seventeenth century, the Druzes controlled the Shī'ī territories and raised taxes for the Ottomans. Nevertheless, the Druze leader Fakhr al-Dīn ibn Qurqumāz (the second) had ambitious plans to pursue

6 al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 53:296–297.

7 See, for example, Stefan H. Winter, “Shiite Emirs and Ottoman Authorities: The Campaign Against the Hamadas of Mt. Lebanon, 1693–1694,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 18 (2000), 233, 235.

8 The zenith of the Druze rule in northern Palestine was during the reign of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma'nī, who also ruled in the district of Safed, which included several Shī'ī villages. On the process of the Druze immigration to Ḥawrān, see Firro, *History of the Druzes*, 31–32, 37, 42, 45; also see his map on 44; it shows that most of the Druze villages in Palestine had disappeared by 1890. See also Nejla M. Abu Izzedin, *The Druzes: A New Study of their History, Faith, and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1984) 42–43, 131–133. According to Abu Izzedin, there were also Druzes in southern Palestine, including Ramla, Gaza, Ashdod, and Ashqelon during the fifth/eleventh century. Most of the villages in Galilee that appear in Druze sources from the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth century, no longer exist.

complete independence; this eventually made him a rebel. Following the severe reaction of the Ottoman Empire, in 1045/1635 the Druze amirate suffered a crisis, which reached its peak with Fakhr al-Dīn's detention and execution in Constantinople. The collapse of Druze Ma'n control in Safed and the immigration of a large part of the Druzes from northern Palestine to the Ḥawrān (in today's southwestern Syria), where they were referred to as the Ṣafadiyya, created a political void. The Sublime Porte (that is, the court of the Ottoman Empire) encouraged a new ruling family in Lebanon, the Shihābīs, to raid the region of Jabal 'Āmil that had rebelled and refused to pay the *miri* taxes (due on lands leased from the government).⁹

Ultimately, the political vacuum created after the fall of the Druze dominance was filled in the second half of the eleventh/seventeenth century and the beginning of the twelfth/eighteenth, by two new powers in Galilee. In Palestine the Sunnī Zaydānī clan (pl. *Zayādina*) took control of most of the villages in Galilee. In Jabal 'Āmil, after the fall of the Ma'nīs, the Shī'īs suffered from a wave of punitive raids by the new Sunnī Shihābī *amūrs* of Sidon. These conflicts gradually diminished as the Ottoman authorities became increasingly preoccupied with external wars, mainly against Russia.¹⁰

A new era began in the first half of the twelfth/eighteenth century with the rise of the Shī'ī Naṣṣār family, who succeeded in uniting the Shī'ī leaders of Jabal 'Āmil and resettling deserted villages in southern Lebanon and northern Galilee. The Zaydān tribes oppressed the Druzes in Galilee, encouraging their immigration to Ḥawrān. This step helped the Shī'īs recover and settle in ruined villages in Galilee. By the 1760s and 1770s, Shī'īs in southern Lebanon and Galilee enjoyed a great deal of independence.

9 On the death of the last Ma'n *amīr* (who died without heirs), the Matāwlī rebellion and raids against them in the district of Safed and Jabal 'Āmil (mainly in 1707 and 1743), and the Ottoman wars against Russia in Crimea and other fronts, see Ḥaydar Aḥmad al-Shihābī, *Ta'rikh al-amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad al-Shihābī: Lubnān fī zill al-imāra al-shihābiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1993), 3:961, 988, 995; Ṭannūs al-Shidyāq, *Akhbār al-a'yān fī jabal Lubnān* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1993), 2:132, 133, 134, 140, 156.

10 Āl Ṣafā, *Ta'rikh Jabal 'Āmil* (Beirut: Maṭābi' Dār Mu'jam Matn al-Lugha, n.d.), 108–116.

2 The Matāwila in Northern Palestine

Sources from the twelfth/eighteenth century dealing with northern Palestine, that is, Galilee, mentioned a population called Matāwila or the Matāwlīs¹¹—Imāmī Shī'īs originating from the region that is now southern Lebanon. The presence of this community seems to reflect an expansion of the Jabal 'Āmil community to the south; this expansion was probably consolidated under the leadership of the Naṣṣār clan from the 'Alī l-Aṣghar family, mainly under the leadership of Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār (1125–95/1713–80). Ḥaydar Aḥmad al-Shihābī, an important historian of Lebanon, who was also a ruler of Mount Lebanon between 1117/1705 and 1148/1732, provides a clear statement concerning the Shī'ī expansion in Galilee:

When the shaykhs of the Matāwlīs became more powerful than the [Ottoman] authority, they expanded to the suburbs of the Shūf Mountains and Marj 'Ayūn and to the Ḥūla [Valley, in northeast Galilee].¹²

One of their first acts of independence, and one that characterized Naṣṣār rule, involved the establishment of a united militia armed with light weapons (mostly swords and guns), soldiers, and cavalry. They fortified the old and deserted castles in the Shī'ī regions, including the Naṣṣār center in Tibnīn (today southern Lebanon) and Hūnīn (northernmost Galilee), to ensure the security of the lands belonging to Matāwlī villages.¹³ Note that during this period, the Shī'īs themselves did not consider northern Galilee a foreign country, but rather as southern Jabal 'Āmil. We can see a clear indication of this already in the twelfth/eighteenth century, in the list of the villages of Jabal 'Āmil. This list appears in the book of the Shī'ī shaykh Yūsuf al-Baḥraynī (d. 1186/1772), and includes the following Shī'ī villages in Galilee:

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- 11 Muḥsin al-Amīn provides two possible explanations of the root of the name Matāwila (Matāwlīs): (1) It is a combination of the three words said by the Shī'ī warriors, i.e., *muttu walīyyan li-'Alī* (I died loyal/close to 'Alī); (2) *li-tawallīhim 'Alīyyan wa-abnā'ahu* (due to their loyalty to 'Alī and his descendants). See Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Khīṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil* (al-Dār al-'Ālamiyya li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Naṣr wa-l-Tawzī', 1983), 67–68.
 - 12 al-Shihābī, *Ta'riḫh*, 4:1084. About this expansion, the French explorer Victor Guérin, who visited Matāwlī villages in the nineteenth century (in what he called northern Palestine), reported that most of the Shī'īs seemed like new villagers living in the ruins of older settlements. Guérin, *Description Géographique Historique et Archéologique de la Palestine* (Galilée, vol. 2) (Paris: L'Imprimerie imperial, 1868), 2:124, 353, 362. See Guérin's definition of Hūnīn as a village in the northern Palestine, *ibid.*, 372.
 - 13 'Āl Ṣafā, *Ta'riḫh Jabal 'Āmil*, 86–87, 118.

Mālkiyya, Qadas, another “village of the tomb of Joshua,” Šalḥa, and al-Baṣṣa.¹⁴ These villages were later annexed to Palestine in the 1920s.

2.1 Galilee between Zāhir al-‘Umar and Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār

Zāhir al-‘Umar (1101–89/1689–1775), an Arab Sunnī leader of the Zaydānī tribe, took control of the region of Galilee.¹⁵ Nevertheless, we do not possess sources indicating the exact period of the Zaydānīs’ immigration from the Ma‘ārat Nu‘mān in northern Syria to Palestine, or any information concerning the religious leanings of the Zaydānīs.

Zāhir claimed that two villages, al-Baṣṣa (19 kilometers north of Acre) and Mārūn (today Mārūn al-Ra’s, near Tibnīn in southern Jabal ‘Āmil), belonged to him. Zāhir’s claim supports the thesis that villages in northern Palestine were settled by Shī‘īs close to his time, and this spurred him to refuse to acknowledge that they were part of the Tibnīn district. Al-Baṣṣa was populated by Sunnīs, and also by Shī‘īs who probably immigrated to it in the eleventh/seventeenth century, a situation that created tension in the village.¹⁶ Zāhir’s claim that al-Baṣṣa and Mārūn were his led to a battle with Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār; this battle took place near the village of Tirbīkha (also called Ṭirbīkha and later Tarbīkha) in upper Galilee in 1155/1749.¹⁷ Al-Naṣṣār’s troops succeeded

14 Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Baḥraynī, *al-Kashkūl al-musammā Anīs al-Musāfir wa-Jalīs al-Ḥādīr* (Najaf: al-Maktaba l-Ḥaydariyya, 1966), 1:657–660. The list seems to have been brought by a shaykh who left Jabal ‘Āmil and met al-Baḥraynī in Iraq. Yūsuf al-Baḥraynī never visited Lebanon or Palestine. After leaving Bahrayn, he traveled in Kirmān (Iran) and al-Qaṭīf (the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula) and settled in Karbalā’.

15 Mikhā’il al-Šabbāgh, *Ta’rikh al-Shaykh Zāhir al-‘Umar al-Zaydānī* (Ḥarīsa, Lebanon: Maṭba‘at al-Qiddīs Būlus, n.d.), 15–17. It is interesting to note that according to some historians, such as Mikhā’il al-Šabbāgh, grandson of Zāhir al-‘Umar’s doctor, the members of the Zaydānī tribe were *ashrāf*, that is, descendants of Zayd b. Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, from the latter’s wife Fāṭima.

16 Āl Ṣafā, *Ta’rikh Jabal ‘Āmil*, 96–97. In the case reported by Āl Ṣafā, a “Palestinian” (i.e., a local Sunnī from the town) cursed the religion of a Shī‘ī trader. Although al-Baṣṣa was under Zāhir’s control, al-Naṣṣār came with his troops and hanged the “Palestinian.” Regardless of its reliability, this story reflects the tension following the settlement of Matāwliš in the village.

17 Āl Ṣafā, *Ta’rikh Jabal ‘Āmil*, 118. Āl Ṣafā, who lived in the first half of the twentieth century, wrote that Zāhir claimed that the two villages “belonged to Palestine.” This assumption is anachronistic. Nevertheless, it seems that he meant that it belonged to territories that were part of the districts of Safed and Acre, not under the Naṣṣār clan previously. On the Shī‘ī rule of the Naṣṣār clan in the Jabal ‘Āmil/Bilād Bishāra region (today southern Lebanon), see Stefan Winter, *The Shītes of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule 1516–1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 126–127.

in stopping the advance of Zāhir's forces. Several historians report a popular story that al-Naṣṣār's two sons were caught as captives in the battle. Impressed by Zāhir's generosity to his sons, al-Naṣṣār called for a ceasefire and signed a defense agreement. The control of the two disputed villages was transferred to al-Naṣṣār and the latter demonstrated his dominance in the region by building a *khān* (inn) near al-Baṣṣa. In fact, this agreement was based on political and economic interests. In 1165/1751 a peace treaty was reached between Zāhir and al-Naṣṣār in Sidon. In 1201/1768 the two sides again signed a cooperation agreement, this time in Acre; the agreement made the two sides powerful and autonomous and enabled them to refuse to pay the *miri* taxes to the Ottoman authorities, who were still busy with the war against Russia. However, at the administrative level, the Matāwliš were subordinated to Zāhir's rule in Acre.¹⁸

Sa'dūn Ḥamāda, a modern historian of the Shī'īs in Lebanon, describes the period of Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār's rule in Jabal 'Āmil as the golden era of the Shī'ī community in the region (modern day southern Lebanon). From the perspective of Galilee, the history of Lebanon has merged with that of Palestine; therefore, we could say that this was a thriving period for the Shī'īs of Palestine as well.

This treaty between Zāhir and al-Naṣṣār divided the region between the two local leaders into two areas with unofficial borders; these were just a few kilometers south of the present Israeli-Lebanese border. Interestingly, these borders, which were settled in the twelfth/eighteenth century, were established on religious basis, since al-Naṣṣār's territories included all the Shī'ī settlements south of the district of Sidon and north of Acre, and most of Galilee was Sunnī, including the districts of Safed and the town of Acre, which were under the control of Zāhir al-'Umar.¹⁹

This temporary anti-Ottoman alliance between the Sunnī leader of northern Palestine and the Shī'ī leader of Jabal 'Āmil, which included military cooperation in many cases, lasted for some twenty-five years.²⁰ Some Sunnī historians

18 Āl Ṣafā, *Ta'rikh Jabal 'Āmil*, 118, 120–121; al-Amīn al-'Āmilī, *A'yān al-Shī'a*, 5:117, 49:119–120; al-Ṣabbāgh, *Ta'rikh*, 39–41; Winter, *Shiites of Lebanon*, 135–136. Zāhir al-'Umar shared common economic interests with the Matāwliš, mainly the marketing of cotton through Acre. They were his subjects, but he gave them their independence and control over a chain of fortresses; in the twentieth century, one of them—Hūnīn—was included as part of Palestine. See Amnon Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century: Patterns of Government and Administration* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973), 84, 124.

19 Sa'dūn Ḥamāda, *Tarikh al-Shī'a fī Lubnān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kayyāl, 2008), 1:454.

20 On the cooperation of Zāhir and al-Naṣṣār on the battlefield, see, for example, al-Shihābī, *Ta'rikh*, 3:990–991, 4:1084–1085; al-Shidyāq, *Akhbār al-a'yān*, 2:154–155, 160–161.

criticized this unusual collaboration. Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Maḥāsini (d. 1188/1774; poet, *imām*, and *khaṭīb* at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus), who backed the Ottoman authorities, described Zāhir's allies as "the shaykhs of the Matāwila and the Ṣafadiyya (people of Safed) who are people of *bid'a*, *rafḍ* [Shī'ism], heresy and corruption."²¹ Similarly, the contemporary Damascene Ḥanafī *muftī* and historian Khalīl al-Murādī (d. 1206/1791), used similar terms in his description of the events of the Ottoman Empire in the year 1185/1771; he noted that "the population of Safed are people of *rafḍ* and *bid'a*."²²

According to Ḥamāda, in addition to the peace achieved with the Sunnī leader of northern Palestine, Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār succeeded in unifying most of the Shī'ī leaders of the Jabal 'Āmil, waging successful battles against the Ottoman *wālīs*, and protecting them from the Sunnī Bedouins in Palestine. These achievements provided the Shī'īs temporary autonomy in the region that is today southern Lebanon and Galilee.²³

2.2 *al-Nabī Yūsha': a New Shī'ī Sanctuary in Palestine*

Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār lived during a period that was characterized by a rise of Shī'ī influence in northern Palestine. His goal was to expand his control to northern Galilee without breaking his peace with Zāhir al-'Umar. This goal led al-Naṣṣār to seek a strategic settlement in northern Palestine, which at the time was largely deserted. He achieved this by transforming the uninhabited site of the tomb of al-Nabī Yūsha' (the Prophet Joshua),²⁴ some 22 kilometers north of Safed, into a Shī'ī sanctuary. Joshua holds a special place in Islam in general, as a prophet, and in Shī'ism in particular, because he is considered the successor (*waṣī*) of Moses. As such, he is the parallel of 'Alī, whom Shī'īs identify as the successor (*waṣī*) of Muḥammad.²⁵

21 Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Maḥāsini, *Ḥulūl al-ta'b wa-ālām bi-wuṣūl Abī l-Dhahab ilā Dimashq wa-l-Shām* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Jadid, 1980), 1.

22 Abū l-Mawadda Muḥammad Khalīl b. 'Alī l-Murādī, *Kitāb silk al-durar fī a'yān al-qarn al-thānī 'ashar* (Būlāq: al-Maṭba'a al-Amiriyya, 1874), 1:54.

23 Ḥamāda, *Ta'rikh al-Shī'a*, 1:441–487.

24 For photos and inscriptions from al-Nabī Yūsha', see appendix 2. The sixth-/twelfth-century traveler al-Harawī mentioned two tombs of Yūsha', but in other places: in 'Awarta between Nablus and Jerusalem, and in Ṣarafa near Nablus. See al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-ishārāt*, 18, 24. In the eleventh/seventeenth century, Evliya Tshlebi mentions a tomb of Yūsha' in Nablus, without mentioning any Shī'īs in this site. See Tshlebi, *Travels in Palestine*, 51.

25 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 13:372–376. For other similarities between Joshua and 'Alī, see Khalid Sindawi, "Link between Joshua Bin Nun and 'Alī Ibn Abū Ṭālib," *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 47 (2010), 305–321.

Al-Naṣṣār's settlement in northern Palestine came while he was in the midst of a direct confrontation with the Ottoman campaign. In 1185/1771, 'Uthmān Pasha, the governor (*wāli*) of Damascus, led his army against the Shī'is from the direction of the Ḥūla Lake (today Ḥūla Valley).²⁶ According to popular Shī'i traditions cited by the Shī'i historian Muḥammad Jābir Āl Ṣafā (d. 1945), Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār passed through this site and swore that if he won the battle against 'Uthmān Pasha, he would build a shrine on the site:

The shaykh Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār camped with his soldiers close to [the tomb of] al-Nabī Yūsha', which is located southeast of Jabal 'Āmil, then the shaykhs of the Shī'a assembled an advisory council and organized a plan to attack and begged God to give them victory over their evil enemy. The tomb of al-Nabī Yūsha' was a poorly constructed building, and Shaykh Nāṣif [al-Naṣṣār] vowed that he would rebuild this building as a magnificent structure, if he won over his enemy. Then he humbly swept the tomb with his turban, and sought [God's] blessing. When he achieved victory, he built it [the tomb] in the existing form and he put a lofty dome over the tomb ...²⁷

The Lebanese Shī'i religious scholar and historian Muḥsin al-Amīn (d. 1952) adds important information concerning the site. He explains that a village was founded near the tomb of Yūsha' and that it was settled by the al-Ghūl family, who was in charge of caring for the sanctuary and supervising pilgrimages to it. Al-Naṣṣār not only built the tomb (*maqām*) and its dome, he also built a mosque on its western side, as well as rooms for pilgrims, and he erected a wall to surround the site. Prior to al-Naṣṣār's construction project, the site was not populated.²⁸ This is confirmed by the fact that there are no Ottoman tax and *waqf* records from the tenth/sixteenth century.²⁹

Ultimately, Zāhir al-'Umar was betrayed by his commanders and his allies and was killed when Ottoman troops headed by the naval grand admiral Ḥasan Pasha laid siege to Acre and bombarded his capital in 1189/1775. His four

26 Āl Ṣafā, *Ta'rikh Jabal 'Āmil*, 122–123.

27 *Ibid.*, 123–124. The French explorer Victor Guérin (1821–91) noted, in his book written after his visits to the region, that the al-Nabī Yūsha' site was apparently an old Jewish synagogue. See Guérin, *Description Géographique*, 2:362.

28 al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 272–273.

29 Wolf-Dieter Hutterot and Kamal Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan and South Syria in the Late 16th Century* (Erlangen: Palm und Enke, 1977), 175–194 (northern Palestine).

children escaped to al-Naṣṣār, who offered them his protection, an act that proved the depth of the Zaydānī-Matāwli cooperation and is evidence of a temporary and rare Sunnī-Shīʿī rapprochement.³⁰

The death of Zāhir al-ʿUmar marked the end of a temporary tolerance toward the Shīʿīs and the beginning of the Ottoman's oppressive policies. Zāhir's successor was Aḥmad al-Jazzār (1133/1720–1219/1804), governor of Acre and a cruel leader of Bosnian origin; he took a different attitude toward the Shīʿīs of Lebanon, and brought Jabal ʿĀmil under his direct control. He conducted violent campaigns against them in 1190/1776 and again in 1194/1780. In a battle in the village of Yārūn (today in southern Lebanon) al-Jazzār's soldiers killed al-Naṣṣār, and brought many Shīʿī books to Acre, where they were burned.³¹ It seems that al-Jazzār's policies compelled many Shīʿīs in northern Galilee to escape to Lebanon.³² According to Muḥsin al-Amīn, the Sunnī farmers of Ṭīr Shiḥa (today Tarshiḥa) took the opportunity of the escape of the Matāwli's and regained control of their lands in Galilee, including their rich olive trees. Most of the agricultural fields al-Jazzār destroyed in northern Galilee belonged to Matāwli farmers and never recovered. In his time, at the beginning of the twentieth century, al-Amīn describes these deserted lands as dangerous areas inhabited by Bedouins and bandits.³³

The historian Saʿdūn Ḥamāda's thesis concerning the importance of the site of al-Nabī Yūshaʿ is relevant to our study of the Shīʿīs in Palestine. Ḥamāda insists that al-Naṣṣār, who died in 1194/1780, was buried in the *maqām* (tomb) that he built for al-Nabī Yūshaʿ. Most modern scholars of Jabal ʿĀmil do not

30 al-Shihābī, *Taʾrikh*, 3:1021–1022.

31 al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 192; Winter, *Shiites of Lebanon*, 139–142; Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām* (Damascus: Maktabat al-Nūrī, n.d.), 2:286–301. In what modern Shīʿī literature considers the *nakba* (catastrophe) of Jabal ʿĀmil, scholars were tortured by al-Jazzār and the 5,000 books from the Āl Khātūn library were destroyed. See Jaʿfar al-Sobḥānī, *Tadhkirat al-aʿyān* (Muʾassasat al-Imām al-Ṣādiq, 1998), 2:174–175. This information is supported by Ḥasan al-Ṣadr, *Takmilat amal al-āmāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Muʾarrikh al-ʿArabī, 2008), 1:383. Al-Ṣadr claims that some books survived and were kept in Acre. Among the Shīʿī villages that were captured by al-Jazzār, Kurd ʿAlī mentions Hūnīn in the year 1197/1782. See Kurd ʿAlī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām*, 301.

32 The French orientalist Volney visited Syria between the years 1198/1783 and 1200/1785 and described the difficult situation of the Shīʿīs under al-Jazzār and their loss of lands. He even thought that in these circumstances they they might disappear from the region of Syria altogether. See Constantin François de Volney, *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* (Paris: Courcier, 1807), 1:361, 481–483.

33 al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 62–63. al-Amīn confirms that Jabal ʿĀmil expanded north into the Biqāʿ Valley and south to the Ḥūla Valley, see *ibid.*, 66.

share this view. Rather, they agree that he was buried in Yārūn, the village where he was killed.³⁴ Ḥamāda explains that for a time, there was some fear among Shī'ī religious authorities, that al-Naṣṣār's tomb would overshadow the importance of the twelve Imāms. Al-Naṣṣār's tomb was venerated by the Shī'ī community of Jabal 'Āmil, who encouraged pilgrimages to the tomb of al-Nabī Yūsha', organized special mourning assemblies (*ma'tam*, pl. *ma'ātim*), and wrote poems memorializing the great martyr (*shahīd*). These kinds of sentimental religious cults were originally meant to memorialize the massacre of Ḥusayn in Karbalā'. Hence, in religious terms, there was an urgent need to limit the admiration of Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār, in order to maintain the priority on the cult of the Imāms; this may be why Shī'ī scholars prohibited the mourning of this great modern leader of the Matāwliṣ.³⁵

2.3 *The Ottoman Renovation of the Mashhad of Ḥusayn*

While the tomb of al-Nabī Yūsha' developed in northern Palestine as a Shī'ī pilgrimage center, the Ashkelon site with the mausoleum and the head of Ḥusayn in the south was neglected for an unknown period.

Although the Sufi 'Abd al-Ghanī l-Nābulṣī (d. 1144/1731) provided information about the domed *mashhad* of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon, the information gathered from the nineteenth century indicates that the site was in ruins and neglected. Between the years 1293/1876 and 1306/1888, the site of the head of Ḥusayn was reconstructed by Ra'ūf Pasha, the Ottoman governor of the district of Jerusalem, with the help of donations from local residents. It is unclear whether the new building was built on the site of the earlier location.³⁶ Prior

34 Ibid., 371. Muḥsin al-Amīn visited the site and described the tomb as the *balāṭat* (grave-stone of) *Nāṣif*.

35 Ḥamāda, *Tarikh al-Shī'a*, 1:500. Ḥamāda does not accept the claim that Naṣif al-Naṣṣār's tomb is located in Yārūn and he questions the reliability of the inscription found recently in the village, in what locals claim is his tomb. See, for example, an opposing view in al-Amīn al-'Āmilī, *A'yān al-Shī'a*, 49:119; al-Amīn, *Khīṭat Jabal 'Āmil*, 371. Al-Amīn visited al-Naṣṣār's tomb in 1930 and read the Fātiḥa near a stone called *balāṭat Nāṣif*. Ḥamāda's view may be meant to suggest that al-Nabī Yūsha', which is today controlled by Israel, belongs to Lebanon, though other Lebanese who share Ḥamāda's political views insist that the tomb is located in Yārūn. Guérin's report that a certain *walī* (saint), not Joshua, is buried in al-Nabī Yūsha' may support Ḥamāda's thesis. See Guérin, *Description Géographique*, 354.

36 Talmon-Heller, Kedar and Reiter, "Vicissitudes of a Holy Place," 197–201, include a photo of the *mashhad* taken in 1943 (200). See also the plan of the site (fig. 4, 200); D., Talmon-Heller, "Job (Ayyub), al-Husayn and Saladin in Late Ottoman Palestine," p. 131.

to 1948, the *mashhad* of Ḥusayn was one of the major Muslim pilgrimage sites in Palestine, yet it was only venerated by Sunnī Palestinians.³⁷

2.4 *Remnants of the Matāwila of Palestine in the Twentieth Century*

The persecutions of al-Jazzār not only marked the end of Matāwila autonomy in southern Lebanon, but also the end of its expansion into northern Palestine. Nevertheless, the population continued to grow in existing Shīʿī villages. The Ottoman persecutions ceased after al-Jazzār, though the hostility toward the Matāwlīs remained. In the twelfth/eighteenth century, a severe *fatwā* condemning the Shīʿa as heretics was launched by religious authorities in Damascus.³⁸ It would seem that during the nineteenth century, the villages that were deserted during the raids of al-Jazzār were resettled by the Matāwlīs. The French explorer Victor Guérin (1821–91) wrote accounts of the situation in some of the Matāwila villages in northern Palestine and among its minor populations. After visiting the villages, he made general estimates of the population as follows: 150 villagers in Tirbīkha, 300 in Ābil al-Qamḥ, and 300 in al-Mālkiyya.³⁹

We have exact numbers of the population in Shīʿī villages in Galilee for the first time after the World War I, when Great Britain controlled Palestine. The British census of 1922 states that only 156 people in British Mandate Palestine were Shīʿī Matāwila. Most of these were located in the “north district” of Palestine. There were no Matāwlīs identified in the sub-districts of Safed and Tiberias. Rather, most of the Shīʿīs were from the sub-district of Acre. This population came to just 0.02 percent of the total population of Palestine, while Sunnīs formed 590,580 people, or 78 percent of the population (the rest were mostly Christian Arabs and Jews).⁴⁰ The border changes of 1923 altered the

37 Talmon-Heller, Kedar and Reiter, “Vicissitudes of a Holy Place,” 203.

38 Muḥammad Amīn b. ʿĀbidīn, *al-Uqūd al-durriyya fī tanqīḥ al-fatāwā l-ḥāmidīyya* (Cairo: Bulāq, 1882), 101–105. Ibn ʿĀbidīn (d. 1252/1836), the Ottoman Ḥanafī Muftī of Damascus, cites this *fatwā* from an older one (issued in the tenth/sixteenth century) by the Damascene shaykh Nuḥ al-Ḥanafī. This duplicate *fatwā* seems to reflect the Ottomans religious attitude toward the Ṣafavid Empire in Iran and the Shīʿī minorities within the Ottoman Empire, including the Matāwlīs in Lebanon and northern Palestine.

39 Guérin, *Description Géographique*, 124, 316, 346.

40 J.B. Barron, *Report and General Abstract of the Census of 1922* (Jerusalem: Greek Convent Press, 1923), 8, table 1. Only three members of the Matāwila in Palestine were registered in the southern district and 153 in the northern district.

situation dramatically, by adding seven ShĪ'Ī villages with 3,191 people, an increase of more than 4,770 prior to the 1948 war.⁴¹

2.5 *The Case of al-Baṣṣa Village*

The village of al-Baṣṣa was included in Palestine from the beginning of the British mandate in 1920. It was populated by both Sunnīs and ShĪ'Īs. The village already appears in one of Napoleon's correspondences at the end of the eighteenth century; at the time, he estimated the number of Matāwliš in the village at 600.⁴² Muḥsin al-Amīn, in his *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil* claims that following the battle of Ṭirbīkha in the middle of the eighteenth century, the village came under the rule of Zāhir al-'Umar and was annexed to "Palestine" (this anachronism of al-Amīn refers to the territory under Zāhir's rule); this remained the situation until the twentieth century.⁴³ According to the British Mandate census of 1922, only 150 Matāwliš lived in al-Baṣṣa, and it was the only ShĪ'Ī settlement in the district of Acre.⁴⁴

2.6 *The Seven Villages*

Sources from the twelfth/eighteenth century mention ShĪ'Ī villages south of Jabal 'Āmil; these were located in northern Galilee and the Ḥūla Valley. The British traveler Laurence Oliphant (1829–88), who visited Palestine around 1880, mentioned ShĪ'Īs living in what he defined as "the extreme north of Palestine" or the "Galilee of the Gentiles."⁴⁵ These ShĪ'Īs in northern Galilee

41 For additional details, see table 2 on p. 89. The number 9,263 provided by al-Rayyis seems exaggerated and unreliable, since it contradicts all the other accounts. According to al-Rayyis, the population count is as follows: In Hūnīn 4,011; in Ṣaliḥa and Ṭirbīkha 3,437; in al-Mālkiyya, Qadas, al-Nabī Yūsha', and Abl al-Qamḥ 1,815. Fāyiz Ḥasan al-Rayyis, *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab': Dirāsa wathāiqīyya shāmila* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā, 1985), 75–76 and table 14 on 132.

42 *Correspondance inédite officielle et confidentielle de Napoléon Bonaparte avec les cours étrangères, les princes, les ministres et les généraux français et étrangers, en Italie, en Allemagne et en Égypte* (Paris: C.L.F. Panckoucke, 1819), 4:291. These pages, from 1799, seem to have been written by Napoleon Bonaparte himself. On the same page, there is a description of the escape of Matāwliš from the neighboring regions following a campaign of al-Jazzār.

43 According to a popular ShĪ'Ī story, al-Baṣṣa was transferred to Zāhir al-'Umar in exchange for Naṣīf al-Naṣṣār's horse, which has a similar name: al-Bariṣa. See al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 244.

44 Barron, *Report*, 39, table 11. Only three Matāwliš were recorded in the village of Majd al-Kurūm in this district; they were probably workers, not permanent inhabitants.

45 This definition of upper Galilee is taken from the New Testament (Matthew 4:15). See Laurence Oliphant, *The Land of Gilead, with Excursions in the Lebanon* (New York:

apparently did not consider themselves as part of Palestine prior to the border agreement between France and the British Mandates in 1923.⁴⁶ These border changes, which were made after the western powers captured Syria from the Ottomans during World War I, added seven Shī'ī villages to the new Palestinian entity created by the British Mandate. These seven villages, as described by Muḥsin al-Amīn, were populated by farmers, not the educated scholars of Jabal 'Āmil. These Shī'ī villages that came to be included in Mandate Palestine were (from west to east): Ṭīrbīkha (also spelled Tīrbīkha or Tarbīkha) 27 kilometers east of Acre; Ṣaliḥa; al-Mālkiyya; Qadas; al-Nabī Yūsha' near the Ḥūla Valley; the largest Shī'ī village, Hūnīn, and the mixed Ābil al-Qamḥ (with both Shī'ī and Christian Arabs) in upper Galilee.⁴⁷ Of these villages, the medieval sources mention as Shī'ī villages only Qadas (al-Maqdisī, fourth/tenth century) and Hūnīn (al-Qalqashandī, ninth/fifteenth century). The absence of any mention of these villages indicates that the rest of the villages were settled later, by Shī'īs who emigrated from southern Lebanon; this thesis is supported by the modern Lebanese writer Fāyiz Ḥasan al-Rayyis. According to Muḥsin al-Amīn, the lands of Qadas were purchased from the Ottoman owners by two Shī'ī families Faraḥāt and Bizzī and

D. Appleton & Company, 1881), 36. This region was defined in Jewish texts as the land of Naftali.

- 46 Six of these villages, including al-Baṣṣa, are mentioned in Ottoman records from the end of the tenth/sixteenth century as part of Tibnīn district (i.e., southern Lebanon). See Hutterot and Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine*, 179–183, al-Nabī Yūsha' and Hūnīn do not appear in this Ottoman list. The former was probably not inhabited yet; it is possible that Hūnīn had been abandoned temporarily. The issue of who ruled al-Baṣṣa had long been an issue of controversy between the leaders of the Jabal 'Āmil and the governors of Acre and Safed; see Ḥasan al-Amin, *Dā'irat al-ma'arif al-islāmiyya al-shī'iyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ta'aruf li-l-Maṭbū'āt, 1997), 6:132.
- 47 al-Rayyis, *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab'*, 39–40; Asher Kaufman, "Between Palestine and Lebanon: Seven Shi'i Villages as a Case Study of Boundaries, Identities, and Conflict in the Middle East," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 4 (2006), 685–691 (see map, 690); Khalid Sindawi, "Are There Any Shi'ite Muslims in Israel?," *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 7, no. 2 (2008), 185–187 (see his list of villages, including information on 190); al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, includes the following villages in Jabal 'Āmil: Ābil al-Qamḥ, 232; Ṣaliḥa, 305; Tīrbīkha/Ṭīrbīkha, 319–320; Hūnīn, 338; and the following in the Ḥūla Valley: Ṣaliḥa, 276; Qadas, 335–336; al-Mālkiyya/Mālkiyyat al-Jabal, 351. According to Muḥsin al-Amīn, Ṭīrbīkha included two smaller villages named Surūḥ and Mazra'at al-Nabī, where there was a tomb of the prophet Rūbīl (Ruben). See al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 291, 356. The geographer Yāqūt from the seventh/thirteenth century described the village of Ābil al-Qamḥ without mentioning any Shī'ī presence, but only Sunnī scholars from this place. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, 1:50.

another anonymous (probably Shī'ī) family from Damascus. However, al-Amīn does not note the date of this purchase.⁴⁸

Fāyiz Ḥasan al-Rayyis's book, *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab'* (The seven southern villages), is the only book written on this issue specifically. He uses Arabic sources and depends on witnesses from among the elderly villagers, though at the time he interviewed them, it had been thirty-seven years since they had left their homes.⁴⁹ Al-Rayyis calls the seven settlements "the southern villages," thus making clear that in his opinion, the villages were part of Lebanon, not Palestine. As evidence of his thesis, al-Rayyis claims that approximately three centuries ago, two of these villages were settled by Matāwliš and two others by Shī'īs from Syria. According to al-Rayyis, Hūnīn, the largest of the seven villages, was settled by Matāwliš at the time of Nāṣīf al-Naṣṣār. The latter transferred rule over Hūnīn to his brother Qublān al-Naṣṣār.⁵⁰ The same was true of the town in which the tomb of al-Nabī Yūsha', which was built in the twelfth/eighteenth century by Nāṣīf al-Naṣṣār. Al-Rayyis confirms that the place that later became a *mashhad* had not been settled before.⁵¹ This view is also shared by the Shī'ī historian Muḥsin al-Amīn.⁵²

Interestingly, Samuel Ives Curtiss, who visited the tomb of al-Nabī Yūsha' in 1902, notes the following: "It is visited by all sects, including Jews, except

48 al-Amīn, *Khīṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 335.

49 al-Rayyis, *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab'*.

50 al-Rayyis, *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab'*, 22–24; al-Amīn, *Khīṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 175. Hūnīn is mentioned in medieval sources, but not as a Shī'ī settlement. The absence of Hūnīn in Ottoman registers at the end of the tenth/sixteenth century may indicate that it had been abandoned temporarily and then resettled in the period of Qublān. See Hutterot and Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine*, 112–220 (list of villages and the maps). In the inscription in the mosque, which was erected in the middle of the twelfth/eighteenth century, the name Qublān appears explicitly. See Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum*, 5:289–291; the name Qublān was also mentioned in poems engraved on a wall in the mosque of Hūnīn and also an inscription on its minaret, dated from 1187/1773, as recorded by Muḥsin al-Amīn. See al-Amīn, *Khīṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 368–369.

51 al-Rayyis, *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab'*, 39–40. The al-Ghūl family was in charge of the sanctuary and welcoming the pilgrims. The site became an agricultural village during the nineteenth century. See Ḥasan 'Alawiyya, *al-Ḥudūd al-dawliyya bayna Lubnān wa-Filasṭīn wa-in'ikāsātuha* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 2006), 58.

52 al-Amīn, *Khīṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 373:

"There were no inhabitants before Nāṣīf's building of it [the *maqām*] and there was nothing but the tomb."

Protestants and Druzes.⁵³ As to Qadas, which was mentioned as a Shī'ī village in medieval sources, al-Rayyis claims that it was deserted, though he does not specify when it was abandoned. It was resettled in 1260/1844 by Shī'ī immigrants from Ḥawrān (present-day southern Syria).⁵⁴ Al-Rayyis adds that Ṣāliḥa was also populated by Shī'īs who were originally from Dar'a in southern Syria.⁵⁵ Al-Rayyis does not provide historical information on the origins of the population of the other three villages (Tirbīkha, al-Mālkiyya, and Ābil al-Qamḥ). However, he mentions a tragic event, in which Tirbīkha was burned during the clash between Zāhir āl-'Umar and Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār; this may indicate that the village was also resettled later by Syrian or Lebanese Shī'īs (along with the four villages mentioned above).⁵⁶ Finally, al-Rayyis provides a table that includes the name of each Shī'ī village prior to the 1948 war and the name of the Israeli settlements that took their places (see Table 1).⁵⁷

TABLE 1 Shī'ī villages and Israeli settlements that replaced them

Tirbīkha = Moshav Shomera
Ṣāliḥa = Kibbutz Yir'ōn
al-Mālkiyya = Kibbutz Malkiya
Qadas = National Park of Tel Qedesh
al-Nabī Yūsha' = a neglected site next to the army base of Metsudat Yesha'
Hūnīn = Moshav Margalioṭ
Ābil al-Qamḥ = Moshav Yuval
al-Baṣṣa (the eighth village) = Betzet and Shlomi

Figure 4 includes the location of the eight Shī'ī-Matāwālī villages in northern Palestine.

53 Samuel Ives Curtiss, "Researches in Syria and Palestine Conducted in the Summer of 1903," *Biblical World* 23, no. 2 (Feb. 1904), 101.

54 al-Rayyis, *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab'*, 35. This contradicts his own claim (33 n. 2), that the people of this village immigrated from al-Fū'a in Idlib district, northern Syria.

55 *Ibid.*, 55.

56 *Ibid.*, 49–50.

57 *Ibid.*, 7. The Hebrew names, added here by the author, appear in al-Rayyis' book in Arabic letters.

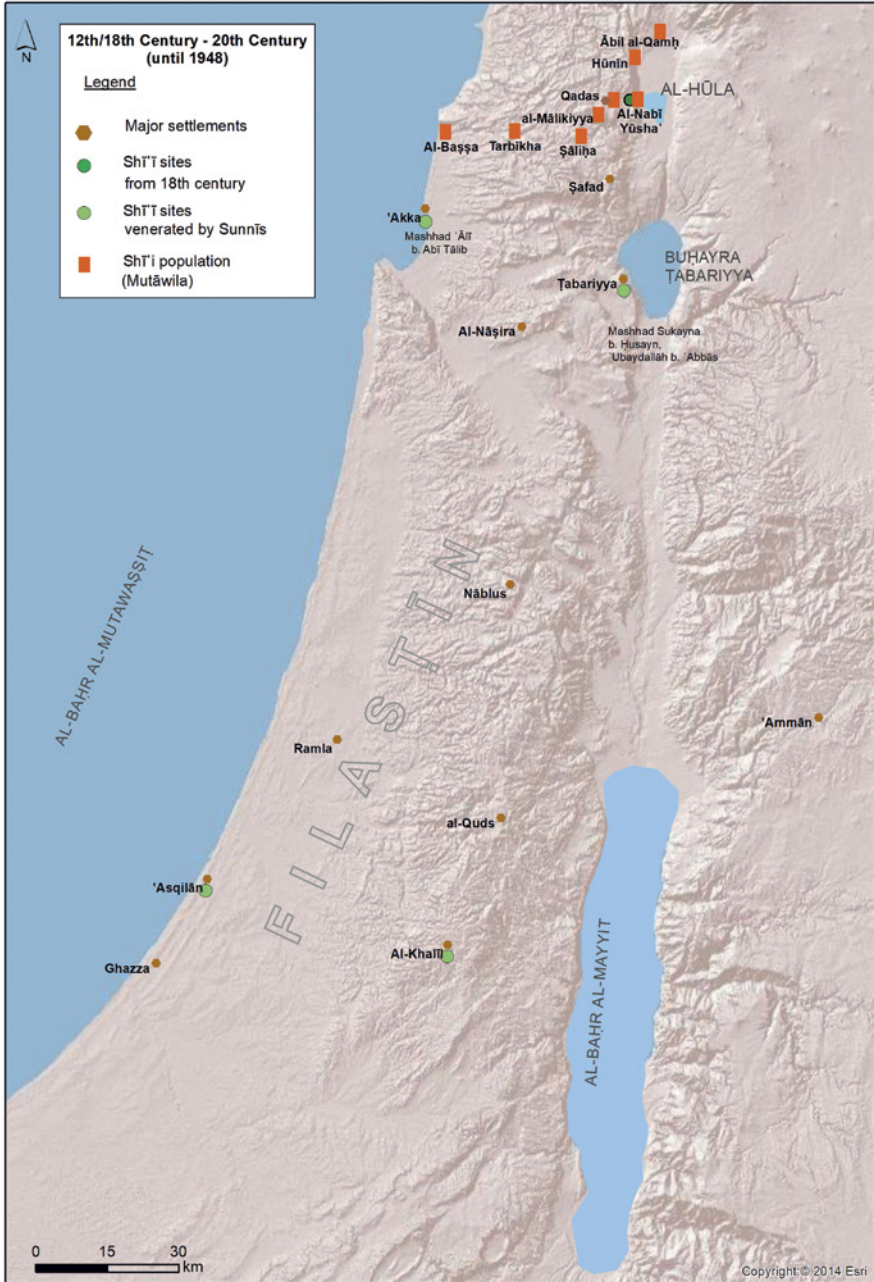


FIGURE 4 Shī'ī settlement in Palestine: twelfth/eighteenth to twentieth centuries (until 1948)

3 Palestinian and Zionist Views on the Shī'ī Villages

The Shī'īs from the seven villages were granted Lebanese citizenship in 1994, after the Shī'ī parties of Amal and Hizbullah pressured the Lebanese parliament. This step served several political interests for the Shī'īs in Lebanon, most important of which was to claim that the seven villages are located in Lebanese lands, but occupied by Israel. Another goal was to increase the Shī'ī population in Lebanon vis-à-vis other religious groups in the country. Notably, these Shī'īs and their families from Palestine did not renounce the Palestinian “right of return,” a fact that indicates that they consider themselves Lebanese citizens and Palestinian refugees at the same time. In addition, Lebanese Shī'ī refugees from Palestine created a Council of the Seven Villages. In opposition to Shī'ī Lebanese claims, scholars representing the Palestinian national movement insist that the seven villages and al-Baṣṣa are Palestinian, not Lebanese. As Asher Kaufman notes, Palestinian literature of the *nakba* (lit., “disaster” of 1948) clearly attempts to blur their Shī'ī identity and define them more generally as Muslims.⁵⁸ I support his theory with some key examples.

3.1 *Shī'ī Identity in Palestinian Writings*

In *Bilāduna Filastīn* (Our land Palestine), Muṣṭafa Murād al-Dabbāgh includes the seven villages in the territory of Palestine; he cites the number of villagers in 1931 and in most cases also in 1945, thereby showing the growth of the population during these years.⁵⁹

58 Kaufman, “Between Palestine and Lebanon,” 694–700. Kaufman explains how the seven villages became an internal Lebanese political issue. See also Sindawi, “Are There Any Shi'ite Muslims in Israel?,” 188–190. In his introduction to *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab'*, al-Rayyis thanks the Council of the Seven Villages for supporting his research, and for providing documents and witnesses, see 7–9. Hizbullah's leader Ḥasan Naṣrallāh recently repeated his claim that the seven villages belong to Lebanon, see: <http://www.almanar.com.lb/5189571>.

59 In his descriptions, al-Dabbāgh does not say precisely whether the population is Sunni or Shī'ī; he describes the following villages: Ābil al-Qamḥ (in 1931 he notes there were 122 “Muslims” and 107 Christians in the village), see Muṣṭafa Murād al-Dabbāgh, *Bilāduna Filastīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī'a, 1965), 6:141–142. In Ṣāliha the population grew from 742 “Muslims” in 1931 to 1,070 in 1945, *ibid.*, 6:219–220; Mālkiyya grew from 254 “Muslims” in 1931 to 360 in 1945, *ibid.*, 6:222–223; Qadas grew from 272 “Muslims” in 1931 to 390 in 1945, *ibid.*, 225–226; al-Nabī Yūsha' had a population of just 52 in 1931, and no further data is noted, see *ibid.*, 227–228; Hūnin grew from 1,075 “Muslims” in 1931 to 1,620 in 1945, *ibid.*,

In al-Dabbāgh's description, some traces of Shī'ī history still remain, as opposed to later Palestinian historians of the *nakba*, who neglect Shī'ī history. In his description of al-Nabī Yūsha', al-Dabbāgh agrees that Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār built a dome over the tomb and a mosque and that the al-Ghūl family maintained the shrine and served the pilgrims. Al-Dabbāgh also confirms the existence of a Shī'ī *mawsim* in mid-Sha'bān, in which thousands of pilgrims, both men and women, from Jabal 'Āmil celebrate with meals, music, and dance.⁶⁰

Al-Dabbāgh only explicitly mentions the Shī'īs in his description of Hūnīn; they settled at the time of al-Naṣṣār and were ruled by Qublān al-Ḥasan, whose name is mentioned in a poem engraved on its minaret. Al-Dabbāgh adds that al-Naṣṣār built its mosque in 1166/1752 and completed the minaret in 1187/1773.⁶¹ When al-Dabbāgh mentions the tomb of Sitt Sukayna in Tiberias, he adds that Sukayna, daughter of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, is not really buried in this site.⁶² According to al-Dabbāgh, al-Baṣṣa was annexed from Jabal 'Āmil to Palestine after World War I, but prior to the 1923 border changes. He adds that men from this village fought in 1948 against the British and Jews equally; they blew up caravans and planted land mines.⁶³

In 1970 the Palestinian scholar Sāmī Hadāwī (1904–2004) published a book on the statistics of Palestinian villages, based on his previous survey in 1945. For our purposes, his study is problematic for two main reasons. First, Hadāwī does not mention the Shī'ī population, and his numbers are categorized based on ethnicity, not religion, which means that under the title "Arabs," he includes Sunnī, Shī'ī, and Christian Arabs. Second, in some cases, he combines the population with that of other neighboring villages, some of which are now located in Lebanon. For this reason, Hadāwī's study only contributes

232–233, and al-Baṣṣa grew from 868 "Muslims" in 1931 and 1,076 Christians in 1931 to 1,360 "Muslims" and 1,090 Christians in 1945. In contrast to the other villages where the population was Matāwli, in the case of al-Baṣṣa, it is impossible to estimate the number of Shī'īs during these years, since the Muslim population was a mixture of Sunnī and Shī'ī. See *ibid.*, 6:337–339. Tirbikha grew from 674 in 1931 to 1,000 in 1945, *ibid.*, 7:407–408. Al-Dabbāgh seems to base his information on E. Mills, *The Census of Palestine 1931, Population of Villages, Towns and Administrative Areas* (Jerusalem: Greek Convent and Goldberg Presses, 1932): al-Baṣṣa, 104 people and Tirbikha (recorded as Tarbikha), 103, are included in the district of Acre. The following villages are included in the district of Safed: Ābil al-Qamḥ, 105 people; Hūnīn, 107; Mālkiyya, 108; al-Nabī Yūsha', 109; Qadas, 109; Ṣāliha (recorded as Ṣālḥa, colloquial Arabic version), 110.

60 al-Dabbāgh, *Bilāduna Filasṭīn*, 6:227–228.

61 *Ibid.*, 6:232–233.

62 *Ibid.*, 6:316 n. 1.

63 *Ibid.*, 6:337–339.

to my evaluation of the number of Shī'īs in villages that were populated by Matāwīlīs only.⁶⁴

3.2 *Palestinian Descriptions of Shī'ī Confrontations with Israeli Forces*

Walīd Khālīdī in his book entitled *Kay lā nansā* ('So that we do not forget,' in the English version: *All That Remains*), mentions the seven villages individually, but never mentions their Shī'ī identity. His book provides information missing in al-Dabbāgh's study, namely Israeli research and Zionist sources, such as *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, by Benny Morris and the *History of the Haganah* edited by Ben Tzion Dinur. According to Khālīdī, most of the villages in the region of Safed and the Hūla Valley were depopulated during the Zionist military operations called Yiftach and Hiram, as part of the Plan Dalet, in the months of April and May 1948.⁶⁵ Khālīdī's population numbers in the Shī'ī villages are identical to those of al-Dabbāgh.⁶⁶ The following is a summary of the Palestinian description of the 1948 events in the Shī'ī villages with relevant additions of al-Rayyīs:

3.2.1 Şāliḥa, Mālkiyya, and Qadas

Khālīdī claims that the Israeli forces who captured Şāliḥa during Operation Hiram in May 1948 later (in October) massacred the population.⁶⁷ The Israeli forces first attacked in May, but the Hagana found the village already empty. In October, they took Mālkiyya, with some resistance from the Lebanese army.⁶⁸ In Qadas (as in Mālkiyya), the Hagana captured the village

64 Sāmī Hadāwī, *Village Statistics, 1945: A Classification of Land and Area Ownership in Palestine* (Beirut: Palestine Liberation Organization Research Center, 1970), 40–41, 70, district of Acre: 2950 "Arabs" (mixed Sunnī and Shī'īs) in al-Başṣa.; 5,360 in Tarbīkha plus Nabī Rubīn and Surūḥ; in the district of Safed: 1,620 in Hūnīn plus Hūla and 'Udaysa and 330 in Ābil al-Qamḥ; 70 in Nabī Yūsha', 360 in Mālkiyya and 'Aytarūn, 390 in Qadas, 1,070 in Şāliḥa plus Mārūn al-Ra's and Yārūn.

65 Walīd Khālīdī, *Kay lā nansā: qurā Filasṭīn allati damrathā Isrā'īl sanat 1948* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, 2001), Ābil al-Qamḥ: 428–429.

66 For Ābil al-Qamḥ, Khālīdī completes the data that is missing in al-Dabbāgh. According to his study, there were 330 "Muslims" in 1945 in the village; he does not note that they were Shī'īs of Matāwīla.

67 Khālīdī, *Kay lā nansā*, 491–492. According to Khālīdī, 94 people were killed after "encountering light resistance." Morris makes the same claim, see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 230 and see 350 n. 37.

68 Khālīdī, *Kay lā nansā*, 470–471. According to Morris, Mālkiyya belonged to the villages, which were depopulated after resistance during Operation Hiram. See Morris, *The Birth*

in Operation Yiftah, then the Lebanese fought them off and forced them to withdraw from the village. In October, following Operation Hiram, the Israelis occupied it.⁶⁹

3.2.2 Al-Nabī Yūsha'

Khālidī, like al-Dabbāgh, mentions the *mawsim* (annual feast) that took place in al-Nabī Yūsha', which was attended by "Muslims," without mentioning its Shī'ī nature or even the name of Naṣīf al-Naṣṣār. During the British Mandate, al-Nabī Yūsha' was closed, because a British police station nearby was built. The station was evacuated on 15 May 1948 and occupied by Fawzi l-Qawuqjī's Arab Liberation Army. In October 1948, after several attempts, it was captured by Israeli forces with air force support.⁷⁰

3.2.3 Hunīn

In his description of Hunīn, Khālidī omits the sliver of information we have about the Shī'ī history of the village, information that al-Dabbāgh provided on the period of al-Naṣṣār. According to Israeli sources, Hunīn was evacuated on 3 May, before the attack by the Hagana. Nevertheless, according to Palestinian information, the population left the village with a local militia, which retreated to Hūnīn from the village of al-Khāliṣa on 11 May.⁷¹ According to both sources, most of its population went to Lebanon before the village was captured in Operation Yiftah. Khālidī's descriptions of the 1948 events supports the thesis that there was military resistance of young members from the Shī'ī villages, as claimed above by al-Rayyis in *al-Qurā al-Sab'*.

3.2.4 Tirbīkha

The village of Tirbīkha was captured during the Operation Hiram at the end of October. It seems to be the last of the seven Shī'ī villages captured by the Israeli forces.⁷² The population of Tirbīkha, like that of other villages that were close

of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 226 and 349 n. 23.

69 Khālidī, *Kay lā nansā*, 484–485.

70 Ibid., 481. Khālidī notes that the fate of the population is not mentioned explicitly in the sources and that they probably escaped to Lebanon like the rest of the villagers in the region. See also Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 121. According to Morris, Syrian officers ordered the villagers to leave their homes by 14 May 1948. See Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 326 n. 203.

71 Khālidī, *Kay lā nansā*, 454–455.

72 Ibid., 33–34. According to Khālidī, the Oded Brigades captured the village and ordered the villagers to cross the border to Lebanon.

to the Lebanese border, was ordered by the Israeli forces after operation Hiram to cross the border to Lebanon.⁷³

3.2.5 al-Baṣṣa

Al-Baṣṣa village in the district of Acre was captured during Operation Ben-Ami on 11 or 14 May 1948. According to Israeli sources and studies, the villagers fled before the Israeli attack. Palestinian sources claim that only women and children were evacuated before the battle, while the men remained and fought.⁷⁴

Khālidi's effort to blur the Shī'ī connection to Palestine is also reflected in his description of the *mawsim* of al-Jūra near Ashkelon, which he refers to as a spring religious festival, without mention of the head of Ḥusayn or its Shī'ī origin.⁷⁵

The reports brought by the Shī'ī writer al-Rayyis concerning Shī'ī confrontations with Israeli forces in 1948 support Palestinian descriptions. According to al-Rayyis, several young men from the seven villages, mainly from Mālkiyya, volunteered to fight with Fawzī al-Qawuqjī's Arab Liberation Army against Israel when he invaded Galilee with his force. Al-Rayyis adds that the *mukhtār* (head of the village) of Ṣāliḥa explained that after the retreat of al-Qawuqjī, fighters from his village escaped to Lebanon and left the village unprotected in the face of Israeli forces that then took control of the village.⁷⁶

3.3 *The Absence of Shī'īs in Palestinian Encyclopedias*

The erasure of Shī'ī identity is evident in the case of Palestinian folklore studies written after Canaan (see below in the next chapter), in which there is no trace of Shī'ī *mawsims*. For example, in the *Encyclopaedia of the Palestinian Folklore*, published 1977, under the entry of *al-mawāsīm wa-l-a'ṣyād* (feasts and holidays), the Sunnī feast of Ra's al-Ḥusayn in Ashkelon and the Shī'ī feast of al-Nabī Yūsha' in Galilee are not mentioned at all. The same is true of other Shī'ī terms that appear in Canaan's study of Palestinian folklore, including

73 Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 237–238.

74 Ibid., 124–125; Khālidi, *Kay lā nansā*, 7–8. According to Palestinian sources, Israeli forces shot few young men after al-Baṣṣa was captured.

75 Khālidi, *Kay lā nansā*, 116.

76 al-Rayyis *al-Qurā al-janūbiyya al-sab'*, 87–88, 102, 117. al-Rayyis's claim that the Israeli army massacred 105 villagers in the village of Ṣāliḥa is problematic. This number of victims, which does not appear in other sources mentioning the massacre, is cited by an anonymous witness, "one of the survivors" who is not mentioned by name. See *ibid.*, 117–118.

those under such headings as *'ashūrā'* and *dhū l-fiqār*, which no longer appear in Palestinian sources.⁷⁷

The *Mawsū'a al-Filasṭīniyya* (The Palestinian encyclopedia), published in 1984, includes an entry for "Shī'a." Its author, who is not credited, acknowledges that a Shī'i community existed in Palestine from the Fāṭimid period; he claims that many missionaries (*dā'i*, pl. *du'āt*) tried (unsuccessfully) to convert the population to Shī'ism. In addition, the author claims that a branch of the Cairo Dār al-Ilm ('house of knowledge,' the well-known Ismā'īlī library of al-Ḥākim) was founded in Jerusalem for this purpose; though this is not supported by other sources. Then he claims that the Shī'a became a secret group, in the face of Ayyūbid and Mamlūk endeavors to strengthen the Sunnīs in this region. The author also describes the period of al-Jazzār Pasha's oppression of the Shī'īs in the region of Safed. The entry leaves no doubt about the encyclopedia's exclusion of Shī'īs from Palestinian history. The author concludes as follows:

The Shī'a in Palestine do not exist as an autonomous sect with known institutions; hundreds of Lebanese Shī'īs who dwelled in northern Palestine in the period of the [British] mandate, left it.⁷⁸

In the statistical studies in the Palestinian encyclopedia, there are no references to Shī'i characteristics among the Palestinians before and after the war of 1948. The only divisions are between Muslims, Christians, and Jews.⁷⁹

3.4 *A Missed Opportunity?*

The resistance of Shī'īs in Palestine and their fighting against the Israeli army in 1948 described above may give a wrong impression that the entire community was hostile to the Zionist movement. This resistance was limited to young members of the Shī'i community in some of the villages of Galilee, while at the same time the older generation that had economic ties to the Jews preferred to find a solution through negotiation, as this would enable them to remain in their villages. The Palestinian national struggle, which had a Sunnī nature, threatened Shī'i villages, and as a result, created an opportunity for an alliance

77 Nimr Sirhan, *Mawsū'at al-Fulklūr al-Filasṭīnī* (Amman: Maktabat Rāmī, 1977), 3:562–564.

78 Aḥmad al-Mar'ashlī and 'Abd al-Hādī Hāshim (eds.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Filasṭīniyya: al-Qism al-Ām* (Damascus: Hay'at al-Mawsū'a al-Filasṭīniyya, 1984), 2:653.

79 *Ibid.*, *al-Qism al-khāṣ*, 1:281 (during the Ottoman period) and 411 (during the British Mandate), 449 (between 1948 and 1982).

between the Shī'īs in Galilee and the Zionist movement. The Shī'ī and Jewish populations had no history of hostility. On the contrary, during the Palestinian (mostly Sunnī) anti-Zionist attacks against the Jewish settlements in northeastern Galilee in 1920, Jews from Metula escaped to the neighboring Shī'ī villages in southern Lebanon, because they had good personal and economic relations with them. Later, Shī'īs in Palestine did not take part of the Palestinian Arab revolts of 1936–39.⁸⁰

During the 1948 war, negotiations took place between leaders of Hūnīn and the kibbutz of Kfar Giladi, but were cut short by the tragic events of the 1948 war, which prevented the two sides from reaching an agreement. According to Israeli documents from September 1948, the event that led to the end of these short negotiations was a shooting from Hūnīn on Israeli forces; this led to a disproportionate retaliation. The Shī'īs from Galilee, like other Palestinians, left Palestine and became refugees in Lebanon.⁸¹

Morris explains that during the 1948 war there was no clear policy toward the Matāwlīs in particular. That is, during the war, the Israeli army was not instructed to deal with the Shī'ī population differently.⁸² The Matāwlīs were probably seen by most of the Israeli forces as part of the Palestinian Muslim community; they likely ignored any differences between Shī'īs and Sunnīs.

In contrast to Druzes and Circassians, Shī'īs did not cooperate with the Israeli forces during the battles of 1948. Nevertheless, the negotiations between Kfar Giladi and Hūnīn demonstrate an opportunity that was missed by the Zionist movement, which did not understand the political and economic potential of developing ties with the Shī'īs of Palestine prior to 1948. At the same time, the early Zionists established strong strategic bonds with the Druze

80 Asher Kaufman, *Contested Frontiers in the Syria-Lebanon-Israel Region: Cartography, Sovereignty, and Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 81. See also (in Hebrew), Dani Rubinstein, "Once, Long Before Naṣrallāh was Born," *Haaretz* 9 August 2006 online: <https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1126891>.

Rubinstein based his report on the recollections of the archeologist Meir Ben Dor, whose grandparents (of the Lishinsky family) took refuge in Matāwlī villages in southern Lebanon during the attacks. He remembered being sheltered by their local leader, Shaykh Kāmil As'ad bek (1870–1924) in the neighboring Taybe village. The latter was a descendant of Nāṣīf al-Naṣṣār from the 'Alī l-Aṣghar clan. He added that Matāwlī workers from Kafr Kilā came to work in Metula and its surroundings alongside Jewish farmers.

81 Israeli State Archive, file 36/310 g (3) see translation in appendix 4; Kaufman, "Between Palestine and Lebanon," 691–694; Sindawi, "Are There Any Shi'ite Muslims in Israel?," 187–188. Compare to the case of the Druzes, who decided to cooperate with the Zionist movement: Adi Greif, "Druzes and Jews" *SURJ* 4 (Spring 2005), 1–6.

82 Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 227.

minority in Palestine. These relations, initiated by the Zionist movement from the early 1930s, were taken much more seriously.⁸³

Table 2 sums up the data concerning the estimated population of ShĪ'īs in Palestine.

TABLE 2 The population count in ShĪ'ī villages in Palestine

	al-Baṣṣa	Tirbīkha	Mālkiyya	Ābil al-Qamḥ	Ṣāliḥa	Qadas	al-Nabī Yūsha'	Hūnīn
Napoleon's correspondence 18th century (estimated)	600	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victor Guérin 19th century (estimated):	—	150	300	—	—	—	—	—
British census of 1922	150	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
British census/ al-Dabbāgh 1931	Fewer than 838 ^a	674	254	122	742	272	52	1,075
al-Dabbāgh/ Khālīdī 1945	Fewer than 1,360	1,000	360	330	1,070	390	—	1,620

a In the case of al-Baṣṣa, Muṣṭafa al-Dabbāgh and Wālid Khālīdī include the Sunnī population (838), but do not distinguish them from the ShĪ'īs; this makes it impossible to estimate the exact number of the ShĪ'ī population.

The total number of ShĪ'īs in Palestine after the border amendments of 1923:

In 1931: 3,191 without al-Baṣṣa.

In 1945: 4,770 without al-Baṣṣa and al-Nabī Yūsha'.

Figure 5 illustrates the locations of the Shī'ī villages in Palestine prior to the 1948 war.

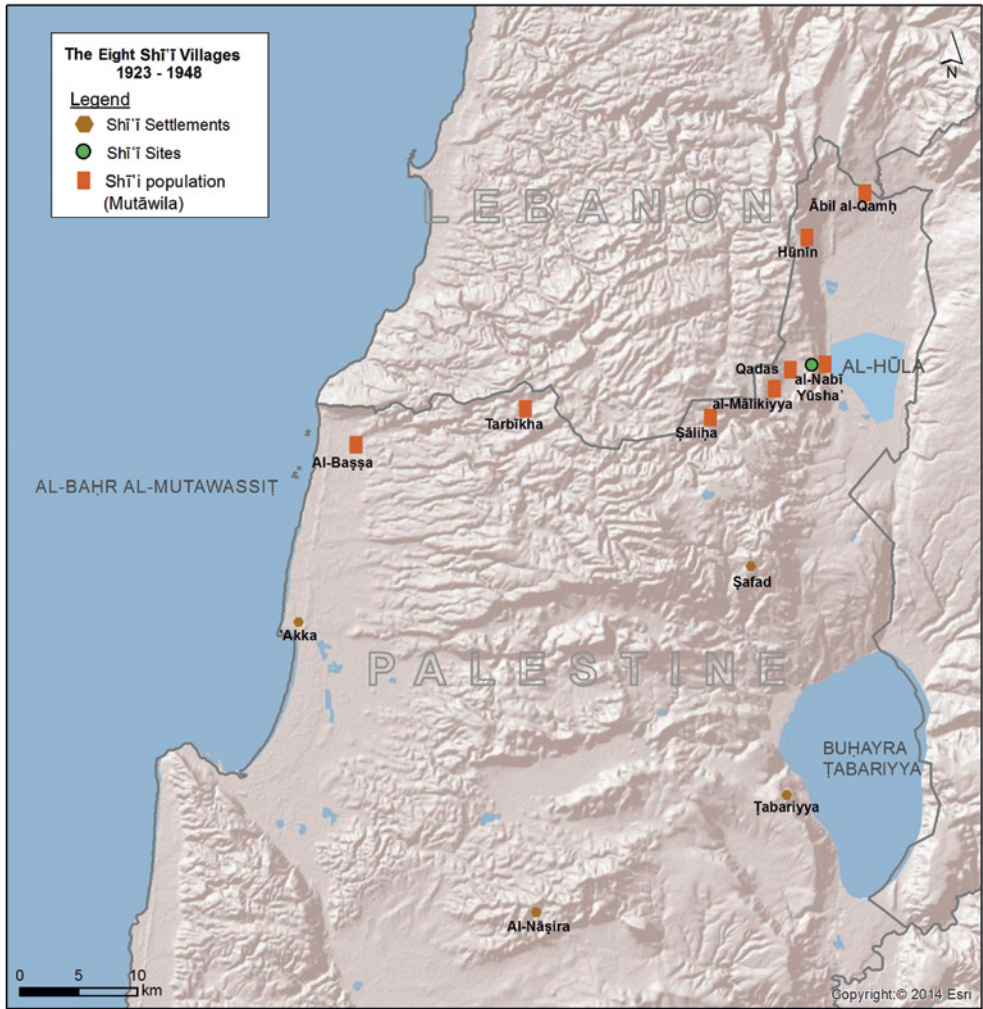


FIGURE 5 The Eight Shī'ī villages: 1923–48

4 The Palestinian Fear of the Return of the ShĪ'īs

The desertion of the last ShĪ'ī villages marks the end of the history of ShĪ'īs as a significant community in Palestine. The last remnants left following the 1948 war and the foundation of the state of Israel. Nevertheless, in the last decades, with recent political developments and religious propaganda, small ShĪ'ī groups have appeared, one in northern Israel and another in the Gaza Strip. These small communities are minor, but cause some distress among Palestinian society.

4.1 *A New ShĪ'ī Community in the State of Israel*

Sindawi studied the case of Palestinian families that were ShĪ'īs before 1948. These ShĪ'īs are concentrated in Galilee, mainly in Nazaret, Kafr Mazra'a, Kafr Kanna, Shafā 'Amr, and in Haifa. According to Sindawi, three groups of ShĪ'ī minority communities still exist within the 1948 borders of the state of Israel. The first includes a small group from the seven villages, who did not migrate to Lebanon with the majority of this community. The second is a new community formed from the South Lebanon Army (SLA); this group includes ShĪ'ī soldiers who collaborated with Israel from the late 1970s and escaped from Lebanon in 2000, when Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon and the South Lebanon Army was dismantled. The third group of ShĪ'īs is comprised of some Sunnī citizens of Israel who, over the last several decades, converted to ShĪ'ism. According to Sindawi, at the time of his study in 2008, the ShĪ'īs in Israel numbered 223 persons. Sindawi's numbers are not supported by other sources.⁸⁴

With regard to the first group, Sindawi does not offer names, interviews or any exact references of any ShĪ'īs from the seven villages and al-Baṣṣa, who remained in Israel. The second group of ShĪ'īs could not return to Lebanon following the dismantling of the SLA, as they feared death sentences. Most of these ShĪ'ī soldiers immigrated to Europe, but Sindawi counted 93 former SLA ShĪ'īs that remained in Galilee; in 2008, they were mostly in the city of Nahariya.⁸⁵

Sindawi also studied the issue of ShĪ'ī propaganda among the Sunnī population in Israel. He located two centers of preaching: the first is in the village of Dabūriyya in Marj Ibn 'Āmir region (the Jezreel Valley/in Hebrew: Emek

84 Sindawi, "Are There Any ShĪ'ite Muslims in Israel?," 191–192. See Sindawi's table of families in Israel on 192. Sindawi does not provide footnotes with references supporting his information. According to his studies and interviews, the remnants of the ShĪ'ī villages no longer practice as ShĪ'īs, rather, they live like Sunnīs.

85 See Sindawi's table of ShĪ'īs from the SLA and their location in Israel (ibid.).

Izra'el), and the other is a secret movement that operates in the 'triangle' of Kafr Qara, Baqa al-Gharbiyya, and Umm al-Fakhm. Despite the contribution of his study, Sindawi leaves us without a clear idea of the number of Shī'īs in the state of Israel.⁸⁶ The number remains unknown to the time of this study.

The third group of Shī'īs, Sunnī converts, seems to be the largest Shī'ī community in the state of Israel. We do not know whether these three groups of Shī'īs maintain any connection or collaborate with external Shī'ī elements (Hizbullah or Iran). Notably, it is the converts who are seen as the group that is most threatening to the Sunnī majority, because of their *tashayyu'*, that is, their propaganda and efforts to spread Shī'ism and enlarge their community.

4.2 *The Increase in Shī'īs in 2006*

In 2006, Nūr al-Yaqīn Yūnis Badrān, a Sunnī *imām* of a mosque in al-Bi'na village in Galilee east of Acre, publicly declared that he had embraced Shī'ism. In doing this, he became the first Sunnī *imām* of a mosque in Israel to embrace Shī'ism. Although he later renounced his conversion, he gave an interview to the Jordanian Şawt al-Balad ('Sound of the Village') radio program, and revealed the two main reasons for his temporary conversion: the war in Lebanon in 2006 and the declaration of the Sunnī authority in Qatar, shaykh Yūsuf al-Al-Qaraḍāwī, that Shī'īs are not heretics.⁸⁷

Israel waged a war and invaded southern Lebanon during July and August 2006, after Hizbullah fired rockets at Israeli border towns. Many in the Arab world criticized the irresponsible provocation of the Shī'ī terrorist organization, given that the Israeli retaliation caused considerable destruction in Lebanon. Nevertheless, Hizbullah considered it a victory because Israel's army, which is the strongest power in the Middle East, failed to destroy the organization and eventually accepted a ceasefire and withdrew from southern Lebanon. After the war, Hizbullah presented it as a "divine victory," and this propaganda apparently influenced several observers in the Middle East and Arabs in Israel in particular. The interview of Yūnis Badrān certainly proves

86 Ibid., 193–196. Although Sindawi claims that according to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistic (ICBS) in Israel, 600 Shī'īs lived in Israel in 2005, he does not provide references. According to my discussion with ICBS in Jerusalem, they do not maintain separate records of the Sunnī and Shī'ī populations. The total population in Dabūriyya is 10,000 Muslims (CBS, 2016). The number of Shī'īs in this village is unknown.

87 See http://www.alrased.net/main/articles.aspx?selected_article_no=5141.

Al-Qaraḍāwī, the chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars in Qatar, supported Hizbullah during the 2006 war against Israel and claimed that although they are Shī'īs, who practice some heretical innovations (*bid'a* pl. *bida'*), they are still Muslims who declare, like Sunnīs, that "there is no god but Allāh and that Muḥammad is His prophet," see *Īlāf Newspaper* online, which cites *al-Jazeera*: <http://elaph.com/Web/ElaphWriter/2006/7/166275.htm?sectionarchive=ElaphWriter>.

that Hizbullah made a significant impression on large numbers of Palestinians. Badrān admitted that the “recent war,” that is, the second Lebanese war in the summer of 2006, was the occasion that motivated him to reveal his Shī'ī identity publicly, and the war also convinced the Muslim world that the Shī'īs are “true Muslims.”⁸⁸

Aḥmad Shahwān, another Arab shaykh in Israel who openly embraced Shī'ism was from Iksāl, a village south of Nazareth. He converted to Shī'ism earlier, in 1989, and sparked a controversy when he declared that the number of Shī'īs in Palestine was continually growing. In an interview in November 2011, Shahwān denied any contacts with external Shī'ī authorities in Iran or elsewhere in the Muslim world. Nevertheless, he admitted that he was influenced by the preachings of the Shī'ī shaykh al-Wā'ili.⁸⁹ He claimed that from the beginning of the 2000s a growing number of Palestinians, most of them educated middle-class men, embraced Shī'ism. According to Shahwān, the converts are located in Gaza, Nablus, Jenin, Acre, Haifa, and northern villages inside the 1948 borders. Interestingly, in this interview, he explicitly mentioned the site near Barzilai hospital in Ashkelon, that is, the *mashhad* of Ḥusayn, as a site of pilgrimage for Palestinian Shī'īs. We could not confirm most of his claims through other sources, apart from his claim that the majority of the Shī'īs in Israel are located in Dabūriyya. Shahwān also claimed that some of the converts are even *imāms* in mosques, but he did not reveal their names, out of concern for their safety. He claimed that “Wahhābī” (that is, Salafīs) activists in Bāqa and Umm al-Fakhm spread lies about Shī'ism and accused him of heresy. His fears were not unfounded. In 2015, Shahwān was shot in his office, probably by extremist Salafīs.⁹⁰

This phenomenon of Sunnīs living within the state of Israel (1948 borders) and converting to Shī'ism is considered a betrayal by Sunnī society; these converts are isolated and treated with hostility. These negative attitudes caused a sharp decline in the number of this group of Shī'īs in northern Israel and toward the end of the 2000s, their activities have become more limited.⁹¹ Indeed,

88 See the complete interview in Arabic with translation, in appendix 5.

89 Aḥmad al-Wā'ili (1928–2003) was a notable Shī'ī shaykh from Najaf University in Iraq.

90 See the complete interview in appendix 5. On his assassination, see *Bānūrama al-Sharq al-Awṣaṭ* newspaper, 21 Nov. 2015, online: <http://mepanorama.net/413364>.

91 From personal interviews I conducted at the University of Haifa in recent years, I have learned from several students living in Galilee that the 2006 war in Lebanon indeed inspired interest in Shī'ism, and that some Israeli Arabs, mainly from Dabūriyya, were attracted to and even converted to Shī'ism. Nevertheless, this Shī'ī influence diminished toward 2011, mainly after Hizbullah's intervention in the Syrian conflict; this was criticized as a violent anti-Sunnī policy.

in his interview in 2011, Shahwān admitted that the Shī'īs had stopped meeting in Dabūriyya and only gathered in Ashkelon once a year.⁹²

4.3 *The Influence of the War in Syria*

Recent events in Syria have likely had a significant influence on conversions among Israeli Arabs; it seems to have slowed the process that increased in 2006. The atmosphere that led to the murder of Shahwān was not unrelated to the dramatic developments in neighboring Syria. The civil war in Syria, which at the time of this research is still ongoing, has aggravated tensions between Sunnīs and Shī'īs in the region. Hizbullah fighters, who, in 2006, were seen by some Palestinians and Israeli Arabs as heroes, are now operating on the orders of Iran, helping Bashar al-Assad's government massacre the population and fighting against the opposition, which is mostly Sunnī.⁹³ In Iraq, another upheaval (*fitna*) broke out in 2014; it is a Sunnī against Shī'ī problem, between the Shī'ī-controlled government and backed by Shī'ī militias against the Sunnī population in the eastern areas of the country. Extremis Sunnī fighters took this opportunity to establish a terrorist entity ('the Islamic state in Syria and the Levant, or ISIL; the Arabic acronym is Dā'ish) in western Iraq; this later penetrated Syria. This Sunnī organization was supported by ex-officers from Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath army, those who want to topple the Shī'ī regime in Iraq.⁹⁴ Above all, Iranian-Saudi tensions, which reached their peak in 2016,⁹⁵ have had generally negative effects on the attitude toward Shī'ī minorities in the Sunnī world and in Palestinian society in particular. The Sunnī Salafī movement,

92 See appendix 5.

93 On the Syrian civil war and Hizbullah's involvement, see Yaron Friedman, "The Alawi Regime during the Syria Civil War: From Collapse to Fragile Stability," in Carmela Lutmar and Benjamin Miller (eds.), *Regional Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution: A Comparative Approach* (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2015), 180–199.

94 On those interested in maintaining ISIL as a tool to promote several Sunnī-Shī'ī conflicts, see Yaron Friedman, "Why Is the Islamic State Undefeatable?" in *YNET* (21 May 2015), online: <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4659562,00.html>.

95 The tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia reached its peak following Saudi King Salman's involvement in the Yemeni conflict in 2015, in which the Saudis intervened to defend the Sunnī government against the Huthis, who are backed by Iran. In addition, during 2015–16, a series of tragic events during the pilgrimage deepened the tension between the two countries: there was a catastrophic stampede in Mecca, which caused the deaths of many Iranians; the Shī'ī shaykh Nimr al-Nimr, who was accused of inciting opposition against the Saudi kingdom, was executed; the Saudi embassy in Tehran was set ablaze as a result; diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed and Iranian pilgrims abstained from the following pilgrimage. This political tension, which also has religious aspects, is ongoing. See, for example, Soli Shahvar, "Saudi-Iranian Crisis: An Ongoing Cold War," in *Ynet* (1 May 2016): <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4748915,00.html>.

whose roots go back to the Wahhabi movement and who are backed by Saudi Arabia, seems to lead the hostility toward the Shī'īs in Palestine. In order to demonstrate this hostility, we should examine the publishing of an anti-Shī'ī encyclopedia by Salafis in Jordan in 2007.

4.4 *A Salafi "Encyclopedia of the Sects" and the Shī'īs of Palestine*

It is not a coincidence that in 2007, one year after the number of Shī'ī converts increased in Palestine, two Jordanian Salafis published *al-Mawsū'a al-shāmila li-l-firaq al-mu'āsira fī l-'ālam* (Encyclopedia of the sects in the contemporary world), a book that includes a long chapter entitled "The Shī'a of Palestine."⁹⁶ From the beginning of this chapter the authors, Usāma Shaḥāta and Haytham al-Kiswānī emphasize that Palestine is a "Sunnī state" that has no Shī'ī minority like Lebanon; but it does have an organized Shī'ī propaganda (*tashayyu'*) that is funded by Iran. In addition, they claim that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are also subjected to Shī'ī propaganda, and that they are more vulnerable than their correligionists in Palestine, because of their difficult economic situation.⁹⁷ These authors propose that Iran is attempting to transform the Palestinian issue into a political bargaining chip. The Palestinian cause serves to promote Iran's status and political goals in the region, particularly in terms of its regional conflicts with other countries and the defense of its nuclear program. According to their thesis, the results of the Iranian policy in Palestine have been negative, since it spreads division among Palestinian society, mainly between Hamas (the religious Islamic resistance movement) and Fatah (the secular Palestinian national liberation movement). Hence, Iran's project damages Palestinian society and its struggle with the so-called "Zionist occupation."⁹⁸

The first historical example of this damage is Iran's support of Yasser Arafat and the PLO; this support was given in exchange for a Palestinian embassy in the Ahwaz region of Iran. This controversial demand was designed to promote the Iranian revolution among the Sunnī Arab minority in Iran. This attempt to promote the Iranian revolution resulted in antagonism in Ahwaz and the Palestinian ambassador Hānī al-Ḥasan demanded to leave. Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī explain that from the beginning of the 1980s when the Palestinians

96 Usāma Shaḥāta and Haytham al-Kiswānī, *al-Mawsū'a al-shāmila li-l-firaq al-mu'āsira fī l-'ālam* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 2007), 3:181–229.

97 Ibid., 3:181–182, 188. Shaḥāta and Kiswānī claim that Shī'ī propaganda in the Palestinian refugee camps is directed by Qasim Sulaymani, commander of the al-Quds forces in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Hizbullah even provided Lebanese citizenship to Palestinians in the camps who embraced Shī'ism, as they did with the refugees of the seven villages. See *ibid.*, 3:209–2011.

98 Ibid., 3:182.

refused to help export the Iranian revolution, Palestinian-Iranian relations froze and have not yet recovered.⁹⁹

Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī raise a typical Salafi theological accusation regarding al-Aqṣā Mosque; namely, that according to Shīʿī belief the mosque is not in Jerusalem, but in heaven. They base this on a famous tradition of the sixth Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. This accusation is mentioned in modern anti-Shīʿī Salafi literature, such as *al-Shīʿa wa-l-Masjid al-Aqṣā*, written by Ṭāriq Aḥmad Ḥijāzī, a member of the al-Ḥaqīqa—Lajnat al-Difāʿ ʿan ʿAqīdat ahl al-Sunna fi Filasṭīn (The Truth—the Committee for the Defence of the Belief of the Sunnī People in Palestine).¹⁰⁰ Although this tradition does exist, there are many other traditions in Shīʿī religious literature (as demonstrated in the next chapter) that identify al-Aqṣā with Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Ḥijāzī like other Salafis chooses to cite only this tradition to support their views.¹⁰¹

Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī claim that one of the main goals of Hizbullah, which is controlled by Iran, is to spread Shīʿism in Palestine. They cite Hizbullah's leader Ḥasan Naṣrallāh, who said that three major events have attracted Palestinians to embrace Shīʿism: The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, the withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon in 2000, and the war of Tammūz (July) 2006.¹⁰² The shaykh Taysīr al-Tamīmī, head of the Palestinian *sharʿī* high court of law declared that he does not trust the Shīʿīs in general and Hizbullah in particular, since this organization only proposes to help the Palestinians for “Shīʿī-Iranian-Persian missionary goals.” The Katāʾib Shuhadāʾ al-Aqṣā (al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades), the military wing of Fatah, rejected Hizbullah’s propositions of cooperation in military activity on several occasions, for the same reasons.¹⁰³

4.5 *Shīʿī Propaganda in the Palestinian Authority and Gaza*

Many modern Sunnī societies have developed a phobia in relation to Shīʿīs, largely because of Iranian propaganda. Legrain analyzed the history of Shīʿī propaganda in Palestinian society and the fear that Palestine might take on

99 Ibid., 3:190–191.

100 Ibid., 3:192. The focus of their criticism is a Shīʿī book written by Jaʿfar Murtaḍā l-ʿĀmilī, entitled *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā ayna?* [Where is the mosque of al-Aqṣā], which claims that al-Aqṣā Mosque is located in heaven, not Jerusalem. I could not locate details about the book, but it is mentioned in several sites online.

101 The phrase that is cited in Shīʿī traditions, is *huwa al-masjid fi l-samāʾ*, “it is a mosque in heaven” (not Jerusalem). See Ṭāriq Aḥmad Ḥijāzī, *al-Shīʿa wa-l-Masjid al-Aqṣā* (Palestine: al-Ḥaqīqa—Lajnat al-Difāʿ ʿan ʿAqīdat Ahl al-Sunna, n.d.), 6–18. Ḥijāzī also emphasizes the Shīʿī preference of Kūfa, Najaf, Karbalāʾ, and Qumm over Jerusalem, see *ibid.*, 19–32.

102 Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī, *al-Mawsūʿa al-Shāmīla*, 3:194–195.

103 Ibid., 3:195–196.

a Shī'ī character. The Sunnī, mainly Salafī movement spread its propaganda in the last two decades, warning against the *tashayyu'* in Gaza Strip. This fear derives from the strategic link between the Lebanese Shī'ī Hizbullah and the Palestinian Hamas movement in the early 1990s. According to this theory, Iran is trying to expand what Sunnī leaders call the “Shī'ī crescent” (*al-hilāl al-shī'ī*) to Palestine; this ‘crescent’ starts in Iran then curves toward Bahrayn, Iraq, Syria (the ‘Alawīs), and to Lebanon, all states with significant Shī'ī communities. Following the coup of Hamas in the Gaza Strip in 2007, leaders in Fatah warned that Iran is backing Hamas, in order to take over the Palestinian Authority.¹⁰⁴

During the 2000s, Salafis warned that Iran’s influence is not limited to politics and military support. The Salafis warned about what they considered a Shī'ī mission to convert Palestinians, using website propaganda and associations founded by individual converts among Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.¹⁰⁵ The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (IJMP), a smaller organization that is the most dangerous opposition to Hamas in Gaza, is considered notorious in Palestinian society for its ideological ties to the Iranian revolution; some of its members even converted to Shī'ism.¹⁰⁶ After Israel expelled some Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders to southern Lebanon in 1992, IJMP developed ties with Hizbullah and came under Iranian influence.¹⁰⁷ Thus, a bridge was built between Sunnīs and Shī'īs; Legrain concludes that the connections between Hamas and the IJMP on the one hand, and Iran on the other, were more strategic than religious and there was no real danger of a mass conversion of Sunnī Palestinians to Shī'ism.¹⁰⁸

The growing Iranian influence in the region strengthened the confidence of some members of the IJMP, who openly declared their Shī'ī identity. Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī claim that the IJMP’s propaganda had been typically Shī'ī in nature from the early 2000s. Apart from distributing books in the Gaza Strip that called on Muslims to embrace Shī'ism and praising the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the IJMP published articles in support of Shī'ī theological claims in its al-Quds radio programs and in its journal *al-Istiqlāl* (Independence). For example, an article published in January 2007 denounced Abū Sufyān, father of the first Umayyad caliph Mu‘āwiya, who has long been an enemy of ‘Alī’s

104 Jean-François Legrain, “The Shiite Peril in Palestine: Between Phobias and Propaganda,” in Brigitte Maréchal and Sami Zemni (eds.), *The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships: Doctrine, Transnationalism, Intellectuals and the Media* (London: C. Hurst, 2013), 41–47.

105 Ibid., 48–51.

106 Ibid., 51, 57; Sindawi, “Are There Any Shi’ite Muslims in Israel?,” 196–197.

107 Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī, *al-Mawsū‘a al-Shāmīla*, 3:202–209.

108 Legrain, “The Shiite Peril in Palestine,” 59–60.

supporters.¹⁰⁹ One of the main centers of IJMP is located in a mosque (named the “mosque of Ashkelon”) the organization built in the Shāṭi’ refugee camp.¹¹⁰ Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī provide names and details about four leaders of the IJMP, including their head Faṭḥī Shqāqī (killed by Israeli security forces in 1995) who, they claim, converted to Shī’ism.¹¹¹

In addition, they mention the names of seven other converts who are not members of the IJMP, but who embraced Shī’ism for personal reasons. One married a Shī’i woman, another was influenced by Internet propaganda, and two students were introduced to Shī’ism during their academic studies abroad. An especially interesting case of conversion is that of Ashraf Amūna, who established al-Jam’iyya al-Ja’fariyya (The Ja’fari Association) in the village of Dabūriyya in the Galilee.¹¹²

The fact that Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī were able to provide the names of just eleven converts in Palestine, proves that the *tashayyu’* project promoted by Iran and Hizbullah has failed and that the majority of Palestinians, even among the pro-Iranian organizations, remain Sunnī. This is probably the background for the foundation of al-Ṣābirīn, an organization of Palestinian Shī’is.

4.6 al-Ṣābirīn Movement

In May 2014, a purely Shī’i organization appeared in Gaza; it did not attempt to conceal its religious identity, in fact, it is referred to as Ḥiṣn (lit., ‘castle’ or ‘fortress’), the acronym for Ḥarakat al-Ṣābirīn Naṣran li-Filasṭīn (‘The Patient People’s Movement for the support of Palestine’). It was founded in 2014 by Hishām Sālīm, a former member of Islamic Jihad. It has been supported and sponsored by Iran since then. The organization’s flag is similar to that of the Lebanese Hizbullah; it is a combination of the Arabic name of the organization, a globe with a hand holding a Kalashnikov starting from the letter alif in the middle of the name, with the Qur’ānic verse on it.¹¹³ Compare the flag of Lebanese Hizbullah on the left with that of the Palestinian Ṣābirīn on the right (see fig. 6).

109 Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī, *al-Mawsū’a al-Shāmila*, 3:208.

110 Ibid., 3:212.

111 Ibid., 3:217–222. In March 2006, one of them, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Ghawānme, announced the foundation of al-Majlis al-Shī’ī al-A’lā fi Filasṭīn [The High Shī’i Council in Palestine], but it was abolished after couple of days, probably as a result of threats. See <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2006/03/07/39225.html>.

112 Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī, *al-Mawsū’a al-Shāmila*, 3:2212–226.

113 On the flag of Ṣābirīn, the slogan is the Qur’ānic verse: “indeed Allāh is with the patient” (2:153); Hizbullah uses the verse “So indeed the party of Allāh is the winner” (5:56).



FIGURE 6
Flags of Hizbullah and the Palestinian Ṣābirin

Although the Ṣābirin movement remains small and faces challenges from the Sunnī majority and surrounding hostility, its support from Iran makes it a challenge for Hamas authorities. By declaring itself a movement (*ḥaraka*), the Ṣābirin identified itself as a new threat to the authority of Sunnī Hamas in Gaza. In addition, the name of the movement the “patient” reveals that its goal is to spread its propaganda for a long period to ensure its success, regardless of the difficulties. The movement’s flag adds to the Hizbullah symbols a map of Palestine in the background, as an expression of its national goal, to liberate the entire land of Palestine. This is the overt goal of the movement; the hidden goal, which is religious, is to spread Shī’ism throughout all of Palestine.¹¹⁴

The complicated relations between Hamas and Iran and the need both sides have to maintain these relations, prevents Hamas from taking any serious steps against the Ṣābirin; in some cases, they must even provide protection to its members. In May 2015 two people in Gaza were arrested by Hamas security forces, after attempting to blow up the house of a member of the Ṣābirin movement. Although in July 2015, rumors spread that Hamas had decided to ban and dissolve the movement, it remains active. Some members were detained for a short period, but none were prosecuted.¹¹⁵

The members of Ṣābirin were not the only ones to publicly identify as Shī’ī. Some religious personalities in Gaza embarrassed Hamas by publicly declaring their Shī’ī beliefs. ‘Abdallāh al-Shāmī, a spokesman for Islamic Jihad, is accused of using his speeches in the mosque of Sayyid Quṭb in the Nuṣayrāt camp in the Gaza Strip to praise the Iranian revolution and Shī’ism.¹¹⁶ Maḥmūd Jouda, a member of the extreme Salafī group al-Takfīr wa-l-Hijra, surprisingly

114 Concerning the roots of the Ṣābirin, see Yaron Friedman, “Ticking Time Bombs: Hezbollah in Gaza and Palestinians in Syria,” *Ynet* (25 April 15), online: <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4650208,00.html>.

115 Dadi Shafei, “What is Harakat al-Sabireen and Why is Hamas Trying to Block Their Expansion?,” *al Monitor* (18 March 2016), online: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/palestinian-al-sabireen-movement-spread-shiism-Ghaza.html>.

116 See, for example, (in Arabic) *paldf.net*, 25 February 2015: <https://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=1165983>.

converted to Shī'ism and publicly supported the Ṣābirīn.¹¹⁷ During 2016, he was seen in Gaza wearing a Shī'ī turban (*'imāma*). In September 2016, he was arrested after uploading a YouTube video of accusations against the two first caliphs, Abū Bakr and 'Umar, for deviating from the *sharī'a* and illegally taking the caliphate from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.¹¹⁸

Qatar, which has been funding Hamas in recent years, mainly after the 2014 conflict between Hamas and Israel, also suspected that the Ṣābirīn's real intention is to spread Shī'ism in Gaza. This accusation appeared in an article broadcast by al-Jazeera in 2015, entitled "Palestine in the new Karbalā'."¹¹⁹

The Saudi-Iranian tensions, which reached a peak in 2016, had serious implications for the Ṣābirīn movement. In March 2016, explosives were planted in the house of its leader Hishām Sālim; he was stabbed, but survived the attack. Two weeks later, following a decree of Hamas' Bureau of Interior Affairs in Gaza, security forces closed the charity association of al-Bāqiyāt al-Ṣāliḥāt (lit. 'The remaining good deeds'), which belonged to the Ṣābirīn and was sponsored by Iran.¹²⁰

Nevertheless, Hamas wants to maintain the fragile balance in its relations between Iran and the Sunnī world. Its leadership wants to keep both channels permanently open. For example, Iran's support was critical in recent years when Sunnī financing from Turkey and Qatar stopped.¹²¹ These circumstances

In this article, al-Shāmī is accused of criticizing a young person in the mosque for referring to Shī'is using the negative epithet *rawāfiḍ*.

117 See the following interview: "Overview of Propaganda about Shia's Danger in Ghaza," (6 March 2016), online: <https://theiranproject.com/blog/2016/03/06/overview-of-propaganda-about-shias-danger-in-Ghaza/>.

118 See the following article in Arabic (21 January 2016), online: <http://www.wattan.tv/news/161256.html>.

119 See the following article in Arabic, from al-Jazeera (9 July 2015), online: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2015/7/9/حركة-الصابرين-بغزة-أولى-بذور-التشيع>

120 See, for example, in the Palestinian al-Quds (in Arabic) (13 March 2013), online: <http://www.alquds.com/articles/1457864062605751300/>.

121 As of 2018, Hamas is trying to restore its relations with Iran; these deteriorated during the civil war in Syria. After two decades of Iranian/Syrian support for Hamas, in 2012, Hamas backed the rebels during the civil war. Hamas's decision seemed just in light of the weakness of the Syrian regime and the rise of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. However, in 2013, following the Egyptian army's coup headed by 'Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi, Hamas lost the support of Egypt. At the same time, Iran criticized Hamas's reversal and cut their relations with the movement, after accusing it of betraying the *muqāwama* (resistance) axis. In addition, Hamas's Sunnī sponsors, Turkey and Qatar, had limited their support to the organization in recent years. Turkey decreased their support following their reconciliation agreement with Israel in 2016 and Qatar as a result of its tension with Saudi Arabia and the blockade of the other Persian Gulf states. See Yaron Friedman, "Ticking Time Bombs."

led Hamas to be careful, not to completely outlaw the Ṣābirīn and irreparably harm Hamas' relations with Iran. Indeed, Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī provide examples of Hamas's tolerance toward Shī'ī propaganda in the Gaza Strip—tolerance caused by their fear of Iran's reaction.¹²² At the same time, Hamas must also calm Sunnī extremists and Salafīs in the southern Gaza Strip, by limiting the activity of the Shī'ī movement. The closing of al-Bāqiyāt charity association, without harming the leaders of the Ṣābirīn movement, reflects Hamas' balanced policy.

The future of the Ṣābirīn movement depends on the ties between Hamas and Iran and the fate of the Gaza Strip in general. It also depends on future negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to end the situation of the divide (*inqisām*) between the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In any case, Iranian influence in Gaza is more political than religious and the odds of the Ṣābirīn growing and spreading Shī'ism in the short and long term seem limited under the rule of Sunnī Hamas and with the permanent Salafī tendencies among the population.

5 Remaining Shī'ī Sects

Most Shī'ī sects, namely the Ismā'īlīs and Nuṣayrīs, disappeared along with the Imāmī Shī'īs, following the end of the Fāṭimid rule in Palestine. The Druzes (also called Ḥākīmīs in medieval texts) are the only community with Shī'ī Ismā'īlī roots in Palestine that survived from the Fāṭimid period. Nevertheless, they are not considered Muslims, since even in the period of the crystallization of the sect in the fifth/eleventh century, they deviated from Ismā'īlī beliefs and the tenets of Islam. The survival of the Druzes in northern Palestine was a result of the extraordinary military abilities of their tribes. In 2017, there are more than 141,000 Druzes in Israel (1.6 percent of the population, according to the Central Bureau of Statistic (CBS) of Israel), living in Galilee. Because they are no longer considered Shī'īs, I do not delve further into the topic of the Druzes.

The history of the Bahā'īs, who created a new religion (and center in Palestine) that originated in Iranian Shī'ism also stands outside the framework of this study. Nevertheless, because of their Shī'ī roots, I briefly describe their journey to Palestine. The Bahā'ī sect is the last originally Shī'ī group to

See also Gregg Carlstrom, "The Qatar Crisis Is Pushing Hamas Back to Iran," *Atlantic* (14 June 2017), online: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/06/qatar-crisis-saudi-arabia-hamas-iran-syria-gcc-gaza/530229/>.

122 Shaḥāta and al-Kiswānī, *al-Mawsū'a al-Shāmīla*, 3:236–239.

immigrate to Palestine. Their migration to northern Palestine occurred in the nineteenth century. The Bahā'ī sect, influenced by messianic Shaykhism in Iran, believe in the divine revelation of their leader. The sect was persecuted in Iran under Qājār dynasty (1794–1925), because of their deviation from Shī'ī Islam. Their leader, Mīrzā Ḥusayn 'Alī Nūrī called Bahā'llāh (lit. 'the beauty, or glory of Allāh,' d. 1892), was accused by of heresy and expelled to the Ottoman Empire, which in turn imprisoned him in Acre. 'Alī Muḥammad Shirāzī, his messenger (*bāb*), expected his advent but was executed in 1850. Members of the sect secretly brought his bones to Haifa, where, in the 1950s, a golden domed mausoleum was erected. At the end of the nineteenth century, Bahā'llāh declared Mount Carmel a holy site. The international religious center of the Bahā'ī faith, which has members throughout the world, is located in Haifa, where the community has developed splendid gardens. Today, in addition to its six to seven million members around the world, hundreds of its members live in Israel mostly in Haifa and Acre, near the tomb of Bahā'llāh (the Mansion of Bahjī). The sect is still persecuted in Iran; its circumstances worsened after the Islamic revolution in 1979.¹²³

The Nuṣayrīs, today referred to as 'Alawīs, differ from Druzes and Bahā'īs in the sense that they still considered themselves a Shī'ī Muslim group. Most of them disappeared from Palestine after the fifth/eleventh century, but three 'Alawī villages remained in the Golan Heights: Ghajar, previously called Ṭaranja (in local dialect: Ṭranje), next to the Hasbani River (the Lebanon-Israel border), which has survived to the present; and Za'ūra; and 'Ayn Fīṭ on the northern Banias River (in the Golan Heights). Za'ūra and 'Ayn Fīṭ were both destroyed and abandoned following the 1967 war between Syria and Israel. These three villages are beyond the historical borders of Palestine, but since the origin of these 'Alawī villagers may be Galilee, and because Ghajar was annexed to the state of Israel, I discuss their condition briefly.

5.1 *Ghajar—an 'Alawī Village Annexed to Israel*

The village of Ghajar (or Ṭaranja) is located in the Golan Heights, on the border between Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. The village was occupied by Israel following the 1967 war. Since most of the 'Alawīs from the late medieval period to the present live in the coastal region of Syria and Lebanon (Lādhiqiyya, Jabla, Ṭarṭūs and Tripoli, Lebanon), the location of Ghajar, Za'ūra and 'Ayn Fīṭ, far from the other communities of the sect, seems odd.

123 For a general description of the Bahā'ī history and faith, see Moojan Momen, *A Short Introduction to the Bahā'ī Faith* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1997).

The main religious site of these 'Alawīs is located in the village of Ghajar; it is the *maqām* (tomb) of Sayyiduna al-Arba'īn (lit., 'our master of the forty'). According to local tradition, this site was built by a man from Antioch (in modern Turkey), who dreamt that building this place would save his ill child.¹²⁴ The white domed shrine has been renovated in the recent years. It contains the tomb of an unknown person and a *mihrāb* (niche marking the direction of prayer) with an inscription above it, with a Qur'ānic verse, "... Every time Zachariah entered the niche [of Mary] ..." (3:37). 'Alawīs from the three villages in the Golan performed pilgrimages to the site and made vows (*nadh'r*, pl. *nudhūr*) to show their belief in God.¹²⁵

A recent book based on a field study of popular oral traditions in the village of Ghajar was written by two members of the local Khaṭīb family. They present two popular traditions about the roots of these three villages: First, they were founded by the *amīr* Sayf al-Dawla, ruler of the Ḥamdānids of Aleppo in the fourth/tenth century, in order to protect the passage of caravans passing through the Golan; and second, they were created in a later period, during the tenth/sixteenth century, by Nuṣayrīs escaping the persecutions of the Ottoman sultan Selim in northwestern Syria. The authors of the book acknowledge that the two different versions, which differ by four centuries and are taken from oral sources, lack credibility. In addition, they claim that the original name of the village was Ṭaranja. According to another oral tradition, the name was changed to Ghajar (meaning gypsies), by Kurds who took over the village in the seventh/thirteenth century, to humiliate the Nuṣayrī peasants. The Syrian government sought to change its name to al-Muthallath (the triangle), because of its location between three countries. According to local legend, a miracle

124 Aḥmad Ḥusayn al-Khaṭīb and Jamāl Ḥusayn al-Khaṭīb, *Qaryatī wa-l-ayyām: qaryat al-ghajar, haḍbat al-jūlān* (Nazareth: Maṭba'at al-Ḥakīm, 1990), 32. This oral tradition may refer to the main connection of the Nuṣayrī-'Alawīs with Antioch, and Shaykh Muḥammad b. Yūnus Kalāzū from the early eleventh/seventeenth century. Kalāzū is the eponym of the Kalāziyya branch of the 'Alawīs. Another 'Alawī *maqām*, called al-Arba'īn, is located in Qardāḥa near Lādhiqiyya and inhabited by the Kalāziyya. Although several sites in the region of Palestine and Syria are referred to by this name, it has a specific meaning in Shī'ism. The term "forty" relates to a well-known Shī'ī tradition of making a pilgrimage forty days after *'ashūrā'* to mourn the death of Ḥusayn.

125 al-Khaṭīb and al-Khaṭīb, *Qaryatī wa-l-ayyām*, 31–32. On the importance of Zachariah in the Nuṣayrī religion, see Me'ir Mikha'el Bar-Asher and Arieh Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawī Religion: An Enquiry into Its Theology and Liturgy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 71, 114, 173. The Khaṭīb mentions the inscription that appeared on the entrance of al-Arba'īn before the renovations; it was in slightly corrupted Arabic:

"In the name of Allāh the merciful the compationate, build a sanctuary to me, in the Merciful [God, you would find the] end." See al-Khaṭīb and al-Khaṭīb, *Qaryatī wa-l-ayyām*, 32.

prevented the Kurds from damaging the tomb of Sayyiduna al-Arbaʿīn, and they eventually left.¹²⁶ It would seem that the history of these villages is still largely unknown, and further research is required, since popular traditions are historically unreliable.¹²⁷

Schumacher, of the German Society for the Exploration of the Holy Land, undertook a field study of the Golan Heights in 1306/1888, but did not include Ghajar/Ṭaranja in his study, as he considered it part of Lebanon. According to his research, ʿAyn Fīṭ included about three hundred inhabitants and cultivated fruits, vegetables, tobacco, and rice.¹²⁸ In his time, Zaʿūra had about three hundred fifty inhabitants, who cultivated rice and also tobacco in the Ḥūla Valley. A tomb of a certain ʿAjami (of Persian origin) is located nearby.¹²⁹ The peasants of the two villages claimed that they came from northern Syria long ago, from the mountains east of Lādhiqiyya. They spoke Arabic and Turkish.¹³⁰

Asher Kaufman's research on Ghajar, which he undertook in the context of the border shifts in the region, is more relevant to our study.¹³¹ Until 1967, Ghajar was under the sovereignty of Lebanon and Syria; maps were inconsistent as to its exact location, whether in Syria or Lebanon, though the villagers considered themselves Syrians.¹³² According to the Syrian census of 1960, some 3,285 ʿAlawīs lived in the Golan Heights¹³³ and their agricultural lands were located in three countries: Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. The ʿAlawīs of this region suffered, at least until the first half of the twentieth century, from isolation,

126 Ibid., 9, 12–14. According to local tradition, Saʿīd Aghā (the commander of the Kurds) wanted to climb on the roof of al-Arbaʿīn to belittle their religion, but his horse refused to move and was struck by lightning, cutting his horse into two parts. The commander was frightened by this miracle and sold the lands to the local villagers for a low price.

127 In private discussions with Aḥmad al-Khaṭīb (25 August 2018), he told me that the real history of the three villages remains a mystery, and that the families' origin is probably from northern Syria.

128 Gottlieb Schumacher, *The Jaulān*, trans. from German (London: Richard Bently and Son, 1888), 76–77.

129 Ibid., 272–273.

130 Ibid., 59–60.

131 Asher Kaufman, "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie: On Ghajar and Other Anomalies in the Syria-Lebanon-Israel Tri-Border Region," *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 4 (2009), 539–560.

132 Ibid., 540–541.

133 Ibid., 541. In 1960 there were 1,532 ʿAlawīs in ʿAyn Fīṭ; 1,133 in Zaʿūra; and 620 in Ghajar. Today the population in the Israeli part of Ghajar is 2,517 (according to the census of 2016).

poverty, and a lack of education.¹³⁴ They also lived in a degree of insecurity, due to the control of powerful Bedouin tribes in the Golan.¹³⁵

Following the 1967 war, the Syrian army withdrew from the Golan and the village came to be located between the Israeli and Lebanese borders. The Israeli army left the village, as they considering it Lebanese territory and the Lebanese authorities considered it Syrian territory. Hence, for some months the villagers found themselves beyond the legal authority of any country, and lacking basic services. Eventually, the villagers asked to be part of the Occupied Golan, hoping to return to Syrian control in a future agreement. An Israeli census in 1967 indicates that 385 'Alawīs remained in Ghajar. Kaufman notes that Israeli maps from 1967, based on a Lebanese map from 1963, cut the village of Ghajar into two parts, with the northern half (which came to be called Wazzānī) in Lebanon and the southern part (that had belonged to Syria before the war), in Israel. Under Israeli rule, the 'Alawīs enjoyed considerable improvement in their educational and economic situation. This would seem to be the main reason the population of Ghajar took Israeli citizenship (unlike the Druze in the Golan) following Israel's annexation of the Golan in 1982.¹³⁶

When Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in April 2000, after eighteen years of occupation, a new problem arose. The United Nations created the Blue Line, which left the northern part of Ghajar, which until then had been occupied by the Israeli army, in Lebanon. In the years 2005–06 the northern part of the village became a combat zone.¹³⁷ Although the Israeli government declared its willingness to leave northern Ghajar during the 2000s, until the time of this study, the entire village has remained under Israeli control for security reasons. Hizbullah's attempts to attack IDF forces in the village and the instability in the region following the civil war in Syria in 2011 have prevented the Israelis from withdrawing from northern Ghajar. According to the 2017 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistic (ICBS), the population was 2,559.¹³⁸

5.2 *The Dāwūdī Bohrās in Ashkelon*

In addition to the Shī'īs living in Palestine and the sects with Shī'ī origins, other Shī'īs come to Palestine only for pilgrimage. A small group of Ismā'īlīs from the Dāwūdī Bohrā community, most from India, have visited Israel and

134 Ibid., 542.

135 For example, prior to 1967, the poor villagers of 'Ayn Fit had to pay protection money to the Fā'ūr tribe. See 'Abdallāh Ḥannā, *al-Fallāḥūn wa-mullāk al-arḍ fī Sūriyā l-qarn al-'ashrīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī'a, 2003), 192–196.

136 Kaufman, "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie," 552–556; Kaufman, *Contested Frontiers*, 146–150.

137 Kaufman, "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie," 556–558; Kaufman, *Contested Frontiers*, 215–217.

138 *Israeli Central Bureau of Statistic (ICBS)*, Information by locations, 2017.

the Palestinian Authority in recent years. This group, whose adherents live in India, Pakistan, and Yemen, followed al-Ṭayyib Abū l-Qāṣim son of al-Mustaʿlī (d. 495/1101), the last Fāṭimid caliph, who, according to their belief, went into occultation in 528/1134. Most of these adherents seem to be descendants of people converted from Hinduism by Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs*. In India, they were labeled *bohorā* ('trader' or 'merchant').¹³⁹

These visits of the Dāwūdī Bohrās, a group that considers itself the only remaining followers of the Fāṭimid dynasty, take place along a pilgrimage road in the region. The track contains Fāṭimid sites, such as the head of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon, the tomb of Hāshim in Gaza, and the tombs of the *ahl al-bayt* believed to be buried in Cairo.¹⁴⁰

The shrine of the head of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon was ruined by the IDF shortly after the 1948 war, and for decades the site was completely deserted; the hospital of Barzilai was built nearby.¹⁴¹ In 1980, in a meeting in Cairo between members of the Bohrā community headed by Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn, the fifty-second *dāʿī muṭlaq* (lit., 'absolute missionary'; 1965–2014) and an Israeli entrepreneur of tourism, Burhān al-Dīn recounted his experience in 1937, when he visited the site in Ashkelon with his father. Following this meeting, the Bohrās began to make pilgrimages to Ashkelon. In the 1990s, the Barzilai Medical Center agreed to erect a modest memorial next to the hospital, in the location that Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn claimed is the exact place of the old shrine. The prayer platform was erected in the year 2000, with the authorization of the Israeli Foreign Office. In 2011, the Council for the Preservation of Heritage Sites in Israel, together with the Ashkelon municipality, added a sign explaining the site's historical significance.¹⁴²

With regard to the new site in Ashkelon, its white marble and an open rectangular space, is designed as a memorial of the head of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon, follows that of the tombs of many Bohrā *dāʿī muṭlaqs*. This style is also typical of the graves of Sufi shaykhs in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, where the sites are commonly surrounded by a white marble wall. The tomb (*mazār*)

139 For a short description of the Dāwūdī Bohrās, see A.A.A. Fayzee, "Bohorās," *EI*² (1986), 1:1254–1255.

140 See, for example, Ramy Amichay, "Shi'ite Pilgrims Flock to Ancient Tomb on Grounds of Israeli Hospital," *Haaretz* (9 February 2015): <https://www.haaretz.com/shi-ite-pilgrims-flock-to-ancient-tomb-at-israeli-hospital-1.5303649>. On the pilgrimage route and the importance of Palestine for the Bohrās, see appendix 7 for my interview with Dr. Mustafa Abdulhussein.

141 The destruction of the shrine was criticized by the Israeli Department of Antiquities, see Talmon-Heller, Kedar and Reiter, "Vicissitudes of a Holy Place," 205–207.

142 *Ibid.*, 210–214. On the site and the sign, see appendix 2.

in Ashkelon is exceptional because it is empty and has no dome or mosque nearby. This void transmits a message to the believers, namely, that the sacred object is no longer present, that it was transmitted by the ancestors of the Bohrās, the Fāṭimids, to Cairo.¹⁴³ Yet, since, according to the Ismā'īlī tradition, the head of Ḥusayn was there, the land retains a certain amount of sanctity. Shaykh Moiz Tarmal, one of the sect's leaders, said in an interview to Reuters during his visit to Ashkelon in February 2015, that he believes that God listens to the prayers in this particular place.¹⁴⁴ Media publications about the visits of the Bohrās to Ashkelon have perhaps discouraged these pilgrimages, since they have not taken place in recent years (2017–19).¹⁴⁵

The pilgrimages of the Bohrās to the Palestinian Authority also stopped, though for different reasons. In 1994, the Bohrā leadership received authorization to build a shrine honoring Hāshim b. 'Abd Manāf inside the mosque of Hāshim in Gaza and during the years 1999–2000, they invested money to reconstruct the tomb. In an interview, the Sunnī *imām* of this mosque described the activities of the Bohrās during the pilgrimages that disturbed him, and stated that he considered it *bid'a* (a heretical innovation). He claimed that they slaughtered a lamb, lit candles, and walked around the tomb. Then, following the violent events of the second *intifāda* (2000–04), the Bohrās' pilgrimages to Gaza stopped.¹⁴⁶ They have not returned to Gaza, and the media has not reported on the issue.

The Dāwūdi Bohrā pilgrimages and their financial contributions to reconstruct shrines do not represent their aspiration to return Ismā'īlī Shī'ism to Palestine, but rather signify their members' need to mourn the loss of their Imāms, and express their longing for the Fāṭimid era that will not return.

143 This tomb without a dome fits Cannan's explanation that this was the kind of sites for saints; it is known that they are not buried in this place, rather, they were in this site for a period of time. See Canaan, *Muhammedan Saints*, 50–52.

144 Amichay, "Shi'ite Pilgrims"; this reference also appeared in Reuters: "Prophet's Grandson Hussein Honoured on Grounds of Israeli Hospital," *Times of India* (9 February 2015), online: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/middle-east/Prophets-grandson-Hussein-honoured-on-grounds-of-Israeli-hospital/articleshow/46175414.cms>.

145 Moshe Hananel, the Israeli tourism entrepreneur who met their leader in Cairo, explained to me that the publications about the pilgrimages of the Bohrās caused irreparable damage to the sect's visits to Ashqelon; the issue was a very delicate political matter.

146 See *Dunya l-waṭan* (in Arabic), (3 July 2005), online: <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2005/07/03/24612.html>. See also a more recent report in *al-Quds al-'Arabi* (in Arabic), (1 October 2016), online: <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=606723>.

Shī'ī Folklore and Religious Traditions about Palestine

1 Shī'ism in Palestinian Folklore

Traces of Shī'ism remained in twentieth-century Palestinian folklore prior to 1948. It is probably impossible to determine exactly when local Sunnīs adopted these Shī'ī terms and symbols, which seem to exist in every Arab country that was ruled by Shī'ī dynasties for any significant period.

1.1 *‘Āshūrā’ Water and dhū l-fiqār Talismans*

Canaan provides some examples of Shī'ī customs that Palestinian Sunnīs embraced and continue to practice, even into the first half of the twentieth century. At *‘āshūrā’*, the tenth of Muḥarram and the day Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī was massacred with his family at Karbalā’, it is believed that the water in some wells was mixed with those of Zamzam (the well of Hagar in Mecca), thus giving it purifying and even curative properties. Two of these wells are located in east Jerusalem, in Silwām (or Silwān), Ḥammām al-Shifā’ (also called Ḥammām *‘āshūrā’*), and one is in Nablus, at the shrine of al-Nūbānī.¹ On the eve of the day of *‘āshūrā’* (that is, *laylat ‘āshūrā’*), some people in Nablus used to perform the *ziyāra* to local saints.² It could be claimed that these customs are based on the importance of *‘āshūrā’* in Sunnism, commemorating the event when Israelites were saved from Pharaoh and is a recommended fast.

However, Canaan notes another more definite remnant of Shī'ism in Sunnī Palestinian folklore, namely, the use of typical Shī'ī talismans. These are prepared from circular papers put on seals (*khātim*); they contain praise for ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and are given out by some shaykhs in the “mosque of ‘Umar” (that is, the Dome of the Rock) in Jerusalem. According to Shī'ī tradition, this well-known phrase was heard when the Prophet Muḥammad transferred the sword called *dhū l-fiqār* to ‘Alī in the Battle of Uḥud (in the year 3/625):

¹ Canaan, *Muhammedan Saints*, 65–66.

² *Ibid.*, 216, 217.

There is no young warrior like 'Alī, and no sword like *dhū l-fiqār*.³

The '*āshūrā*' traditions in Palestine before 1948 were recorded by the Palestinian Ḥusayn 'Alī Lūbānī, a Lebanese refugee from Dāmūn (near Acre), in his book on festivals and traditions in Palestine. He only mentions these traditions in his description of the Shī'ī villages of al-Baṣṣa and Tarbīkhā (or: Tirbīkhā). In al-Baṣṣa, during the first ten days (which end with '*āshūrā*') of the month of Muḥarram, men and women used to meet in the house of one of the Shī'ī shaykhs of the village. There they retold the tragic story of Ḥusayn that ended with his martyrdom, and they mourned and cried and beat themselves on their cheeks and their chests. On the same day, some people (probably Sunnīs from the same village) distributed sweets (the same tradition is mentioned in another village, see below).⁴ In Tarbīkhā, during '*āshūrā*', although they were mourning the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, people used to gather together and eat fried chicken, in honor of the spirits of the Imām and those who died with him.⁵

The mourning of '*āshūrā*' is not mentioned elsewhere in Lūbānī's book, though in the village of Jimzu near Lod, which existed until 1948, a strange custom was practiced during '*āshūrā*'. Instead of mourning, Sunnī villagers used to eat fried chicken in celebration of this day, though it is recommended that Sunnīs fast during the day, in solidarity with the suffering of the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The author proposes, that this custom may have remained from the time of the Sunnī Ayyūbids and Mamlūks, who might have tried to transform the day of '*āshūrā*' into a day of joy. Perhaps for the same reason, Sunnīs in this region used to prepare cakes called "sweets of '*āshūrā*'."⁶

1.2 *The Mawsim Traditions*

Until the war of 1948 there was a *mawsim* (a feast) in Ashkelon; this was one of several feasts that took place in various periods and places in Palestine.⁷ Canaan describes the mausoleum in Ashkelon as dating from 1927, as follows:

3 Ibid., 117. The errors of the shaykhs are corrected in parentheses. Concerning the meaning of the *dhū l-fiqār* sword transmitted from the Prophet Muḥammad to 'Alī in the battle of Uḥud, see E. Mittwoch, "Dhū l-Faqār," *EI*² (1991), 2:233.

4 Ḥusayn 'Alī Lūbānī, *Mu'jam al-a'yād wa-l-mawāsīm wa-l-munāsabāt al-filastīnī* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn), 96–97.

5 Ibid., 106–107.

6 Ibid., 121–122.

7 Concerning the earliest eye witness of this annual festival provided by the traveler Nu'mān al-Qaṣṭalī (d. 1920), see: D. Talmon-Heller, "Job (Ayyub), al-Husayn and Saladin in Late Ottoman Palestine", pp. 135–138 and the rare photo in p. 139.

Seyidnā el-Ḥusēn, S.E. of ed-Djōrah (near Ascelon) [i.e., al-Jawra, near Asheqlon], has no tomb, but inside the *maqām* a fragment of a pillar shows the place where the head of el-Ḥusēn was buried. The top of the pillar bears a green *laffeh* and below it there is a red cloth.⁸

In the footnote, he adds, “The large *maqām* is on the top of a hill about 20–30 minutes from the sea. There are no tombs or caves in the neighborhood. Two mulberry trees and a vineyard are on its property.”⁹

During the *mawsim* of the head of Ḥusayn, which used to take place on the Wednesday of the Nabī Mūsā *mawsim*,¹⁰ Sunnī Palestinian pilgrims came from all around the country to Ashkelon. Several customs took place near the site, where men and women asked for blessings, prayed, read from the Qurʾān, prepared meals, and played music.¹¹

Another *mawsim*, which was truly Shīʿī in nature, was the *mawsim* of Nabī Yūshaʿ, which took place every year on the fifteenth of Shaʿbān.

The researcher Lewis Bayles Paton provides some information concerning the ceremony in the beginning of the twentieth century:

At Nebī Yūshaʿ in Galilee there is a holy oak, before which stands a shrine that is regarded as the burial-place of Joshua the son of Nun. To this all the sects come, except the Druzes. Nebī Yūshaʿ, they say, is with God. At the same time he is alive in this spot. Sacrifices are offered directly to him. Two annual feasts are celebrated. The priestly family in charge of the sanctuary receives the skin and a shoulder of the victims [i.e., of the slaughtered animal].¹²

In addition to the mid-Shaʿbān *mawsim*, believers took part in an annual pilgrimage that lasted four days. At the end of the month of Ramaḍān they journeyed to al-Nabī Yūshaʿ from several regions, mainly from Lebanon. Following the border shifts of 1923, a “Bon Voisinage” agreement was signed in Jerusalem (in 1926), between representatives of the British Mandate and the French

8 Canaan, *Muhammedan Saints*, 151.

9 *Ibid.*, 151 n. 2.

10 The Nabī Mūsā *mawsim* took place during April, one week before Good Friday in the Orthodox Greek calendar.

11 *Ibid.*, 135–136, 214–215.

12 Lewis Bayles Paton, “Survivals of Primitive Religion in Modern Palestine,” *Annual of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem* 1 (1919–20), 60. A photo of the two-domed shrine is provided on 61, fig. 7.

Mandate. According to this agreement, during the pilgrimage, pilgrims had permission to cross the border from Lebanon (followed by Lebanese policemen), in cooperation with the British Mandate police in Palestine. Until 1948, the site still belonged to a Lebanese ShĪṬĪ *waqf* (pl. *awqāf*, Islamic endowment).¹³

Articles 6 and 7 of the agreement are relevant for our study; here I cite them from the original document:

Article VI. The marabout of Nabi Yusha and its lands remain *Wakf* (sic) property, and shall not in any event be expropriated by the Governments of Palestine or of Syria without the consent of the authority competent in respect of *Wakf* property in either territory. If there is any other *Wakf* property in territory to be transferred, the same principle shall apply.

Article VII. Pilgrims making the annual pilgrimage to this marabout at the end of Ramadan shall be exempt from formalities of a passport or laissez-passer. On the occasion of this pilgrimage which lasts four days the Government of the Grand Lebanon shall, by agreement between the local authorities of the two Governments, be entitled to send to Nabi Yusha a Gendarmerie post to maintain order in co-operation with the Palestine Police.

Muḥsin al-Amīn in *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil* provides an interesting description of this *mawsim*:

The mausoleum of Joshua son of Nun, the successor of Moses, son of Amram, above the Ḥūla, is covered by a lofty dome where thousands of pilgrims from the ʿĀmilīs [people of Jabal ʿĀmil] would meet on the annual feasts of the pilgrimages, especially on the fifteenth of Shaʿbān. There is plenty of *debka* dancing and applause of women and men and gun shootings [into the air] and playing the *mijwaz* and *shabbāba* [double-piped and single-pipe flutes] and other sorts of amusements. Some are busy in the worship, blessings, pilgrimage, praying, and repeating the name of God the mighty. This was before it was annexed to Palestine and then it stopped.¹⁴

13 ʿAlawiyya, *al-Ḥudūd*, 58, 60 and the French source on 71. The term “marabout” used in this agreement originates from the French colonies in Algeria, where *murābiṭ* refers to a domed tomb in which a pious man is buried.

14 al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ʿĀmil*, 178.

According to oral evidence published by Rivka Gonen, another *mawsim* took place until 1948 at the tomb of Sitt Sukayna in Tiberias;¹⁵ but we do not have Arabic sources to support this information.

1.3 Modern *ʿAlid* Tombs

The historian Ḥasan al-Amīn (1908–2002), the son of the well-known Lebanese Shīʿī shaykh Muḥsin al-Amīn, produced a list of Shīʿī sites in Palestine in his Shīʿī encyclopedia.¹⁶ His knowledge was based, in part, on his visit to Palestine during the 1940s, particularly on information from ʿAbdallāh Mukhliṣ (1928–1947), head of the Palestinian *waqf* bureau until 1944.¹⁷

Ḥasan al-Amīn mentioned ten mausoleums (*mashāhid*); five of them are mentioned in the present study. However, he added valuable notes concerning these sites; for example, al-Amīn claimed that the mausoleum (*mashhad*) with the head of Ḥusayn was still a site of (Sunnī) pilgrimage in Mukhliṣ's time (before 1948).¹⁸

Another interesting note concerns the site of Sitt Sukayna in Tiberias. Since she was not really buried in this site, Mukhliṣ suggested that the Sunnī authorities in the fourth/tenth century prevented the descendants of ʿUbaydallāh b. ʿAlī from building a tomb to memorialize the honorable Abū l-Ṭayyib who, together with his wife (a respectable woman from the ʿAlids) was murdered by the Ikhshīdids. Instead, the members of the family built two mausoleums honoring ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās and Sukayna bt. al-Ḥusayn.¹⁹ If we accept this thesis, which is not supported by historical sources, we would consider it an act of *taqīyya* (precautionary dissimulation), since only the local members of the family were aware of the real content of these tombs.

In the time of Mukhliṣ, al-Amīn notes that nothing remained of the *mashhad* of ʿAlī b. Abi Ṭālib in Acre near ʿAyn al-Baqara.²⁰

Al-Amīn (citing Mukhliṣ), describes five mausoleums that I have not yet mentioned in this study. These sites apparently were not very important to the

15 Gonen, "How is a New Saint's Tomb Created?," 76.

16 al-Amīn, *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif*, 9:25–29.

17 For a detailed biography of ʿAbdallāh Mukhliṣ, see Johnny Mansour, "Abdallah Mukhliṣ: His Life and Role in Exposing Arab and Islamic Heritage in Palestine," *al-Qasemi Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016), 63–78.

18 al-Amīn, *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif*, 9:27.

19 Ibid., 9:27, 28; 8:224.

20 Ibid., 9:26. Note that a tomb of ʿAlī b. Abi Ṭālib existed in Acre in the thirteenth/eighteenth century. The traveler ʿAbd al-Qādir Abū l-Saʿūd al-Maqdisī (d. 1257/1841) from Nablus described the site as a building with small domes, where he stopped to pray the *fātiha*. See ʿAbd al-Qādir Abū l-Saʿūd al-Maqdisī, *Riḥla min Nāblus ilā Islambūl* (Damascus: Dār al-Zamān, 2015), 35.

Shī'ī community in Palestine, and two of them seem to be tied only loosely with Shī'ism in general. These five sites are listed here.

1. A *mashhad* of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in the suburbs of Ramla, located near a vineyard on the side of the road leading to Lod. This site does not appear in other sources.²¹
2. Another *mashhad* of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, not far from the one in the suburbs of Ramla noted above; it appears in the middle of the road between Jerusalem and Jaffa in a place called Bāb al-Wād. This tomb did not have a roof. The author admitted that the site did not appear in older sources, but he claimed that it was registered in the *waqf* of Ramla.²² The site was also mentioned briefly by Canaan.²³
3. The *maqām* of Sitt Sukayna in Haifa, located in the west of the old city of Haifa. Until the last years of the Ottoman period it was venerated and pilgrimages were made to it. Yet, by al-Amīn's time, the exact location of the site was unknown.²⁴
4. The *maqām* of Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, called Ibn Sarrāj, who was a descendant of Mūsā b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. This figure fought against the Ikhshīdids in the fourth/tenth century, and had a tomb in Ramla.²⁵ By al-Amīn's time, the site no longer existed.²⁶ There are no sources confirming pilgrimages to this tomb or even its importance.
5. A grave (*darīḥ*) of the Prophet Muḥammad's uncle al-Faḍl b. 'Abbās near Ramla; in spite of al-Amīn's claim, this tomb does not appear as a Shī'ī site. It is registered in the Palestinian *waqf* and has a typical Sunnī inscription.²⁷

In his encyclopedia of Shī'ism, al-Amīn dealt with more than history and holy sites. He also provided important information about the Shī'īs in Palestine during his time. With regard to Tiberias and Ramla, he noted that there were no longer any Shī'īs in these towns or their surroundings.²⁸ Concerning Hūnīn,

21 al-Amīn, *Dā'irat al-ma'ārif*, 9:26.

22 Ibid.

23 Canaan, *Muhammedan Saints*, 14 n. 5, 18. According to Canaan, the site was a place where travelers on the carriage road from Jerusalem to Jaffa stopped and prayed.

24 al-Amīn, *Dā'irat al-ma'ārif*, 9:28.

25 The Egyptian historian al-Kindī (d. 350/961) records (in the events of 335/946) Ibn Sarrāj's killing by the Ikhshīdid dynasty. See Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-wulāt wa-kitāb al-quḍāt* (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Ābā' al-Yasū'iyyīn, 1908), 294–295. The site is not mentioned in other medieval sources and does not seem to have a special importance for the Shī'īs in Palestine.

26 al-Amīn, *Dā'irat al-ma'ārif*, 9:29.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 8:224; 7:185.

al-Amīn accused rich Lebanese landowners of selling their land in Galilee to Zionists in the 1930s.²⁹ Accusations such as this concerning lands in Qadas were raised in the same period by the Palestinian Supreme Arabic Council.³⁰

2 Shī'ī Traditions concerning Holy Towns in Palestine

The traditions that concern Palestine in Imāmī Shī'ī literature are scarce and focus mostly on Jerusalem, as the third, or sometimes the fourth holiest town in Islam (after Mecca and Medina, and before or after Kūfa in Iraq). Nablus, the site of Joseph's tomb, venerated by Jews, Christians, and Sunnī Muslims is not mentioned in Shī'ī sources. The same is true of Hebron, the town where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are buried, which has little if any significance in Shī'ism. In the vast *Bihār al-anwār*, al-Majlisī mentions the tombs of the three biblical patriarchs just once, and defines the pilgrimage to them merely as recommended (*mustaḥab*).³¹

In Imāmī traditions, Ramla and Tiberias are mentioned in the context of apocalyptic events, mostly related to the final battle between good and evil, the *mahdī*, and al-Sufyānī (derived from the name Abū Sufyān, the father of the first Umayyad caliph); these events are said to end with the victory of the *mahdī*. Ashkelon appears in Shī'ī literature, but as a Sunnī town, where the population opposes the *ahl al-bayt* and supports the Umayyad caliph. Traditions praising Ashkelon are missing in Imāmī literature, since, as noted above, the tradition that the head of Ḥusayn was in this location only served Ismā'īlī-Fāṭimid political goals and was rejected by Imāmī Shī'īs. The only Shī'ī connection to Gaza stems from descriptions of Hāshim in the *jāhiliyya* (pre-Islamic) period. Nevertheless, unlike the Sunnī attitude toward the *jāhiliyya*, in Shī'ī literature, the ancestors of the *ahl al-bayt* that possess the divine light are considered holy, pure figures.

29 Ibid., 1:71–72. Al-Amīn states that the Zionist movement did not deport the population after buying the lands prior to the 1948 war; he adds that the population of Hūnīn was respected among the Matāwila and well-known for their horses. The villagers resettled in Beirut's southern outskirts after the 1948 war. They have built a *ḥusayniyya* (congregation hall) where al-Amīn himself was invited to give speeches.

30 The representative in Safed district sent a letter to the Supreme Arab Council in Jerusalem in which he blamed two families, Āl Faraḥāt and Āl al-Bizze from Bint Jbel district in southern Lebanon, for selling parts of the lands of Qadas to the Zionists. See *Israel State Archive*, file P (D) 343/35.

31 al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 99:277.

2.1 *The Holiness of Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem*

Imāmī traditions about Jerusalem and its sanctity decisively prove that this town was considered one of the holiest places in Shī'ī Islam, together with Mecca, Medina, and Kūfa. Jerusalem is mentioned in the context of the *isrā'* (the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey) and the *mi'rāj* (his ascent to the heavens), as it does in Sunnī religious literature; but in addition to this, it is related to the murder of Ḥusayn in Karbalā'. Nevertheless, members of the *ahl al-bayt* and other 'Alids are usually not mentioned in the context of Jerusalem.

Livne-Kafri notes that Jerusalem was not a focus of discussion for Shī'ī scholars, or a focus of Shī'ī pilgrimage. He explains that, in terms of its religious importance, Jerusalem was overtaken by alternative pilgrimage centers in Iraq and Iran related to the *ahl al-bayt*. According to Livne-Kafri, following Kister, this attitude to Jerusalem was mainly a result of Shī'ī antagonism toward the Umayyads, who promoted the sanctity of Jerusalem.³² This also explains the phenomenon of Shī'ī traditions that define the holiness of Kūfa, including the tomb of 'Alī, as equal to or, in some traditions, even surpassing that of Jerusalem.³³

The three volumes of al-Majlisī's books of *ziyāra* (vols. 97–99) from the vast *Bihār al-anwār*, do not include sites in Palestine, with the exception of Jerusalem, which is covered in just two pages entitled "Faḍl Bayt al-Maqdis" (The merits of Jerusalem) in volume 99. Most of the sites that are mentioned in these volumes concern the Imāms, who are buried in Iraq, mainly in Kūfa, Baghdad (Kazimiyya), Karbalā', and Samarrā'. Shī'īs were also encouraged to visit tombs of the *ahl al-bayt* in the Baqī' cemetery in Medina.³⁴ The chapter on the 'Merits of Jerusalem' includes a recommendation to visit Jerusalem because it is "one of the four castles of heaven in this world," together with Mecca, Medina, and Kūfa.³⁵ A prayer in Jerusalem was said to be worth one thousand prayers elsewhere, but the merit for a good deed in Jerusalem is equal to one in Kūfa.³⁶ Shī'ī tradition rejects the popular tradition about the footprint that the Prophet Muḥammad left in the rock at the Dome of the Rock before ascending to the heavens.³⁷

32 Livne-Kafri, "The Early Shī'a and Jerusalem," *Arabica* 48, no. 1 (2001), 112–120.

33 Friedman, "Kūfa is Better."

34 al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 97:203–211.

35 *Ibid.*, 99:270.

36 In some traditions, fulfilling a *farīḍa* (religious duty) in Jerusalem or in Kūfa is equal in merit to making the pilgrimage to Mecca, see al-Ḥurr al-'Āmili, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 2:550–551.

37 al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 97:270–271.

2.1.1 Jerusalem in the Qurʾān

Several Shīʿī traditions diminish the importance of Jerusalem in order to prove Kūfa's superiority. The following tradition, transmitted in the *tafsīr* (Qurʾān exegesis) of al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 320/932), describes the Prophet's night journey to heaven instead of Jerusalem:

From the authority of Sallām al-Ḥannāṭ [transmitted] from a scholar, from Abī ʿAbdallāh [the Imām Jaʿfar], peace be on him, who said: "I asked him [the Imām] about the mosques that have merit. Then he said: the holy mosque [the Kaʿba in Mecca] and the mosque of the messenger [Muḥammad, in Medina]." I replied: "And the mosque of al-Aqṣā, may I be your ransom?" Then he [Jaʿfar] said: "That is in the heaven. The messenger of God was taken to it in the night journey, may God bless him and his family." Then I said: "People say that it is in Jerusalem," and he said: "The mosque of Kūfa is better."³⁸

The descriptions of the night journey in Shīʿī exegesis seem to mix this tradition with that of the *miʿrāj* (Muḥammad's ascent to the heavens). This combination seems to provide an explanation for Imām Jaʿfar's decision to locate al-Aqṣā in heaven.³⁹ However, in later exegeses, as in al-Majlisī's *Biḥār*, the location of al-Aqṣā Mosque is explicitly noted as being in Jerusalem.⁴⁰ Al-Majlisī also arranged the journey in what he considered the right order; the *isrāʾ* (the night journey of Muḥammad from Mecca to Jerusalem) happened first, then the *miʿrāj* (his ascent to heaven) took place. Al-Majlisī adds that all of it happened in one night and with Muḥammad's own body (not only his spirit).⁴¹ On his way to Jerusalem, he stopped and prayed in Kūfa.⁴²

In addition to al-Aqṣā, Shīʿī *tafsīr* identify another place in the Qurʾān where Jerusalem appears, namely, the following verse:

The fig, the olive, Mount Sinai and this secured town (95:1–2).

38 Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr* (Beirut: Muʿasasat al-Aʿlamī lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 1991), 2:302.

39 See other traditions that describe the location of al-Aqṣā as heaven, in al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, 33–37. According to Shīʿī tradition, the Prophet Muḥammad stopped in Kūfa during his night journey, once there, he prayed two units of prayer (*raqʿas*). In this tradition it is not clear whether or not he turned to Jerusalem. See *ibid.*, 3:32.

40 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 18:283; *al-masjid al-Aqṣā yaʿnī bayt al-maqdis* ('the mosque of al al-Aqṣā,' i.e., Jerusalem).

41 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 18:289.

42 *Ibid.*, 308.

These elements are interpreted as the four holiest towns Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, represented by the Mount of Olives next to its walls, and 'the secured town', that is Kūfa.⁴³

2.1.2 The First *qibla*

The Shī'ī tradition also follows the Sunna in accepting that the first *qibla* (direction of prayer) in Islam was Jerusalem. The Prophet Muḥammad, when he was in Mecca, prayed in the direction of Jerusalem (the Jewish custom) for thirteen years, and then maintained this tradition for seven months after the *hijra* to Medina. Then, according to Shī'ī tradition (and Sunnī tradition as well), God ordered him to change the *qibla* to the Ka'ba in Mecca.⁴⁴

2.1.3 Blood under Stones Following the Death of 'Alī and Ḥusayn

A well-known tradition, which also appears in Sunnī sources, describes blood appearing under stones in Jerusalem the day Ḥusayn was murdered in Karbalā'.⁴⁵ The following tradition links this phenomenon with other tragic events that happened on the same day:

Abū 'Abdallāh [Ja'far, the sixth Imām], peace be upon him, said: "Hishām b. 'Abd al-Mālik [the Umayyad caliph, d. 126/743] asked my father [Muḥammad al-Bāqir, the fifth Imām], peace be upon him," who said: "Tell me about the night that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, was murdered. What proof possessed one who was far from the district where 'Alī was killed, what was the sign for the people, and was there a tear for anyone else, when he was murdered?" Then my father told him: "On the night when 'Alī, may God bless him, was killed, no stone on earth could be picked up without finding fresh blood under it, until sunrise. The same happened on the night when Aaron lost his brother Moses, may God bless both of them, and the same happened on the night when Yusha' b. Nūn [Joshua] was killed, the same happened when Jesus son of Mary, may God bless him, was raised [to heaven] and the same happened on the night Ḥusayn may God bless him, was murdered [in Karbalā']."⁴⁶

43 al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 97:292. Concerning the Mount of the Olives in Islam see: Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*, 144–145.

44 Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Taqī Nūrī l-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasa'il*, 3:172.

45 Livne-Kafri, "The Early Shī'a," 116.

46 al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 42:302.

In another Shī'ī tradition describing the *isrā'*, when Jibrīl (the angel Gabriel) arrived in al-Aqṣā he explained to the Prophet Muḥammad that this mosque will be the *maḥshar* (that is, the gathering place on the day of judgment). Then Jibrīl called for the prayer using the typical Shī'ī *adhān* (call for prayer), ending with *ḥayya 'alā khayr al-'amal* (hasten to [perform] the best of acts).⁴⁷

2.2 *Ramla in the Qur'ān and Apocalyptic Traditions*

2.2.1 References to Ramla in the Qur'ān

Shī'ī traditions identify a reference to Ramla in the Qur'ān 23:50:

And We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign and We sheltered them on lofty ground (*rabwa*) having meadows and springs.

The *rabwa* (lofty ground) that is mentioned as a shelter for Jesus and his mother Mary is associated with Ramla and also with Jerusalem, Kūfa, or Damascus (and also appears as such in Sunnī *tafsīr*). But in his commentary, the Shī'ī scholar Abū 'Alī Faḍl b. Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1153) considers Ramla the first option.⁴⁸

2.2.2 The Apocalyptic “day of exchange”

According to Shī'ī tradition, Ramla has apocalyptic importance, since it is the meeting place between the evil al-Sufyānī and the followers of 'Alī at the end of time. This event is called *yawm al-ibdāl* ('the day of exchange'):

Then he [the *mahdī*] will arrive in Kūfa and stay there for a period, as long as God wants him to stay there, until he takes it over, than he will travel until he reaches al-'Adhrā' [a city near Damascus],⁴⁹ he and those who are with him, since several people will have joined him earlier. Al-Sufyānī [who represents the devil] at this time will be in the valley of Ramla. Until they will meet on the Day of Ibdāl [exchange]. People who

47 al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, 4:43. According to this tradition, Gabriel called the *adhān* during the night journey, before Muḥammad asked Bilāl b. Rabāḥ al-Ḥabashī (the freed slave) to make the call for prayers. The phrase in the call for prayer: “Rush to the best deed,” was omitted in the order of the caliph 'Umar, who claimed that praying is not the best way to worship God. 'Umar's decision was rejected in Shī'ism. The rule of the Fāṭimids meant that the Shī'ī could use their own version of the *adhān*. See Heinz Halm, *Fatimids and Their Traditions of Learning* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), 37.

48 al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 14:232; 57:201.

49 Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, 4:103.

were with al-Sufyānī will leave the party of the family of Muḥammad; and people who were with the family of Muḥammad will leave to al-Sufyānī, who are from his party, until they join them. Every group will turn to its [right] flag and this will be the day of exchange. The commander of the believers [‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib] said: “On this day al-Sufyānī and those who are with him will be killed, until no one hears from them, only one who is disappointed by [receiving] a dog [as his share of] the spoils would be disappointed that day.” Then he [the *mahdī*] will return to Kūfa and settle there.⁵⁰

2.3 Tiberias—the Final Battle of the Apocalypse

At the end of time, during the battle of Gog and Magog, the two giant warriors will drink from the lake of Tiberias.⁵¹ In another tradition, at the end of time the *mahdī* will kill al-Sufyānī near the sea of Tiberias:

The hour [at the end of time] will not take long until God kills all the companions of al-Sufyānī and none of them will remain on earth except him, then the *mahdī*, [peace upon him], will take him and slaughter him under a tree whose leaves hang down over the sea of Tiberias.⁵²

2.3.1 The Revelation of the Ark of the Covenant in Tiberias

There is a Shī'ī tradition about the prophecy and revelation of the lost Ark of the Covenant in Tiberias at the end of time and its transmission to Jerusalem:

Nu‘aym < Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-‘Aṭṭār from Basra < Sulaymān b. ‘Īsā, said: “I was told that by the [power of the] *mahdī*, the ark of the covenant will appear from the sea of Tiberias, until it is carried and placed in front of him in Jerusalem.”⁵³

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- 50 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 52:224. On the apocalyptic “exchange” in which supporters of ‘Alī will join al-Sufyānī and vice versa, see David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 2002), 162. According to most of the apocalyptic prophecies, the evil side will gather in Ramla. In another version these are the Byzantines, see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 52:219, 222. In other versions, the final battle will take place near Ramla, in the location of the gate of Lod, where the *dajjāl* (the enemy of the *mahdī* who will pretend to be the messiah) will be killed by the *mahdī* with the help of Jesus. See *Ibid.*, 51:93; alternatively, Jesus alone will kill him. See al-Majlisī, who cites Ibn al-Athīr in 11:233.
- 51 al-Majlisī *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 212:16; 57:117.
- 52 ‘Alī b. Mūsā b. al-Ṭāwūs, *al-Malāḥim wa-l-ḥitan fī zuḥūr al-ghā’ib al-muntaẓar* (Qumm: Manshūrāt al-Raḍī, 1978), 71.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 147.

2.4 *Ashkelon and Its Lack of Religious Importance*

The town of Ashkelon was considered a *thaghr* (frontier land) and did not have a special religious status in Shī'ism prior to the miraculous revelation of the head of Ḥusayn. The Ismā'īlī Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn insisted that the head was in Cairo, and did not mention Ashkelon in his detailed '*Uyūn al-akhbār*'.⁵⁴ The *faḍā'il* 'Asqalān ('Merits of Ashkelon') genre only appears in Sunnī literature.⁵⁵

2.4.1 Ashkelon as a Symbol of Evil

The image of this town in Imāmī literature is negative; it appears on the route of the horrible march of the captives from Karbalā' to Damascus in the towns of Syria, headed by Ibn Ziyād and his warriors following the massacre of Karbalā'. For example, a Shī'ī tradition written in Persian about the period following the massacre of Karbalā' mentions Ashkelon as a town in southern Palestine. Although its historical credibility is in question, it demonstrates the popularity of the Umayyad dynasty and the weakness of the pro-'Alid tendencies in first-/seventh-century greater-Syria including Palestine. According to this tradition, after beheading Ḥusayn b. 'Alī and other members of the *ahl al-bayt* who fought with him in Karbalā' (in the year 61/680), their murderers traveled proudly between the towns of Syria, triumphant in their victory, carrying the heads of the slaughtered men on lances. They were followed by the women who survived the massacre; they were led by Ḥusayn's sister Zaynab and his son 'Alī, known as Zayn al-Ābidīn. On his arrival in Ashkelon, Ya'qūb al-'Asqalānī (the governor of the town) ordered that the town be decorated and the local people started celebrating. Then a merchant named Zarrīr al-Khuzā'ī expressed his shock that the population would celebrate the murder of the Prophet Muḥammad's grandson. One person in the market explained to Zarrīr that these are the heads of rebels who tried to take the place of the Caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya, and that the women on the camels situated near the heads are their wives. Then Zarrīr saw 'Alī the son of Ḥusayn, the young Imām, with the women. Zarrīr cried, and explained to 'Alī that he is a stranger in this country and never expected to see such a horrible sight. The Imām asked the merchant Zarrīr to move the heads, to conceal the unveiled women of the *ahl al-bayt*, so that the crowd would see the heads instead of the humiliated women. Then Zarrīr brought clothes to cover the women and to honor the Imām. Zarrīr found Shamīr b. Dhī Jawshan, the person who had murdered Ḥusayn, and Zarrīr cursed him and as a result was beaten severely and stoned by the crowd. He

54 al-Qurashī, '*Uyūn al-akhbār*', 4:129–130.

55 Talmon-Heller, Kedar and Reiter, "Vicissitudes of a Holy Place," 189–190.

escaped to a shrine (*mashhad*) of prophets in the town, and found a group of Ḥusayn's supporters crying and mourning his death in secret. Zarrīr made this group into a cell of rebels in Ashkelon.⁵⁶

A similar version of this story, which vividly describes the hatred of the people of greater Syria for Ḥusayn and their support for the Umayyad caliph, appears in Shī'ī Arabic sources. In them, the figure of Zarrīr is replaced with that of the traditionist Sahl b. Sa'd, who was on his way to Jerusalem. In his travels, Sahl b. Sa'd passed through a village with many trees and rivers (he does not mention its name), where he observed the population celebrating. He asked people if there was a holiday in Syria that he was not aware of, and was told that the head of Ḥusayn had been brought to this place from Iraq. But, since the next story in this collection of traditions is about the members of the *ahl al-bayt* and their arrival to the caliph Yazīd, it seems that the Arabic version of this tradition refers to another place outside Palestine, closer to Damascus.⁵⁷

2.5 Gaza—the Town of Hāshim

The sanctity of Gaza derives from the tomb of Hāshim b. 'Abd Manāf, the great grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad, which is located in this town. According to Shī'ī faith, as opposed to Sunnī belief, the ancestors of the Imāms possessed the light of prophecy, which passed from Adam to the *mahdī*.⁵⁸ Hence, in Shī'ī literature Hāshim, in his last moments before his death in Gaza, reminded his friends that he possesses light that would be transmitted to the prophet:

... And [Hāshim] turned and looked to the sky, then said: "Mercy, mercy Oh messenger, by the right of the light of the chosen one that I have carried." Then he looked like a candle whose light was put off. Then, when

56 The mysterious shrine, which served as a shelter for the supporters of Ḥusayn in Ashqelon is said to have been built by King Solomon and contain "the remains of some prophets and their children." See this story in Ḥusayn Kāshifi, *Rawḍat al-Shuhadā'*, trans. to Arabic by Shu'ā' Fākhīr (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-Ḥaydariyya, 1968), 723–272. Note that this source is problematic from a historical point of view, since it was written during the pre-Safavid period at the end of the ninth/fifteenth century in Herat, far from Palestine. In addition, the reliability of this source is questioned by Shī'ī scholars.

57 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 45:127–128.

58 On the light of prophecy and its transmission through Hāshim to the Prophet Muḥammad and then to the Imāms, see Muhammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 40–42.

he died, they [his traveling companions in Gaza] prepared him [purified his body] and buried him in his tomb, which is known there [in Gaza].⁵⁹

This tradition does not resolve the question of whether the shrine of Hāshim in Gaza was a Shī'ī site of pilgrimage, but it provides some background for the Ismā'īlī Bohrā's veneration of this site.

59 al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 15:52–53. As noted, this description does not indicate the nature of the tomb or whether it was visited by Shī'ī pilgrims.

Conclusion

The history of the Shī'īs in Palestine can be divided into two main periods. The first is the medieval period, between the third/ninth and the fifth/eleventh century and the second begins with the eighth/fourteenth century and goes on to 1948. The first period involved the settlement of Shī'īs in Palestinian towns, the second was a period during which Shī'īs settled in rural Galilee; this was part of the expansion of the Lebanese Jabal 'Āmil.

At the beginning of the Shī'ī settlement in Palestine, the Arab sources describe two kinds of population: The immigration of the 'Āmila tribe into the region that included modern-day Lebanon and northern Palestine, and another kind of immigration, of descendants of the *ahl al-bayt*, during which al-'Abbās b. 'Alī's respected family bought lands in Tiberias then immigrated to it. With the exception of al-Ya'qūbī (third/ninth century), medieval sources are silent about the tribal Shī'īs in northern Palestine in general, probably because they had little influence in political and religious life. Most of the medieval Muslim scholars who described this region focused on the urban Shī'īs in Palestine.

From the early period of their settlement, the Shī'īs suffered from oppression, as reflected in the murder of Abū l-Ṭayyib (one of their leaders) in Tiberias. The latter became the first Shī'ī martyr in Palestine and thus his family members were called Banū l-Shahīd. The negative attitude toward the Shī'īs in Palestine is reflected in every Sunnī report about their settlement in this region, whether these reports originated with historians, religious scholars, geographers, or travelers. While complaining about their immigration to the southern Jund al-Urdunn and the Jund Filasṭīn (which together constitute what is, roughly, today's Palestine), these Sunnī reports seemed to exaggerate their descriptions, as if whole parts of Palestine had been taken over by Shī'īs or Shī'ī sects.

1 Urban and Rural Shī'īs

Shī'ī settlement in urban areas took place mainly in Ramla, Tiberias, and Acre. Shī'ī populations were rarely mentioned in other towns, such as Safed, Jerusalem, and Nablus, where their presence seems to have been small or insignificant. The Shī'īs who settled in the cultural centers of Palestine were comprised of educated scholars, and also Ṭālibīs, descendants of the *ahl al-bayt* who seemed to enjoy a relatively higher economic status.

2 The Golden Age of Shī'ism in Palestine

With the Fāṭimid capture of Palestine in the second half of the fourth/tenth century, the situation of urban Shī'is in Palestine improved dramatically, as reflected in the medieval sources. The century and a half of Fāṭimid rule in this territory ended with the Turkoman invasions, followed by the crusader's capture of most of Palestine at the end of the fifth/eleventh century. Yet, this period can be considered the golden age of the Shī'ī presence in Palestine. During this period, Shī'is from Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon passed through and sometimes settled in Palestine, where they enjoyed the patronage and protection of the Fāṭimid dynasty and were granted prestigious appointments as community leaders, governors, and judges. The most important example of the intellectual climax of the Shī'is of Palestine is reflected in the life of the well-known shaykh Muḥammad al-Karājukī, the student of Shaykh al-Mufīd, who visited Tiberias and settled in Ramla in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century. There seems to have been a connection between the Shī'ī community of Palestine and the intellectual Imāmī center of Tripoli (Lebanon). We can deduce this from the fact that al-Karājukī visited Tripoli and the Imāmī scholar As'ad b. Abī Rawḥ attempted to transfer books from the library in Tripoli to Haifa, to found another library. This effort was curbed by the Frankish invasion.

Palestine also attracted Shī'ī scholars because the Fāṭimid authorities had invested in the construction of buildings and mosques in Palestine; they understood their economic and religious importance to the consolidation of their rule in the region. Most of the Fāṭimid period in Palestine seems to have been characterized by tolerance of different points of view. Although sources reveal a few attempts to impose Shī'ī customs and to punish Sunnīs who dared to insult the authorities, these cases were rare.

In this study, I described four examples of Fāṭimid attempts to impose Shī'ī prayers in Palestine and one case in which a Sunnī prayer was prohibited. Interestingly, some of the newly introduced prayers were later also observed by Sunnīs, although they were controversial. An example of this phenomenon is the *qunūt* prayer at noon. It is possible that the night prayers of *raghā'ib* in Rajab and mid-Sha'bān were also Shī'ī in origin. During Fāṭimid rule in Palestine, medieval historians recorded only one case of public cursing of the Companions (of the Prophet) (*sabb al-ṣaḥāba*) in Jerusalem and only one case in which the *tarāwīḥ* on the eve of the first day of Ramaḍān was prohibited.

Thus, it seems that the process of transforming Palestine into a Shī'ī state, if such a project existed, failed. Jerusalem remained mainly a center of Sunnī scholars, and the sources are silent on the issue of Sunnīs converting to Shī'ism, since this seems to have been rare. The contemporary sources do not report a public celebration of 'āshūrā', the foundation of a *ḥawza* or a *ḥusayniyya*

(religious seminary and congregation place for ceremonies) in Palestine, which means that Fāṭimid authorities were careful not to impose Shīʿī customs in Palestine, which seems to have had a Sunnī majority. We lack information on the daily life of the medieval Shīʿī communities in Palestine, with the exception of one reference in the *nasab* literature to a Shīʿī butcher in Ramla.

In sources from the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh century, Shīʿī sects are mentioned for the first time in the region of Palestine, mainly in the three towns that were also the centers of Imāmī Shīʿī life: Ramla, Tiberias, and Acre. This phenomenon of Shīʿī sects in Palestine, seems to be the result of the Fāṭimid tolerance of Shīʿī groups (Imāmīs and Nuṣayrīs), Ismāʿīlī propaganda (Bāṭinīs and Ḥākīmīs, later called Druzes), and the weak grip of the Fāṭimids in the region during certain periods; these factors enabled local rebellions and invasions of violent Shīʿī groups (Qarmaṭīs).

The Fāṭimids, as opposed to other dynasties during the “Shīʿī century,” had ambitious goals. For example, they were the only dynasty to install a living Imām as caliph, which indicates that they planned to become an alternative to the caliphate of Baghdad. Their caliph appointed a leader of the Jews in Jerusalem and Ramla, as the caliph in Baghdad did in relation to the Jews in Iraq. In general, the promotion of Jews in the Fāṭimid Empire is unparalleled in Muslim history, and therefore raises several questions. Was Fāṭimid policy influenced by the Jews who were promoted or even by Jewish concepts, such as the holiness of Palestine, or the idea that the Davidic line is parallel to the ʿAlid line in the Ismāʿīlī Imām-Caliph? Were the Fāṭimid conquests encouraged by the converted Jew Yaʿqūb b. Killis in particular? These questions demand further study.

At their zenith, the Fāṭimids controlled the three holiest towns in Islam: Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. However, as Shīʿīs they were more interested in taking control of the sites in Iraq, mainly the tombs of the Imāms, which were more important to Shīʿism. But the Turkish invasion in the East in the middle of the fifth/eleventh century devastated other Shīʿī powers in Iraq and in Syria and alarmed the Fāṭimids. We might assume that the invasion of the Turcomans and Seljuks forced the Shīʿīs from Iraq and Syria to escape and to take refuge in Palestine, since the Fāṭimids were the last Shīʿī dynasty to survive this invasion.

3 Bringing Karbalāʾ to Palestine

The Fāṭimids understood that if capturing Karbalāʾ became impossible, they could “import” the sacred objects they venerated and locate them in their territory; so they established a site to honor the head of Ḥusayn. A site for the head was chosen in Ashkelon, since it was a closely fortified town that protected

the road to Egypt, the seat of the caliph, and yet was remote from the battles with the Turcomans in central Palestine. Although sources mention that the mausoleum in Ashkelon was built at the end of the fifth/eleventh century, its construction, which required time, began some years earlier and was completed under the Fāṭimid leadership of al-Afḍal, the son of Badr al-Jamālī. The mausoleum of Ashkelon was taken by the crusaders fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem; this means the sanctuary existed long enough under Muslim rule to become a significant religious site for the local population.

4 Shīʿī Sites in Palestine

During the Fāṭimid period, four major Shīʿī sites in Palestine were built. The Fāṭimid's goal was to attract Shīʿī population to Palestine, though they may have had strategic purposes as well. We know about most of these Shīʿī sites from later post-Fāṭimid sources, from which we can reconstruct the interesting process that they went through. These sites were built as Shīʿī mausoleums (*mashhad*, *mazār*) or as modest shrines (*maqām*, *ḍarīḥ*, *qabr*); they were captured and held by the crusaders for some decades, then reconquered by Muslim dynasties (Ayyūbids and Mamlūks), who transformed them into Sunnī sites.

In this study, I show that the sources that dealt with the four main sites reflect the Fāṭimid period, although they were written in later eras. These shrines were all meant to honor members of the *ahl al-bayt*. When Palestine was reconquered from the crusaders by Sunnīs, they returned the sites to their original Muslim identity. While some of the religious sites the Fāṭimids erected were specifically Shīʿī in nature, others, like al-Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem, which they reconstructed, are Muslim holy sites. The Fāṭimids rebuilt these sites after damage from earthquakes, but also to glorify their dynasty and legitimize their rule.

The specifically Shīʿī sites in Palestine included two tombs in northern Palestine, one for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in Acre, another for Ḥusayn's daughter Sukayna, and her cousin ʿUbaydallāh b. ʿAbbās near Tiberias. Two other shrines were located in southern Palestine, namely, that of the head of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon, and another of the tomb of Fāṭima the daughter of Ḥusayn in a cave in Hebron. Although the tomb of Hāshim in Gaza apparently existed during the Fāṭimid period, our information about it is insufficient to enable us to reach any conclusions; further study is required.

In Shīʿī religious terms, these tombs of the *ahl al-bayt* in Palestine were erected to fill a void, since Shīʿī Imāmī literature focuses on holy sites in Iraq and has few traditions about the sanctity of towns in Palestine. Moreover, although Shīʿī religious texts include several traditions praising Jerusalem, they also contain traditions that diminish its sanctity, and attempt to prove the

superiority of Kūfa. With regard to Ramla and Tiberias, there are few traditions that deal with them and these focus solely on eschatological events. Religious traditions about Acre are totally absent in Shī'ism. Some traditions that mention Ashkelon are even negative.

The transmission of the head of Ḥusayn from Ashkelon to Cairo marks the end of Fāṭimid rule in Palestine and the beginning of a tremendously difficult period for Shī'is in this region. The crusaders ruled over the site of Ashkelon for less than forty years before Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn recaptured it. In an effort to reinstate the Sunnī Muslim character of Palestine after almost a century of Christian Frankish rule, the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk dynasties undertook a process of transforming Shī'ī sites into objects of popular Sunnī cults. This process also involved a reassertion of the Sunnī identity of Palestine, particularly over Shī'ī shrines. The Mamlūk inscriptions in the shrine of Sukayna reveal Shī'ī traces, mostly in the choice of the Qur'anic "verse of purification." These traces may indicate that the Shī'ī identity of the shrine for Sukayna and 'Abbās was well-known to the local Sunnī population. Its declaration as a *waqf* (endowment) is a typical example of this reassertion of the Sunnī identity of the site. From that moment, it became part of the sultan's endowment, then an object of pilgrimage by the local Sunnī population. Some Shī'ī sites, such as the mausoleum of the head of Ḥusayn, also became objects of the popular local festivals, the Sunnī *mawsim* tradition, that took place from the time of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn until the 1948 war. The tomb of the head of Ḥusayn in Cairo, which was transferred from Ashkelon, became a popular Sunnī site of pilgrimage.

5 The Disappearance of the Shī'is

I characterize the Arabic sources covering the period that began with Frankish rule in Palestine and lasted until the late Mamlūk period as "a disturbing silence," concerning the Shī'ī population in Palestine. In sources covering the late medieval period, that is, between the sixth/twelfth and the early eighth/fourteenth centuries, there are no references to the Shī'ī population in sources on Palestine. This study reflects a "methodology of absence," that is, all the sources concerning Palestine during this period similarly neglect the Shī'ī population, as if they no longer existed. In the present research, I examine how, during this long period, the Shī'is are systematically omitted from the sources that deal with Palestine. Moreover, Muslim historians and travelers who described Shī'ī groups in other regions remained silent when they described Palestine.

This clear absence leads to the conclusion that the Shī'is disappeared from Palestine for two centuries. This disappearance was the result of several reasons, including wars and natural calamities. The towns Tiberias, Ramla, and

Acre, where Shī'īs had lived, were destroyed, depopulated, and later burned by Sunnī leaders who sought to reconquer Palestine from the crusaders. It seems that the first to suffer were the Shī'īs of Ramla, which was destroyed during the Seljuk-Turcoman invasion of the second half of the fifth/eleventh century. The Shī'īs of Tiberias may have been the last to survive in Palestine. If any of them survived Frankish rule, they certainly left after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn destroyed the town.

Unlike Jews, Christians, and Sunnīs who were rooted in Palestine and shared in their veneration of its holy sites, mainly those in Jerusalem, Shī'īs in Palestine were relative newcomers and were more closely attached to sites of pilgrimage in Iraq, where the original tombs of the Imāms were located. As new immigrants, the Shī'īs were fewer in number than other communities that had lived in Palestine for centuries. The Shī'īs in the towns, who were scholars rather than soldiers, were extremely vulnerable, especially after losing the Fāṭimid protection. For example, Druze tribes like the Tanūkh had military experience before they embraced their new religion and could survive the turbulent events of the region. Moreover, they often cooperated with the Sunnī authorities.

The Ayyūbids, and the Mamlūks even more extensively, contributed to the disappearance of the Shī'īs from Palestine by creating an anti-Shī'ī atmosphere in which only the four Sunnī schools were considered legitimate. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya's attack on Shī'ism in general and against the pilgrimages to the tomb of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon in particular, symbolizes this negative atmosphere during Mamlūk rule in Palestine. Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā* against the cult of the head of Ḥusayn is an important document that enables us to understand the process; its author warned against transforming Shī'ī holy sites from the Fāṭimid period into objects of Sunnī popular cult in Palestine. Ibn Taymiyya, who reflects the extreme Sunnī Ḥanbalī view, warned against the commission of two sins: The cult of tombs in general and the adoption of Shī'ī worship of saints in particular.

It is logical to assume that the last Shī'īs in Palestine, the few who survived the Turkish and the crusader invasions, left the region during the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods and joined the closest and most prominent Shī'ī community in the region: that of Jabal 'Āmil (present-day southern Lebanon).

6 The Matāwlis in Northern Palestine

After the "disturbing silence" of the sixth/twelfth and the seventh/thirteenth centuries, the Shī'īs appeared in Palestine again, this time only in Galilee. Historians of the eighth/fourteenth century mentioned the Shī'īs in the district of Safed.

From the Palestinian Shī'ī villages which appear in modern sources, Qadas is the only Shī'ī village that was mentioned (once) in early medieval sources. Al-Maqdisī (fourth/tenth century) mentions it and Hūnīn, but it is not characterized as a Shī'ī village prior to the description of al-'Uthmānī (eighth/fourteenth century). With regard to the rest of the Shī'ī villages in Galilee, which later became part of Palestine, most of these were not mentioned by name in any source prior to the tenth/sixteenth century, when they appeared for the first time in Ottoman tax registers. Nevertheless, even these Ottoman sources did not describe them specifically as Shī'ī (in Ottoman terms, *rafizi*; Ar. *rafidī*, or heretical Shī'ī) villages, and they were clearly only defined as Shī'īs in Arabic sources from the twelfth/eighteenth century onward.

Beginning from the eighth/fourteenth century onward, Shī'ī communities in Palestine emerged as part of an expansion of the Lebanese community of Jabal 'Āmil southward toward Galilee, rather than as a continuation of the medieval Shī'ī presence in Palestine, which had disappeared long ago. Indeed, during the eighth/fourteenth and the ninth/fifteenth centuries, Sunnī historians complained about the growing presence of a Shī'ī population in the district of Safed. This community was very different from the urban Shī'ī scholars who emigrated from Iraq and Syria to Palestine during the golden age. Although they shared the same religion, the new Shī'īs of Galilee belonged to a lower socio-economic level; they were poor uneducated peasants living under the rule of feudal chieftains. Furthermore, their history of rebellions proves that, in contrast to the previous Shī'ī communities in Palestine, these later communities were men of the sword, not of the pen.

Between the ninth/fifteenth and the eleventh/seventeenth centuries, the Druzes of the Ma'n clan enjoyed considerable autonomy and controlled the district of Safed. Unlike the Shī'īs, the Druzes were considered allies of the Ottomans because they served the authorities by collecting taxes from the local population, which was under the control of their *amīr*. This alliance ended at the close of the eleventh/seventeenth century after the Ottoman oppression of a Druze revolt. The combination of the collapse of Druze power, which included the Safed district, together with the general weakness of the Ottoman Empire (because of its war with Russia) at the end of the eleventh/seventeenth and beginning of the twelfth/eighteenth century, caused a new situation to come into being. It provided an opportunity for the Shī'īs in Lebanon and Galilee, who were called from this period "Matāwli" (pl., Matāwila), to rebel. These new circumstances coincided with the advent of the powerful Shī'ī Naṣṣār family, which united and led the Matāwli in Jabal 'Āmil. In addition, the Naṣṣār clan found a powerful partner for its rebellion against the Ottomans: the Sunnī Zaydānis who ruled in northern Palestine.

7 The Silver Age of the Shī'īs in Palestine

Although the void created by the collapse of the Druze *amīrs* provided new opportunities, it also brought new dangers and instability. The expansion of the Matāwliš southward and the increasing power of the Zaydānīs in northern Palestine brought an inevitable clash between the two rising powers in Galilee in the first half of the twelfth/eighteenth century.

The claims of Zāhir al-'Umar, that villages in southern Jabal 'Āmil belong to him, support the thesis of a growing Shī'ī presence in villages in Galilee. Another indication of the Matāwli expansion southward is the existence of villages with mixed populations, where the Matāwliš settled after the eleventh/seventeenth century. Al-Baṣṣa near Acre was inhabited by Shī'īs and Sunnīs and Ābil al-Qamḥ, north of Safed, was half Shī'ī and half Christian. The fact that Ābil al-Qamḥ did not appear in the list of the twelfth-/eighteenth-century Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī as a village of Jabal 'Āmil may indicate that this was the beginning of the process of its settlement by Matāwliš. Ultimately, the thesis of the Shī'ī expansion southward is supported by an explicit account of their growth to the Ḥūla region; this is described by the twelfth-/eighteenth-century Lebanese historian Ḥaydar al-Shihābī. A later source, the modern study of the seven villages in Galilee by the Lebanese al-Rayyis, describes the immigration of Matāwliš from Syria and Lebanon to these villages in Palestine; al-Rayyis also supports this thesis.

The agreement of Zāhir al-'Umar and Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār and their mutual cooperation in the rebellion against the Ottoman authorities mark the silver age of the Shī'īs in northern Palestine. It cannot be considered a golden age, since it was only maintained for twenty-five years (1751–76), a much shorter period than the Fāṭimid golden age of Shī'ism in Palestine, and it covered a much smaller region of northern Palestine.

Al-Naṣṣār's building of al-Nabī Yūsha' shrine near Ḥūla Lake symbolized the climax of the modern Shī'ī expansion southward into Galilee. The case of al-Nabī Yūsha' is in fact extraordinary, since it was located deeper inside the territory of Palestine than the rest of the Shī'ī villages in this region. The new site, which was, until 1948, the most important Shī'ī religious site for pilgrimage in Palestine, was settled by a Matāwli family named al-Ghūl. It also became a site for the *mawsim*, the annual feast and the pilgrimage of the Matāwliš and some villagers from Jabal 'Āmil even asked to be buried close to it.

This silver age ended in the late twelfth/eighteenth century with al-Jazzār's deadly raids against the Matāwliš. Although this silver age was short, its significance went beyond economic (mainly the export of cotton through Acre) and strategic (anti-Ottoman) interests. In the history of this region, this was the only period in which Sunnīs and Shī'īs cooperated politically and made

a peace agreement. This was also a period during which the border between Zāhir and Nāṣif was divided based on religious differences, an arrangement that was violated later, in the border agreement of 1923.

Although the Matāwliš were dealt a painful blow by al-Jazzār, they recovered in the nineteenth century and returned to their deserted villages in Palestine; the numbers of Shī'ī population in Galilee continued to grow until 1948.

8 Between Palestinian and Lebanese Identities

The Matāwli villages in northern Palestine considered themselves part of Jabal 'Āmil. Nevertheless, after World War I, when Britain and France fixed the borders, they annexed the partly Shī'ī village of al-Baṣṣa to Palestine. Further border changes in 1923 annexed seven additional Shī'ī villages in Galilee to British Mandate Palestine. Thousands of Matāwliš were included in the new territory of the British Mandate in Palestine.

These Matāwliš, separated from their community in Lebanon, tried to maintain good relations with their Sunnī, Christian and Jewish neighbors. In their reactions to the dramatic events of the 1948 war, the leaders and older generation tried to avoid the conflict, while the young generation adopted the Arab nationalist ideology and opposed the creation of the state of Israel. During the fighting, these young Shī'īs joined the Lebanese army and other soldiers from Syria, and on several occasions opened fire on Israeli forces from their villages in Galilee.

The Zionist movement, which developed special relations with the Druzes in Palestine from the early 1930s, did not understand the potential benefits of collaborating with the Shī'īs until 1948, and by that time it was too late. During the war, the negotiations in Kfar Giladi with the leaders of Hūnīn demonstrate that the potential for Shī'ī-Zionist negotiations did exist. In the Israeli documentation of this meeting, it was clear that the Shī'īs were a minority that had been oppressed for centuries. As such, this community could have been partners with the Jews. According to the document, both were minorities in the Middle East, and shared the same threat from the Sunnī majority. On the Israeli side, this understanding (regardless of whether or not it was justified), came too late, when the war was already underway and most of the Shī'ī villagers had fled from Palestine to Lebanon. This missed opportunity to build a bridge between modern Israel and the Shī'ī community in the region, was missed again, in 1982, when the Israeli IDF invaded southern Lebanon and fought the Sunnī Fatah, who controlled the Shī'ī villages. At the beginning of the war in 1982, the IDF was welcomed by the Shī'īs; the Israelis were considered liberators, but before long, the IDF was seen as another foreign occupying force.

The situation of the Shī'ī refugees from Palestine in 1948, created a disagreement between the Palestinian and the Lebanese national movements. The Palestinians considered these refugees Palestinian, and the Lebanese claimed them as Lebanese. This problem of identity raised another question: Are the seven villages of Galilee part of Palestine or Lebanon? In Palestinian *nakba* literature, writers work to blur their Shī'ī identity, and describe them only as “Muslim” Palestinian refugees, while Lebanese Shī'ī writers emphasize their Shī'ī identity. Hizbullah, as the most influential Shī'ī organization in Lebanon, went to great lengths to get refugees from these Palestinian villages citizenship in Lebanon—because of their Shī'ī faith. On the basis of the claim that the Shī'ī belong to Lebanon and not to Palestine, Hizbullah also claims that parts of northern Galilee belong to the Shī'īs and thus should be liberated from Israeli occupation (by war) and returned to Lebanon.

9 The Ongoing Shī'ī History of Palestine

The 1948 war and the deportation of the last Matawālīs to Lebanon, could mark the end of Shī'ī history in Palestine, but over the last two decades, some minor Shī'ī cells appeared in the state of Israel and the Gaza Strip. A wave of conversions to Shī'ism was triggered by the second Israeli-Lebanese war (2006), which was considered a success for Hizbullah, since the IDF failed to crush the Shī'ī Lebanese organization. Shī'īs in Israel, in Dabūriyya and other villages in Galilee, were attracted to Shī'ism, probably as a result of Iranian propaganda and Shī'ī missionary sites online created by clerics from Najaf and Qumm.

Iran saw the coup of Hamas in the Gaza Strip in 2007 as an opportunity to extend the *muqāwama*, the resistance axis (of Iran, the Syrian regime, and Hizbullah) to the Palestinian front. As a Sunnī movement originating from the Society of the Muslim Brothers, Hamas recoiled from these ties with Iran and from their efforts to convert Palestinians to Shī'ism (*tashayyu'*).

The conversion of Palestinians to Shī'ism seems to be motivated by three main reasons: ideological motivation based on propaganda, economic support from Iran, and political and strategic regional developments (for example, Hizbullah's “victory” in 2006).

The complexity of the connections of Iran with Hamas can be illustrated in the following three circles of Iranian involvement in the Gaza Strip.

The external circle represents Iran's ties with Hamas, which are political and do not involve any religious influence. These relations are based on opportunity and Hamas' need to finance its movement in the current difficult situation, in which they lack Sunnī patrons. Iran's support of Hamas pushes the movement toward more extreme positions in its demands from the

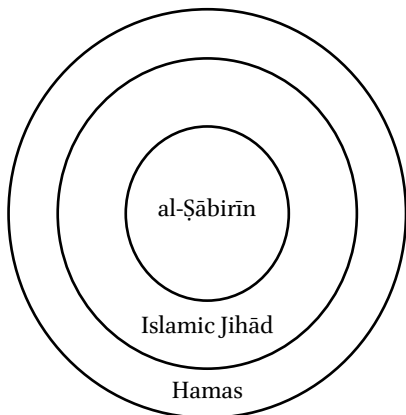


FIGURE 7
Circles of Iranian involvement in the Gaza Strip

Palestinian Authority, and toward more frequent military engagement with Israel. The middle circle represents Iran's connection with the Islamic Jihād Movement in Palestine (IJMP), an organization that identifies itself as representing the Iranian revolution in Palestine and is the main opposition to Hamas in Gaza. The IJMP is committed to ongoing confrontations with the "Zionist enemy." Although some of its members converted to Shī'ism, the organization's connections with Iran are purely ideological, not religious. The inner circle, that of al-Şābirīn movement (which was created in 2014 by members of the IJMP), represents a new phase in the Iranian involvement; this phase is ideological and religious, since its members are Shī'is only. Al-Şābirīn movement openly tries to spread Shī'ī propaganda. Like the IJMP, al-Şābirīn is also engaged in an ongoing and uncompromising war with Israel. The Iranians encouraged this inner Palestinian split because it prevents the three Islamic organizations from one side from reconciling with Fatah from the other. They are divided over external and internal Palestinian issues: The question of whether or not to have any relations with Israel (that is, *jihād* versus negotiations) and over the nature of the future Palestinian state (that is, Islamic or secular).

The situation of the few hundred Shī'is inside the state of Israel, most of whom live in Galilee, mainly in Dabūriyya, can also be illustrated by a three-circle diagram that presents the problematic nature of their position in the state of Israel.

Like the small Shī'ī presence in the Gaza Strip, who are threatened by Hamas and the Salafī movement, the Shī'is in Israel do not have much chance to survive. The diagram above demonstrates their problematic position as a group inside two circles of hostility. The Shī'is comprise a minority (probably less than 1 percent) of the Muslim population, which is also a minority in Israel (some 20 percent). This minority within a minority faces hostility and

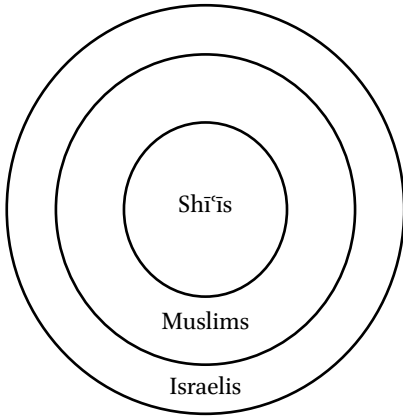


FIGURE 8
Circles defining the Shī'īs' status in the state of Israel

suspicion from both Israeli and Sunnī society. In addition, as a Shī'ī community, the Israeli security authorities consider it a dangerous pro-Iranian group.

Although Shī'ism does not represent a real threat to the majority of Sunnī Arabs in Palestine (Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the Gaza Strip), the fear that the Shī'īs will return is still present. Among intellectuals and religious authorities in particular, this fear is based on the Sunnīs historical memory of the “Shī'ī century,” when Shī'īs dominated the Middle East including Palestine, and when a small but significant part of the population of Palestine was Shī'ī.

With regard to the Druzes in Israel, this sect, which was originally Shī'ī, then split from Islam, are the last remnants of the Fāṭimid period (that is, they were followers of the caliph al-Ḥākīm). The Dāwūdī-Bohrās, whose members are mostly from India and Pakistan, are the only Ismā'īlī group who still make pilgrimages to the holy sites in Palestine. In my interview with Dr. Mustafa Abdulhussein from the Dāwūdī Bohrā community in England, he confirmed that it is unlikely that Shī'īs would return to live in Palestine in the future as they did during the Fāṭimid period.

Finally, I described the three 'Alawī villages in the Golan Heights that Israel occupied following the 1967 war. These 'Alawīs seem to be the last of the Nuṣayrī community that lived in the region of Tiberias in the fifth/eleventh century. The 'Alawī village of Ghajar was annexed to the state of Israel in 1982 and its villagers, whose lives and socioeconomic status improved dramatically, work in Israel and speak Hebrew. This group identifies itself as part of the 'Alawī sect in Syria, not as Imāmī Shī'īs.

Interestingly, seventy years after the departure of the last Matāwliš from Galilee, most of the Shī'īs in Israel (the Imāmīs in Dabūriyya, the 'Alawīs in Ghajar) and sects of Shī'ī origin (Druzes in Galilee, Bahā'īs in Haifa and Acre) chose to settle in the same region, northern Israel.

The *Ṭālibiyyūn* in Palestine

The following list is arranged according to the chronological order of the Imāms, whose descendants appeared in Palestine during the Fāṭimid period. The list is based mostly on the accounts of the following three *nassābs* (genealogists): the two Sunnī Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1208), in *al-Shajara al-Mubāraka*; his pupil ‘Azīz al-Dīn Abī Ṭālib al-Mirwazī Ismā‘īl b. Ḥusayn (d. after 614/1217), in *al-Fakhrī fī ansāb al-ṭālibiyyīn*; and an earlier Shī‘ī source, Najm al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-‘Umarī (d. 460/1067), *al-Majdī fī ansāb al-ṭālibiyyīn*.

Descendant of ‘Umar al-Aṭraf (Lit., ‘the One-Sided’),¹ Son of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib

Descendants of this family, who were not mentioned by name, are said to live in Ramla.²

Najm al-Dīn al-‘Umarī mentions a descendent from this family who was his close friend: the *sharīf* Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan, who only had daughters, lived in Cairo and Tiberias, and was a scholar (*‘āqil*, pl. *‘uqalā’*) of the town.³

A wealthy warrior from this family named Ḥamza b. Abī Ḥarb had descendants in Tiberias who lived in the days of al-‘Umarī (fifth/eleventh century).⁴

Descendants of Ḥasan b. Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (or Ḥasan al-Muthannā, Lit., ‘the Double’)

A certain Yaḥyā, who was a *ra‘īs* in Ramla, had descendants in this town.⁵ The latter may be Yaḥyā b. al-Qāsim al-Rassī, a *ra‘īs* also mentioned in Ramla.⁶

1 He was called “the one-sided” because he was honored as a descendant of the *ahl al-bayt* from his father’s side only; another was called ‘Umar al-Ashraf (lit., ‘the most respected’) who was the son of the fourth Imām ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn and a descendant of the *ahl al-bayt* from both his father and his mother.

2 al-‘Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 503.

3 Ibid., 371.

4 Ibid., 505.

5 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 102; al-Rāzī, *al-Shajara*, 39.

6 al-Rāzī, *al-Shajara*, 43.

A Kūfan named Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad (called 'Ibn al-Adru') immigrated to Ramla and later to Egypt and had descendants in Jerusalem.⁷

Another descendant, who immigrated from Kūfa to Ramla is Abū l-Ḥusayn Maymūn b. Muḥammad.⁸

A judge called Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭalib was known as the 'son of the daughter of the Zaydī b. Ja'far'.⁹

Descendant of Ḥasan b. Ḥasan b. Ḥasan b. 'Alī, the Second Imām (or, Ḥasan al-Muthallath, Lit., 'the Triple')

Kutaym b. Sulaymān was a butcher (*jazzār*) in Ramla;¹⁰ this information is important, as it proves that Shī'īs were living and working in Ramla. Given their strict laws concerning purity, Shī'īs only consume foods (especially slaughtered meat) prepared by members of their community.

Descendants of 'Abbās ('the *Shahīd*') of Karbalā' and Brother of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī

The most important descendant of this family was the wealthy and respected Abū l-Ṭayyib Muḥammad b. Ḥamza, who was murdered by Muḥammad b. Ṭuhj in Tiberias at the end of the third/ninth century, as mentioned above.

The poet 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās b. al-Afṭaṣiyya had one son called Ja'far, who had children in Tiberias, and a second son called Aḥmad, who was a poet and judge in Ramla. Aḥmad had children in the suburbs (*nawāḥiḥa*) of the town.¹¹ A certain Aḥmad from this family was a *khaṭīb* (who gave the sermon in the mosque) in Ramla.¹² Another *khaṭīb* called Muḥammad al-Lihyānī is mentioned in Ramla.¹³ Members of the Lihyānī family lived in Ramla and Tiberias.¹⁴

7 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 118–119.

8 al-'Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 275.

9 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 128–129.

10 Ibid., 255.

11 al-'Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 443, 445.

12 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 170. On this page, he mentions descendants of 'Abbās in Tiberias and Ramla in general.

13 Ibid., 171.

14 al-'Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 449.

Descendants of Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (‘the *Shahīd*’), the Zaydī Imām

Abū l-Sarāyā Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Zayd from Ramla was a judge in Ramla and the *naqīb al-‘Alawīyyīn* (head of the Shī‘īs) of the town. Najm al-Dīn al-‘Umarī recorded meeting with him and consulting him in matters of *nasab*.¹⁵ Al-‘Umarī also describes a meeting with Abū l-Sarāyā and members of his family in 443/1051. From this description, we learn that this family had lived in Ramla for at least three generations and that several members of the family lived there in the fifth/eleventh century.¹⁶

Abū l-Ḥusayn Zayd b. ‘Alī Abī l-Ṭayyib (called ‘son of Qurrat al-‘Ayn’) was a *naqīb* in Tiberias.¹⁷ A certain Aḥmad Abū l-‘Abbās from the same family was mentioned in Jerusalem.¹⁸ Other descendants of Zayd are mentioned, but in relation to Ramla¹⁹ and Jerusalem.²⁰

Descendants of Ḥusayn al-Asghar (Lit., ‘the Little One’), Son of the Fourth Imām ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn

Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh b. Sulaymān is described as an old shaykh with a large family, called Banū Shaqāyīq, in Ramla; one of them, a certain ‘Alī b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. Ṭāhir, was a contemporary of the genealogist al-‘Umarī.²¹

Ṭāhir Abū l-Qāsim was *ra‘īs* (head) of the community in Ramla and had two children in there.²²

A judge in Ramla named Abū l-Ḥasan b. ‘Abdallāh (called Ṣāhib al-Shāma, lit., ‘the man with the mole’)²³ had two sons with the respected titles of *amīrs*: Athīr al-Dawla and Nasīb al-Dawla. The most respected member of this family in the time of al-‘Umarī

15 Ibid., 214.

16 Ibid., 385.

17 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 40.

18 al-Rāzī, *al-Shajara*, 151.

19 Ibid., 154.

20 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 50.

21 al-‘Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 408–409.

22 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 61. On this page, he also mentions descendants of Zayd who served as *nuqabā’* in Ramla.

23 al-‘Umarī, *al-Majdī*, 404. This is not the Qarmaṭī leader from the tenth-century, Ṣāhib al-Shāma al-Ḥusayn b. Zikrawayh.

was Athīr al-Dawla b. al-Kūfī; he was the Fāṭimid governor of Jerusalem in the middle of the fifth/eleventh century.²⁴

Al-Mubārak Abū l-Azhar b. Muslim had a family in Tiberias who was a contemporary of al-ʿUmarī.²⁵

Descendants of the Sixth Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq

Aḥmad b. Ḥamza b. Ḥusayn was a *naqīb* in Tiberias.²⁶

Ḥasan b. Ahmad b. ʿAlī had two sons in Tiberias.²⁷

A certain ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Abahḥ lived in Ramla.²⁸

Descendants of Hārūn, Son of the Seventh Imām Mūsā al-Kāzīm

A judge in Ramla called Jaʿfar b. Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Hārūn had many children.²⁹ A certain ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Aḥwal (lit., ‘the cross-eyed’) from the same family, is mentioned in Ramla.³⁰

A friend of al-ʿUmarī from this family, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Muslim, had a brother named Musharraf, who was a judge in Jerusalem.³¹

Many other descendants of the Imams are mentioned in Ramla and Tiberias in general without specifying their names, for example, “This person had many descendants in this town.”³² The *nasab* literature proves the existence of a significant ʿAlid presence in Palestine during the period of Fāṭimid rule in Palestine. Many of these people were Iraqi Shīʿīs who emigrated to Palestine.

24 al-ʿUmarī, *al-Majdī*, 404; Ḥamza b. Asad b. al-Qalānīsī, *Taʾrīkh Dimashq*, 127. Athīr al-Dawla is mentioned as a governor of Ramla in the year 448/1056.

25 al-ʿUmarī, *al-Majdī*, 403.

26 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 30.

27 Ibid., 32.

28 al-Rāzī, *al-Shajara*, 127.

29 al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 22.

30 Ibid., 310.

31 al-ʿUmarī, *al-Majdī*, 308.

32 In Ramla, see, for example, al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 84, 170, 176, 180, 189; al-Rāzī, *al-Shajara*, 84, 99; in Tiberias, see al-Marwazī, *al-Fakhrī*, 55, 111, 170, 171; in Ramla, see al-ʿUmarī, *al-Majdī*, 264, 312, 462.

Photos and Inscriptions of Shī'ī Shrines in Palestine

al-Nabī Yūsha', Sitt Sukayna, and Ra's al-Ḥusayn

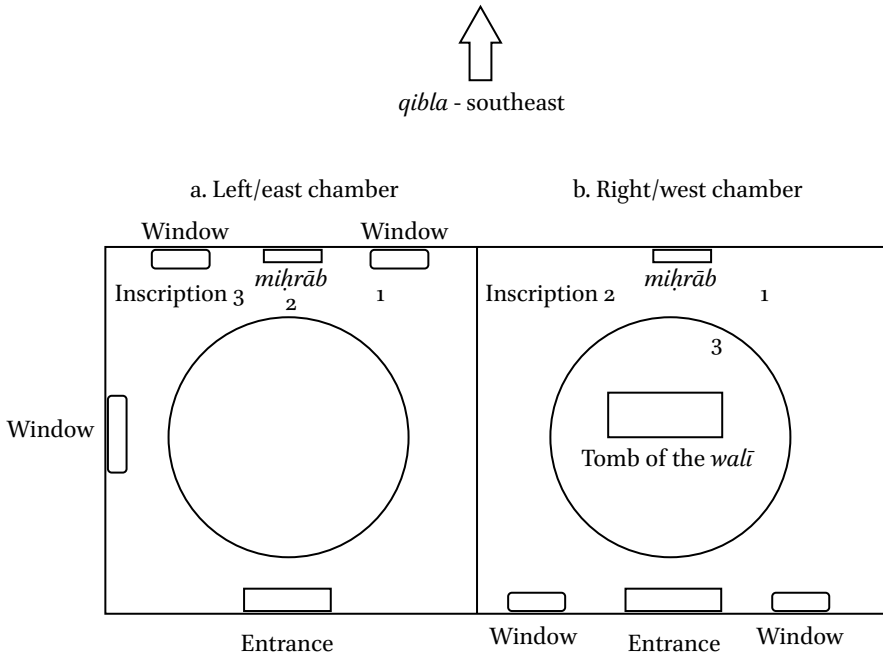
1 al-Nabī Yūsha'¹



FIGURE 9 The al-Nabī Yūsha' shrine

- 1 The photos of al-Nabī Yūsha' shrine were taken by the author, 2 September 2017. After the al-Aqṣā Institute attempted to renovate the building, in May 2009, volunteers from the region of Acre and Shāghūr (al-Bī'na, Deir al-Asad, and Majd al-Kurūm), from the Benevolent Hands Organization tried to renovate the shrine. The Israeli police stopped them, explaining that works at the site are prohibited because it belongs to the Israel Land Authority. See in *Kull al-'Arab*, Nazareth 23 May 2009 online (in Arabic): <http://www.alarab.com/Article/140245>. The recent research does not contribute much to the study of the history of al-Nabī Yūsha'. Petersen's most recent study ignores its Shī'ī background connected to Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār, the special meaning of Joshua in Shī'ī religion, and the inscriptions on its left/east chamber. Moreover, the examples given in his description of this shrine in earlier centuries seem speculative and may not relate to the same site. See Petersen, *Bones of Contention*, 110–112. In June 2014, excavations by the Israel Antiquities Authorities took place in the surrounding

The left/east dome and right/west dome are situated above the two main chambers
 Diagram of the two domed chambers:



The Arabic inscriptions that survived in the two main chambers under the two domes have not been studied yet. Unfortunately, they were seriously damaged and we cannot reconstruct their exact historical background.

area. Nevertheless, the findings do not contribute to the Shī'ī history of the building. See Uri Berger, "En-Nabi Yusha' 09/12/2015 final report," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot: Excavations and Surveys in Israel*, vol. 127 (2015), in http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.aspx?id=24854&mag_id=122.

a. The left/east chamber



FIGURE 10

The left/east chamber of the two domed chambers includes three inscriptions on the *qibla* (direction of prayer, southeast) wall above the *mihrāb* and the two windows as follows (from right to left):

1.

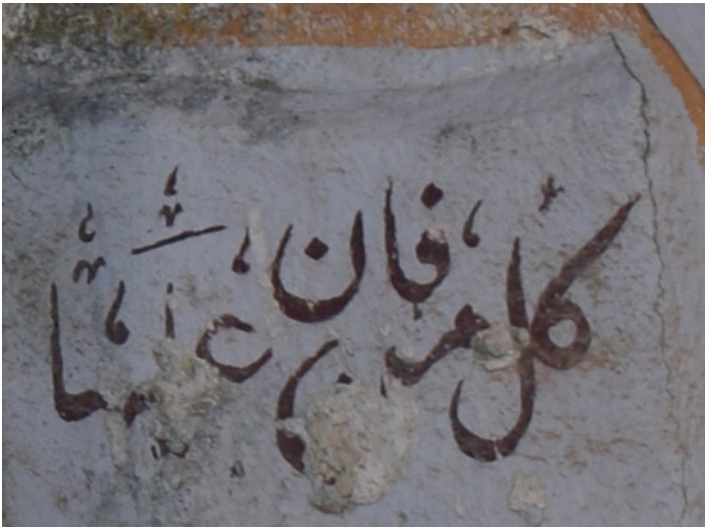


FIGURE 11

2.



FIGURE 12

3.

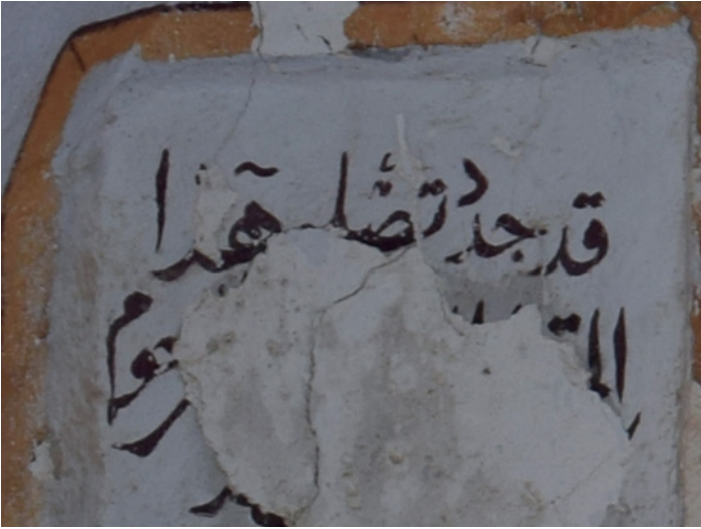


FIGURE 13

1. كل من عليها فان 2. يا باقى ارحم عبدك الفاني 3. قد جددت هذا
 الم[قام] ال[مبارك] [الم] ارحوم
 [كامل?][...] صر
 (1944/) 1364

1. “All which is on it [earth] is temporary” Qur’ān 26:27.
2. Oh Eternal, have mercy on your mortal worshiper!
3. Renovated this [blessed] shrine the late ... [Kāmil?] [...]sr 1364 [/1944].

Inscription no. 3 is easier to reconstruct from older photos that appear online.² Unfortunately, the name of the contributor who repaired the building in 1944 cannot be identified.

b. The right/west chamber

In this chamber, under the right dome, the tomb of the *walī* (the saint) is covered with blue cotton sheets. The identity of the *walī* (believed to be al-Nabī Yūsha‘) is not recorded anywhere at the site or the tomb itself. The following photos show the room from the outside, the entrance, and the inside.



FIGURE 14

The entrance of the right/western chamber has new graffiti mentioning ‘Alī (above the left window) and the *shahada* and *Allāhu akbar* (‘God is the greatest’) in several places. There are signs (from the remains of provision and clothes) that pilgrims may still visit the site and even sleep there to enjoy its blessing.

² In an online photo from 2005, some letters that survived can be observed on the left (3): [المقام] and [كامل]. See <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Safad/al-Nabi-Yusha'/Picture7931.html>. See also <https://www.flickr.com/photos/31383164@N06/4933486755/in/album-72157624822888866>.



FIGURE 15

The right/western chamber contains a space by the tomb where people can sleep. The two inscriptions in this chamber that appeared on its right upper wall, have been destroyed, but can be reconstructed thanks to older photos found online.³ The two inscriptions are a citation from the Qur'ān and a typical Shī'ī slogan, as follows (1 in the right, 2 in the left):

1. وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا 2. لَا فَتَى إِلَّا عَلِيٌّ وَلَا سَيْفٌ إِلَّا ذُو الْفَقَارِ

1. "Hold firmly to the rope of God." (Qur'ān 3:103)
2. "There is no young warrior like 'Alī, and no sword like *dhū l-fiqār*."

The presence of this slogan at this site may be significant, since the young warrior (*fatā*) referred to in the Qur'ān verse is Joshua (Yūsha'),⁴ who is considered by Shī'īs to be the successor (*waṣī*) of Moses, like 'Alī is the successor of Muḥammad.

In the left/east chamber there is a *mīhrāb* in the southeast wall in front of the entry.



FIGURE 16

3 For older photos from the following site, see the undated photos online, at <https://www.palestineremembered.com/Safad/al-Nabi-Yusha'/Picture7959.html>.

4 In this verse the term *fatā* is commonly translated as "servant", although "young warrior" would also fit the personality of Joshua. Qur'ān 18:60, "When Moses told his young servant"
 وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتَاهُ

3. On the southern corner of the dome in the left/eastern chamber the remnants of an inscription are visible; the name of Allāh is next to that of ‘Alī **علي الله**. This may have been, originally, **علي ولي الله** “Alī is close (*walī*) to Allāh,” which is the third part of the *Shīʿī shahāda*. The *yā* (the third letter of **ولي**) is visible at the bottom, under the name ‘Alī.



FIGURE 17

In a cemetery next to the building toward the south, two gravestones survived, indicating that these were graves of people from the village Mays al-Jabal in the Marj 'Ayūn district in southern Lebanon, and that they died in 1355/1936 and 1355/1937. These graves demonstrate that Lebanese Matāwliis wanted to be buried close to the saint (*walī*), in order for their souls to receive his blessing.

2 *Sitt Sukayna*

- a. Two marble tablets include scriptures from the Mamlūk period;⁵ these have been studied.⁶ Until the 1990s, these were situated in the Sitt Sukayna shrine, they were then transmitted to the Gordon Museum in the Kibbutz Deganya Alef.
 1. A five-line dedication to the sultan includes a typical Shī'ī citation of the Qur'ānic verse of purification (*āyat al-taṭhīr*):



FIGURE 18

-
- 5 The photos of the two Sitt Sukayna marble tablets were taken by the author, 3 December 2017 with the permission of the Gordon Museum, Deganya Alef Kibutz.
 - 6 The following translations were made by the author. See other translations of the two inscriptions, in English: Humphrey Milford, *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 1:38–41. In French: L.A. Mayer, “Tibériade—Mausolée de Sukaina,” in E. Combe, J. Sauvaget, and G. Wiet (eds.), *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1944), 13:126–128.

Arabic text (based on the order on the tablet):

1. بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا
2. أَمْرٌ بِعِمَارَةِ هَذَا الْمَشْهَدِ الْمُبَارَكِ وَهُوَ مَشْهَدُ السَّتِّ سَكِينَةَ ابْنَةِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِي بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ
3. وَعَبِيدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْعَبَّاسِ بْنِ عَلِي بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ الْعَبْدِ الْفَقِيرِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى
4. فَارِسِ الدِّينِ الْبَكِّيِّ السَّاقِيِ الْعَادِلِيِّ الْمَنْصُورِيِّ نَائِبِ السُّلْطَنَةِ بِالْمَمَالِكِ
5. الصَّفَدِيَّةِ وَالشَّقِيفِيَّةِ وَالسَّاحِلِيَّةِ وَذَلِكَ فِي غُرَّةِ رَجَبِ سَنَةِ أَرْبَعٍ وَتَسْعِينَ وَسِتْمِائَةَ

Translation

1. In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, "God intends only to remove from you the impurity, oh people of the [Prophet's] household and to purify you." [Qur'ān 33:33].
2. The order to build this blessed mausoleum, which is the tomb of the Sitt Sukayna daughter of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib
3. and that of 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abbās b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, [may the] blessing [of God] be upon them, was given by the worshiper yearning for God the exalted
4. Fāris al-Dīn al-Bakkī the cupbearer the 'Ādilī Manṣūrī representative of the sultanate in the kingdoms of
5. Safed, the Shaqīf [Beaufort castle] and the coast and this is in the beginning of the month of Rajab in the year 694 [1294].

The verse of purification (*āyat al-taḥhūr*) that appears in the first line is as follows:



FIGURE 19

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

God intends only to remove from you the impurification, oh people of the [Prophet's] household and to purify you.

Qur'an 33:33

6. Eight lines declare the shrine a *waqf* (endowment):



FIGURE 20

1. بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ هَذِهِ الْأَمَاكِنُ الْمَوْقُوفَةُ عَلَى مِصَالِحِ مَشْهَدِ السُّتِ سَكِينَةَ بِمَقْتَضَى ثُبُوتِ ذَلِكَ مَجْلِسِ الْحَكَمِ
2. الْعَزِيزِ وَهِيَ مَجْرَدٌ⁷ فِدَانِينَ مِنْ أَرْضِ طَبْرِيَّةٍ مِنْ جَمَلَةِ ثَلَاثِينَ فِدَانًا وَقَطَعْنَا أَرْضَ تَعْرِفَانَ بِالْحَرِيثِيَّيْنِ وَأَرْضَ
3. الْمَعْرُوفَةَ بِالْمَنْبَرِ وَأَرْضَ تَعْرِفَ بِبِسْتَانَ الْقَسَيْسِ وَحَاكُورَةَ تَعْرِفَ بِالْقَصِيلِ وَحَاكُورَتَانَ مَجَاوِرَتَانَ لِهَذَا الْمَشْهَدِ

7 The Arabic word *مجر* proposed by Mayer (instead of *مجرد* = merely) does not make sense in this context, where the word seems to lack the last letter, which was obscured over time.

4. المبارك وحاكورة كرم دار مسرور وقطعتا أرض احداهما تعرف بالبئر والأخرى بالرجم الكبير
5. وحاكورة تعرف بأمر رجم وأرض تعرف البستان والذي وقف العبد الفقير الى الله تعالى
6. الأمير فارس الدين البكي الساقى المنصوري العادلي منشى هذه العمارة وهو
7. جميع بستان الحنّانة المجاور لمدينة طبرية وبحيرتها وحدود ذلك مبيّنة بكاتبى الوقف
8. فمن بدله بعد ما سمعه فإنما إثمه على الذين يبدلونه إن الله سميع عليم

Translation

1. In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate, these are the places endowed (as *waqf*) for the benefit of the mausoleum of Sitt Sukayna, based on [the legalization of] the assembly of judgment
2. the honorable, which is merely two *faddan*⁸ of the land of Tiberias from the entire thirteen *faddan* and the two pieces of land known as the 'two Ḥarṭhiyya,' and the land
3. known as 'al-Minbar' and the land known as 'Bustān al-qissīs' (the priest) and garden known as 'al-qaṣīl' and two gardens neighboring this mausoleum
4. which is blessed, known as the 'garden of Karm (vineyard) Dār Masrūr and two pieces of land, one called 'al-Bī'r' (the well) and the other 'al-Rujm al-Kabīr'
5. and a garden called 'Umm Rujm' and a land called 'al-Bustān';⁹ and the [land] is endowed to the worshiper yearning for God the exalted
6. the *amīr* (commander) Fāris al-Dīn al-Bakkī, the cupbearer of 'Ādilī Maṣṣūrī, founder of this construction which is
7. the entire garden of 'al-Ḥannāna' which is beside the town of Tiberias and its lake; and the borders of this [endowment] are defined in the two *waqf* deeds.
8. "And whoever alters it after he has heard it, the sin is only upon those who have altered it. Indeed, God is Hearing and Knowing." (Qur'ān 2:181)

8 It seems that the Mamluk *faddan* or *feddan* unit was similar to today's Egyptian and Syrian area unit, equivalent to 4,200 square meters.

9 Most of these places could still be found in Tiberias in the 1930s, see Milford, *Quarterly*, 41.

b. The remains of the shrine of Sitt Sukayna were turned into a Jewish synagogue after reconstructions.¹⁰ For the last five centuries, rabbis and Jewish travelers have claimed that this is the shrine of Rachel, wife of Rabī 'Akīva.



FIGURE 21

The shrine of Sitt Sukayna is located on a mountain west of the Sea of Galilee (the Kineret) north of the town of Tiberias. The tombs nearby reflect the beliefs of local Palestinians, who sought the blessings of the saint by being buried close to her. One of the nearby gravestones is dated 1359/1940; this indicates that the site was venerated until the war of 1948.

¹⁰ The photos of the Sitt Sukayna shrine were taken by the author, 2 September 2017.



FIGURE 22

The site has changed identities, from a Shī'ī to a Sunnī shrine, then it was venerated by both Muslims and Jews, and recently it became a Jewish shrine only. A menorah, a seven-branch candle, is situated on its roof.

In 1995, during the renovation of the site, the two Mamlūk marble tablets with the inscriptions were transmitted to the Gordon Museum. A new white sign is now situated on the external wall of the site; this states (in Hebrew):

A holy place

Notification of the shrine of Rachel

Wife of the *Tanna* ('repeater,' a name of Mishna sages in the two first centuries CE) Rabī 'Akīva

Below, the English reads: Tomb of Rachel

In 1995, the Tiberias Religious Council officially declared the site a synagogue. It is maintained nowadays by the Breslav Hasidic Jews.¹¹

¹¹ In 1997, Rabbi Rafael Cohen began a tradition of *hillula*, a Jewish tradition similar to the Muslim *mawsim*. This custom is widespread in Jewish folklore related to tombs of

3 Ra's al-Ḥusayn¹²

The original shrine no longer exists. The current site was built at the end of the 1990s by the Dāwūdī Bohrā community.¹³ It is an open space with a water faucet (on the right) for making ablutions before prayer. The entrance to the site, with three steps, is from the northwest.



FIGURE 23

In 2008, the municipality of Ashkelon added a blue sign with the following explanation in Hebrew:

Jewish saints in the region of Tiberias. The process of the conversion is explained in Rivka Gonen, "How is a New Saint's Tomb Created?," 75–85. In December 2013, a delegation from al-Aqṣā Institute visited the synagogue and met Rabbi Cohen. The Muslim delegation disagreed with the Rabbi's claim that this site was originally a Jewish tomb. See (in Arabic) "A Praying Site and a *maqām* of Sitt Sukayna and the Jewish Rachel," in *Yaeni* online (26 December 2013): <http://yaeni.com//news/news/61865//#.WjDvidljSM8>.

12 The photos of Ra's al-Ḥusayn shrine were taken by the author, 11 October 2016.

13 In 1998, the Dāwūdī Bohrā community claimed that they located the cornerstone of the last shrine of the head of Ḥusayn at this site. See (in Hebrew): <https://news.walla.co.il/item/1280081>. According to Meron Rapoport, the mosque was bombed by Moshe Dayan in July 1950, see Rapoport, "History Erased" online, at <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/history-erased-1.224899>.



FIGURE 24

Translation

In the year 656 CE, 'Alī, the son-in-law of Muḥammad, gained the throne of the caliphate. His young son Ḥusayn was killed at Karbalā' in Iraq (in the year 680 CE). The head of Ḥusayn was transmitted to Damascus, the capital of the Umayyad dynasty, and buried in the great mosque. In the ninth century, the head of Ḥusayn was transmitted to a remote place in the kingdom. That is how it arrived in Ashkelon.

In the year 1098 the Fāṭimids conquered Ashkelon and the head of Ḥusayn was transmitted to a respectable memorial (*mashhad*) that was built on this site. In the year 1153 Ashkelon was conquered by the crusaders and the head of Ḥusayn was transmitted to Cairo. Nevertheless, the sanctity of this site did not disappear, which is characterized by large old sycamore trees that were preserved here, thanks to its sanctity.

The actual *mashhad* (*mashhad al-Ḥusayn*) was built in the nineteens of the twentieth century by the Muslim-Fāṭimīs originating from India and its region [the Dawudi Bohrās]. Many of them come to this site every year for the *ziyāra* (pilgrimage) which begins in Damascus, continues to this site, and ends in Cairo.



FIGURE 25

The open marble site contains a *mīhrāb* (in the right), to show the direction of the prayer to the southeast. The surrounding marble fence contains geometrical forms surrounding stars of David. Next to the site is the maternity room of Barzilai Hospital (the cars parked nearby can be seen in this photo).

The Fatwā of Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya concerning the Head of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon

In the following *fatwā*, the Sunnī Ḥanbalī authority Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) denies that the head of Ḥusayn is located in Cairo, or in Ashkelon. I have translated most of this *fatwā*, with the exception of paragraphs that are not relevant to this topic; these I summarize briefly between hard brackets. The source is the *Majmūʿ fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyya, from the section on the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) of *ziyārāt* (pilgrimages).¹

Istiftāʿ (request for legal opinion)

The shaykh of Islam, may God sanctify his soul, was asked about the mausoleum attributed to Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him, in the town of Cairo: Is it true or not? Was the head of Ḥusayn transferred to Damascus then to Egypt, or was it transferred to Medina from the direction of Iraq? Is there truth in what some people claim concerning the mausoleum, was it in Ashkelon, or not? What about the matter of the head of Ḥusayn and its transferral to the town of the prophet [Medina], without [passing through] Syria and Egypt? From the previous and the later scholars, who decided that the mausoleum in Ashkelon and the mausoleum in Cairo are a lie and untrue? Do they provide a profound explanation for this, due to the urgent necessity and need this would be much esteemed and appreciated, God willing.

Fatwā (legal opinion)

Then he replied: Praise to God. In fact, the mausoleum which is attributed to Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, may God be pleased with both of them, which is in Cairo is undoubtedly an invention and a lie, according to the scholars who are known among the people of religious knowledge, scholars that Muslims rely on in such matters, because of their education and honesty. We do not know of any well-known or famous scholars who say that this mausoleum is true. This is only claimed by some people, who speak about matters they do not know about, such as the claims alleged by the *rāfiḍa* [the Shīʿīs] and their kind of liars.

¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, 27:450–451 (question), 451–489 (answer). Also printed separately in Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *Raʾs al-Ḥusayn* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1949), 3–35.

Indeed, they cite traditions and stories and mention schools and beliefs. But when you ask them who said it or who cited it, they have no supporting sources to turn to and they cannot name anyone who is known for honest citations, or who has knowledge concerning his belief. On the contrary, the thing that they rely on most is their claim that the right community had consensus since they consider themselves the community of the truth, and they consider themselves the believers and the rest of the Muslim community infidels.

And they [the Shī'īs] say: They possess the truth, since they have among them the infallible Imām. In the opinion of the Twelver Imāmī *rāfiḍa*, the infallible one is the one they claim entered the cave in Samarrā', after the death of his father Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-'Askarī in the year 260 [/873], and until now he has vanished, nothing is known about him, no one has seen him, and there is no trace of him.

The experts of genealogy of the *ahl al-bayt* say that Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-'Askarī did not have children or offspring. So, there is no doubt that all the sages consider this belief as the height of ignorance. The claim of the superiority of the Imām and the latter's infallibility is the same sort of nonsense. No one agrees to such a thing, except the most ignorant, most misled, and most illiterate person. The polemics against them is in a separate chapter of this book. Our purpose here is to clarify the sort of beliefs and traditions among the people of ignorance and deception. Since those who are among the ignorant and the misled people claim that the expected one [the last and twelfth Imām, the *mahdī*], was two- or three- or five-years-old at the time of his father's death, though this depends on their different opinions.

[An unrelated paragraph follows, in which Ibn Taymiyya tries to prove that the Shī'ī belief in the twelfth Imām and the claim that he was never born and the belief in his *ghayba*² is ridiculous.]

As to this tomb, which is in Cairo, the mausoleum of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him, and also other mausoleums that were added to that of the tomb of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him; it is known and agreed among all the scholars, that this mausoleum [in Cairo] was built in the year 540 [/1145]

2 The Shī'ī term *ghayba* refers to the absence, or occultation, of the *mahdī*, the period of time after his disappearance until his *raj'a* (his return at the end of time). During the lesser occultation (*al-ghayba al-sughrā*, 260–329/874–941) representatives were sent, but during the greater occultation (*al-ghayba al-kubrā*) there were no agents from the Imām; this state continues to the present time. See M.G.S. Hodgson, "Ghayba," *EI*² (1991), 2:66.

approximately, and that it was transferred from the mausoleum in Ashkelon, and that the mausoleum in Ashkelon was founded after 490 [1096].

Hence, the source of this mausoleum in Cairo is the mausoleum in Ashkelon. That of Ashkelon was created more than four hundred thirty years after the murder of Ḥusayn, and that in Cairo was created close to five hundred years after his murder. There is no controversy about this matter among two of the scholars that were cited in this chapter, of several [specialties], as the scholars of *ḥadīth* and the chroniclers of Cairo, and the authors of the history books and what was transmitted by the scholars from generation to generation.

If the source of this mausoleum in Cairo was taken from that mausoleum in Ashkelon, a fact that is accepted by the scholars and the transmitted traditions, then it is known that someone said that the one in Ashkelon was built for the head of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him. This is a claim without proof at all, since anyone from the people of knowledge, who would have transmitted this tradition, neither did any of the experts of *ḥadīth*, nor the scholars of chronicles and history, nor the scholars who write compilations of genealogy, the lineage of Quraysh or the lineage of Banū Hāshim³ and so on. This mausoleum in Ashkelon was created at the end of the fifth [eleventh] century; it did not exist before, and there was no site prior to it or in its surroundings connected to Ḥusayn, nor was there a stone with an inscription or anything like that, to affirm that it was in fact related to him.

Therefore, it is clear from this explanation that attributing such a thing to Ḥusayn is a claim that lacks any basis in knowledge, and that anyone who says it does not deserve to be considered trustworthy in the transmission of reliable or unreliable traditions. In fact, there is no difference between this and the case that someone would visit some tombs in one of the garrison towns, and then claim that one of them contains the head of Ḥusayn, or claim that it is a tomb of one of the prophets, and other claims raised by people who lie and deceive. It is known that such claims are not cited in religious books that are accepted among the Muslims. Most of what this kind of people rely on is what they saw in a dream or they say that they observed in that tomb a sign showing the piety of its dweller, or a good smell or an unusual illusion and so on. Otherwise, it could be a story invented by someone that worshiped this tomb.

As to the dreams, there are many of them and most of them are false. In our time in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq there are some who claim they saw in their dreams, some sites that they say are the tomb of a prophet, or that they contain the remains of a prophet and so on. Although the person is lying, it becomes widespread. The one who sees something in his dream is not lying in most cases in

3 The Banū Hāshim is the clan of Quraysh to which the *ahl al-bayt* belongs.

terms of evaluating its truth, since it is possible that it is the devil who told him this. As to the pure visions that come in dreams, which have no proof that show if it is true, it is prohibited to base anything on it, according to the scholars. This has already been clarified in a reliable tradition from the Prophet [Muḥammad], may God's peace and blessings be upon him; he said, "visions in a dream are three: A vision from God, a vision created by the man himself, and a vision from the devil."⁴

[In the following short paragraph, Ibn Taymiyya explains that it is ridiculous to decide about the identity of a tomb based on a good smell.]

In addition, as to this mausoleum of Ashkelon, a faction stated that it is a tomb of one of the apostles or other follower of Jesus, son of Mary. Maybe among the tombs of the pagans one can find the same kind of tombs as the tombs of the believers, except that in this case someone claimed that it is the tomb of Ḥusayn, thereby assuming and fabricating a lie. Some shaykhs, who were famous for their knowledge and their religion in Cairo, stated that the mausoleum of Ashkelon is a Christian tomb.

The same is true in Damascus, at the east side of the mausoleum, it is noted that it is the tomb of Ubayy b. Ka'b.⁵ The scholars agreed that Ubayy did not come to Damascus, but died in Medina. Some people used to say that it is a Christian tomb and this is not inconceivable, since the Jews and the Christians preceded [the Muslims] in the cult of tombs and mausoleums. That is why [Muḥammad], may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said: "May God curse the Jews and the Christians who turned the tombs of their prophets into sites of worship,"⁶ prohibiting what they did.

The Christians are more extreme in this matter than the Jews, as the two reliable traditionists cited from 'Ā'isha [the wife of the Prophet Muḥammad] said: "The prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, Umm Ḥabiba, and Umm Salama,⁷ may God be pleased with them both, mentioned to him a church

4 As Ibn Taymiyya noted, this Sunnī tradition is supported by the two Persian authors of the most reliable collections of *ḥadīth*, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 257/870) and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 262/875). See Muḥammad b. Futūḥ al-Ḥumaydī, *al-Jam' bayna al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1998), 3:27.

5 Ubayy b. Ka'b (d. 384/649) was one of the earliest and most loyal Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad.

6 This tradition is also mentioned by the two most reliable Sunnī traditionists, see al-Ḥumaydī, *al-Jam' bayna al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 3:21.

7 These are two respectable women of the Quraysh tribe. Umm Salama Hind bt. Abī Umayya was one of the wives of the Prophet Muḥammad. She was known for her contribution to Islam, as the wife who transmitted a great number of traditions. Umm Ḥabiba Ramlā, also

in Abyssinia and mentioned its beauty and its paintings.” Then he said: “if a righteous man among them dies, these people build on his tomb a worship site and paint these paintings. These are judged as the worst of God’s creation on the day of resurrection.”

[In the following paragraph Ibn Taymiyya explains that many Muslims are influenced by Christianity, which he claims is a religion of heresy and the cult of tombs in particular.]

The Christians succeeded in achieving much of their purposes from the ignorant Muslims, mainly from extremist Shīʿīs and ignorant monks and extremists among the shaykhs, since they are very similar to the Christians in their extremism and innovations⁸ in matters of cults and so on. This is why they [the Christians] confuse the Muslims with tombs, which are their tombs; so that the ignorant people imagine that they are tombs of the righteous Muslims and worship them. The mausoleum of Ashkelon, as one group claimed, is the tomb of one of the Christians or one of the apostles of Jesus, and we do not have any proof that it is a tomb of a Muslim and moreover, that it contains the head of Ḥusayn; the claim of the one who said that it is a tomb of a Muslim, Ḥusayn or someone else, is a treacherous and false claim, which is totally rejected. This is enough to deny the statement that this is the mausoleum of Ḥusayn.

Chapter, then we say: In fact, we know and we are assured that it does not contain the head of Ḥusayn and that the mausoleum of Ashkelon is not the mausoleum of Ḥusayn for several reasons. For example, if the head of Ḥusayn was there, it would not take four hundred years after the murder of Ḥusayn for its revelation and exposure. The Umayyad dynasty was a little more than three hundred fifteen years old before its exposure and the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate appeared and during its time, the mausoleums in Iraq and in other places were revealed. A lot of these mausoleums were lies. After the murder of Ḥusayn in Karbalāʾ, they [the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs] built a mausoleum there, and the great commanders visited it again and again, until the [Sunnī] religious leaders criticized them for this, even the caliph al-Mutawakkil [who ruled from Samarrāʾ during the years 233–47/847–61], when people visited the mausoleum bringing things [as

one of Muḥammad’s wives, was the daughter of Abū Sufyān, the famous leader of the Banū Umayya clan.

8 Ibn Taymiyya mentions two terms for heresy, which he attributes to Christianity and Shīʿism: *bidʿa* (innovation, or the creation of a new tenet in Islam, one that did not originally exist at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad), and *ghulūww* (extremism, an exaggerated admiration of saints and shaykhs and the cult of their tombs).

donations to honor Ḥusayn]; it is said that he [al-Mutawakkil] criticized it strongly, and he even exaggerated.

At the beginning of the caliphate of the ‘Abbāsids, when it was in the state of its righteousness, they did not worship at mausoleums, whether they were true or false, as they did later. This is because in that time, Islam was still powerful and strong. There was nothing during the period of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, the followers and their followers like this worship at tombs in the lands of Islam, not in the Hijaz, not in Yemen, not in Syria, not in Iraq, not in Egypt, not in Khurāsān [Iran], or in the Maghrib [North Africa]. There was no invention of a false mausoleum on any tomb of a prophet or a Companion or anyone from the *ahl al-bayt* or a righteous man at all. Furthermore, all these mausoleums were invented later, and their appearance and their spread occurred when the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate was declining and the Muslim community split, and the heretical groups⁹ who confused the Muslims increased and the speech of the people of heretical innovation became widespread among them. This was from the time of the dynasty of al-Muqtadar [r. 296/908–320/932] at the end of the third [/ninth] century. This is due to the fact that [in this time] the Qarmāṭī-‘Ubaydī-Qaddāḥis¹⁰ appeared in the land of North Africa. Then, later, they came to the land of Egypt.

It is said that close to this time customs duties¹¹ appeared in Islam, along with the advent of the Būyid [Persian Shī‘ī] dynasty. In a lot of these dynasties there were heresies and extreme innovations, and in their dynasty the Banū ‘Ubayd al-Qaddāḥ became powerful. In the land of Egypt, and in their dynasties, the mausoleum attributed to ‘Alī, may God be pleased with him, appeared in the region of Najaf [in Iraq]. Alternatively, before that, no one said that the tomb of ‘Alī was there, but ‘Alī, may God be pleased with him, was rather buried in the governor’s palace in Kūfa. Moreover, some of the religious authorities mentioned that the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd [the ‘Abbāsīd caliph, d. 193/809] came to a site there and apologized before him [‘Alī] for his acts toward his descendants. Then it was said that it was the tomb of ‘Alī, and other people said that it was the tomb of

9 Ibn Taymiyya uses the term *zanādiqa* (sing. *zindīq*) for heretics. The term *zandaqa*, originally Persian, referred to Manichaeism. However, it was used in medieval texts as a general definition of heresy. See F. De Blois, “Zindīq,” *EI*², 11:592.

10 This combining of several Ismā‘īlī groups, with the exception of the original name Fāṭimids, was done by Ibn Taymiyya on purpose, to express contempt. The nickname Qaddāḥī is based on the allegation that the source of the Fāṭimid dynasty is not ‘Alid but from ‘Abdallāh b. Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ. See Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlīs*, 109–115.

11 The collection of such a tax seems to symbolize that Muslims had spread to separate regions. It was paid for protection, when passing from one territory to another. In the fifth/eleventh century it is confirmed by several sources. See, for example, Willem Floor, “Customs Duties,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Fasc. 5 (1993), 6:470–475.

al-Mughīra b. Shu‘ba [the Companion of Muḥammad], and this issue appears in detail in another chapter.

[The following paragraph deals with what Ibn Taymiyya describes, with examples, as the heresy of the Shī‘ī dynasties. In addition, he mentions the crimes of the Qarmatīs, who stole the Black Stone from the Ka‘ba.]

If, together with all these acts of heresy, even the mausoleum of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon did not appear [before the Fāṭimids], knowing that if his head had been in Ashkelon, the former who lived before the Fāṭimid period from those scholars would have known more than the later. If even with the concerns and worries about their location, and the ability and capability [to reveal it], was not revealed, it proves that it is a lie and it is untrue, as much as someone who claims that he is a respectable ‘Alid, and it is known that none of his ancestors claimed that, although they were strict on this issue, if it were true. So, based on that, the lie of one who claims it, is identified and in this example, we have acknowledged the lie of that, who claims possessing the script of the caliphate nomination and so on. With the abundant concerns and worries about its transmission, it [this nomination] was not transferred [to the ‘Alids].

The second aspect: Of those who have gathered the reports about Ḥusayn and his murder, such as Abū Bakr b. Abī l-Dunyā, Abū l-Qāsim al-Baghawī¹² and others, none of them have mentioned that the head was transmitted from Ashkelon or to Cairo. Concerning this matter, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb b. Dihya¹³ in his book entitled *al-‘Ilm al-mashhūr fī faḍā’il al-‘ayyām wa-l-shuhūr* [The well-known knowledge about the merits of the famous days and months], has noted that those who wrote books about the murder of Ḥusayn agreed that the head did not get far, and he mentioned it after noting that the mausoleum that is in Cairo is an invented lie, and that it has no basis in fact. He explained that in detail and also noted it in his chapter on the day of ‘*āshūrā*’.

The third aspect: As for those scholars who mention it and base their claim on scholars and historians, and claim that the head was transmitted to Medina and buried beside his brother Ḥasan, it is known that al-Zubayr b. Bakkār,¹⁴ the

12 These two scholars are Sunnī, Abū Bakr b. Abī l-Dunyā (d. 281/894) was a historian and an instructor of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph’s children in Baghdad and Abū l-Qāsim al-Baghawī (d. 307/929) was a Baghdadi historian.

13 Abū l-Khaṭṭāb b. Dihya (d. 633/1235) was a Sunnī Andalusian scholar who traveled in the Muslim world. This book title can be found in a manuscript in the Library of Medina, no. 6016.

14 Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (d. 256/870) was a Qurayshī poet and historian who served as a judge in Medina.

author of the *Kitāb al-ansāb* [The book of genealogies], and Muḥammad b. Sa'd, the scribe of al-Wāqidī¹⁵ and author of the *Tabaqāt* [The ranks (of biographical literature)], and other people who are well-known for their knowledge and reliability and education, all of them know better, concerning this issue and they are more exact in their transmission than the ignorant people. Others are liars, authors of history books, that people do not rely upon their knowledge and their reliability. Moreover, some of the historians may be reliable, but have no experience in chains of transmission, such that he would be able to distinguish between the accepted and the rejected transmitters, or some may have a bad memory or may be accused of lying or of adding to the content, as many of the chroniclers and historians do, especially when it comes to someone like Abū Mikhnaḥ Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā¹⁶ and his kind.

It is known that al-Wāqidī himself is preferred among the scholars over Hishām b. al-Kalbī and his father Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib¹⁷ and their kind. People's view concerning the words of al-Wāqidī is already known. People rely on things that he notes, he and his kind of historians, and people feel comfortable with it. However, as for relying on it solely [on al-Wāqidī] in knowledge, it is not appropriate. If those whom people rely upon, note that the head of Ḥusayn was buried in Medina and others note that it was returned to his body and buried with him in Karbalā', or that it was buried in Aleppo or Damascus, and other similar baseless claims, then I reply that none of these scholars that people rely on have mentioned that it is in Ashkelon. It is already known that such a thing is wrong, since people of knowledge and truth avoid relying on false things and on ignorant people and avoid deviating from truth in matters of transmission, which must be taken only from people of knowledge, not from people of ignorance and lies.

The fourth aspect: That which was confirmed in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī¹⁸ is that the head was brought before 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād, who began poking with a

15 Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Wāqid, called al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823), was a famous historian and biographer of the Prophet Muḥammad. His scribe was the biographer Muḥammad b. Sa'd (d. 230/845). Both served the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn, in the early third/ninth century.

16 Ibn Taymiyya rejects the version of the most important source in Shī'ī literature on the events of Karbalā', namely, the text of the pro-'Alid Kufan historian Abū Mikhnaḥ Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā (d. 157/774), although he was accepted by some of the Sunnī scholars as reliable.

17 Hishām b. al-Kalbī (d. 204/819) and his father Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib (d. 146/763) were Iraqī genealogists specializing in the Arab tribes in the period of the *jāhiliyya* (before Islam).

18 Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) was a Persian scholar who traveled in the Muslim world to collect traditions. The *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is one of the six most reliable (*ṣaḥīḥ*) collections of *ḥadīth* in Sunnī Islam.

rod his [Ḥusayn's] front teeth in the presence of Anas b. Mālik,¹⁹ and in the *Musnad*²⁰ it is noted that it was in the presence of Abū Baraza l-Aslamī.²¹ Nevertheless, some people alleged, in a broken *isnād*, that the poking took place in the presence of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya [the second Umayyad caliph, d. 64/683] and this is wrong, since Abū Baraza and Anas b. Mālik were in Iraq and not in Syria, and Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya was in Syria and not in Iraq, during the murder of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī. The one who reported that he poked his [Ḥusayn's] teeth with a rod in the presence of Anas and Abū Baraza, in front of Yazīd, is absolutely a total liar in terms of reliability [of the chain] of transmission.

It is known in a reliable chain of transmission that it was 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād, who was the commander of Iraq during the murder of Ḥusayn, a fact which that was confirmed by reliable transmission, that he sent 'Umar b. Sa'd, the son of Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās,²² as the commander of the group that killed Ḥusayn. 'Umar recoiled from that task, but Ibn Ziyād persuaded him and frightened him, until he did what he did. The scholars noted in a reliable *isnād* that when the warriors of Iraq wrote to Ḥusayn, when he was in the Hijaz and asked him to join them, saying that the tradition was dead and heresy has been revived. It is even said that they sent him a case full of letters and more letters, and that people who loved him and were clever, had advised him not to go [from Medina to join the rebel in Iraq], but he did not listen to their advice, as said: "Not every wise man gives you advice and not everyone who gives advice is wise."

Some people, like 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās and 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar, among others, advised him not to join them, and this was previously the opinion of his late brother Ḥasan. They all shared the view that it is not in his interest to go, and that these Iraqis lied to him and deserted him, since they are the fastest people to turn to *fitna* [conflict between Muslims] and the worst people when it comes to steadfastness. His father ['Alī] was a better leader than he was; people obeyed him better and the population backed him. Even though they disobeyed and deserted him, as God knows, until they made him call for peace, after he asked for war [in the battle of Ṣiffin] and he died hating them with a hatred that only God can measure. He cursed them and despised them.

19 Anas b. Mālik (d. 93/709) was one of the oldest Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad.

20 The *Musnad* is the title of the collection of traditions of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the founder of the Ḥanbali school to which Ibn Taymiyya belonged.

21 Abū Baraza l-Aslamī is a lesser-known Companion of Muḥammad.

22 'Umar b. Sa'd (d. 67/686) was the son of the Companion and Muslim warrior Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās. 'Umar led the battle against Ḥusayn in Karbalā' and died shortly later in a battle against the Shī'ī messianic rebel Mukhtār in Kūfa.

[In the next paragraph, Ibn Taymiyya describes, in general, the events of the murder of Ḥusayn in Karbalā'; he claims that Ḥusayn was honored to be a great martyr (*shahīd*) and to belong to the Quraysh tribe and to the sub-tribe of Hāshim, whom he considers the best of human beings. According to Ibn Taymiyya, based on the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, in Ghadīr Khumm, in the sermon delivered by Muḥammad shortly before his death, he praised the *ahl al-bayt*, but did not appoint 'Alī as his successor as claimed by the Shī'īs. Ibn Taymiyya only shares one view with the Shī'īs, that Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were "the two leading young people of heaven". Ibn Taymiyya then claims that the caliph Yazīd should not be cursed; this was also the opinion of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, because Yazīd had good deeds in addition to his bad deeds.]

And that is what we have noted, which is agreed upon among the scholars, concerning the murder of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him, and there were additional reports, some of them reliable and some unreliable and some were invented lies. The authors from among the *ḥadīth* specialists, such as al-Baghawī and Ibn Abī l-Dunyā²³ and such, as well as the compilers from among the *ḥadīth* specialists of the rest of the transmitted traditions, they know best in these matters, and they are the most correct, without a doubt, among the scholars, since they use the chain of transmitters of the reliable scholars only and they transmit with generation gaps²⁴ from the real source who most likely transmitted the traditions, as opposed to the chroniclers that many times transmit from a liar or an anonymous person; as to what they transmit, it is treachery above treachery, and those people are the type of people that transmit from each other in direct or indirect transmission.

As for the people who follow their own passions and their kind, they rely on transmissions from totally unknown, unreliable, and untrustworthy people, people for whom inventing a lie is the easiest of their acts. The most learned of them do not rely on a steady source, but on hearsay from ignorant people and from liars, and on reports from people of clear falsehood. Now it becomes clear that the story in which they mention the transmission of the head of Ḥusayn to Yazīd and it being poked with a rod, they lied and even if the head was brought to Ibn Ziyād [the governer of Kūfa], and this is the reliable part of the story, it was not

23 al-Husayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122) was a Shāfi'ī Persian commentator of *ḥadīth*. 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad, called Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, an earlier scholar, wrote the story of Karbalā' from a Sunnī point of view.

24 The term *mursal*, which is used here, refers to an indirect transmission, one with a gap of generations between the transmitters. For example, a *ḥadīth mursal* is one transmitted from the Prophet Muḥammad by the *tābi'ūn* (followers of his Companions), skipping the *ṣaḥāba* (Companions).

transmitted in a known reliable chain of transmission that the head was placed in front of Yazīd.

And I do not consider this matter anything but as a broken chain of transmitters that was contradicted by additional reliable and clear reports which state that Yazīd, when he heard about the murder of Ḥusayn, expressed grief about it and said: “May God curse the warriors of Iraq! I would have been pleased with their obedience without this.” Ibn Ziyād said: “If there had been between him [Ibn Ziyād] and Ḥusayn family ties, he would not have killed him.” In his palace [that of the caliph] laments broke for the murder of Ḥusayn, and when his family [of the *ahl al-bayt* of Hāshim] came to him, they met the women [of the other Quraysh clan of Umayya] crying with them. He [the caliph] gave his child ‘Alī [the son of Ḥusayn] the choice to stay in his place or to travel to Medina and he [the young ‘Alī] chose to travel to Medina, so he gave him proper supplies to travel to Medina.

These and similar traditions are the chains of transmitters, which are more correct and more reliable, than those chains of transmission that are broken and anonymous. It was already known that Yazīd did not show any satisfaction from the murder of Ḥusayn, but rather expressed pain that he was killed, and God knows His secret best. It was known that he did not order him [Ḥusayn] killed at all. Nevertheless, he did not revenge his blood and did not punish his murderers, since they killed him [Ḥusayn] to protect his [the caliph’s] rule, which was endangered by Ḥusayn and the *ahl al-bayt* (People of the House), may God be pleased with them all. This means that there is no trace of the transferral of the head of Ḥusayn to Syria in the time of Yazīd, and the reliable story is that it was transmitted from Karbalā’ to the commander of Iraq ‘Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād in Kūfa, and those religious scholars who claim that it was buried in Medina are correct.

[In the next short paragraph, Ibn Taymiyya claims that the account that the women of the *ahl al-bayt* were humiliated and driven as prisoners on double-hump camels is a lie and it never occurred.]

The fourth aspect: If it [the head] were taken to Yazīd, what purpose would there be in burying it in Ashkelon, which was at that time a fortified defense town, inhabited by frontier guards? So, if they wanted to keep the information about it [the location of the head] hidden, a place like Ashkelon would expose him, given the many people who went there to defend the frontier. If their purpose was the blessing of this land, why would someone choose this site [Ashkelon, close to the caliph in Damascus], who claimed that he [Ḥusayn] was his [the caliph’s] enemy, permitted to kill him, and with the aim of murder him [Ḥusayn]? In addition, it is well-known that burying him close to his mother and his brother in al-Baqī’ [cemetery in Medina] is better for him.

The fifth aspect: His burial in al-Baqīʿ is what scholars usually report, since during the early *fitnas*, when they killed a man that was not one of them, they would transfer his head and his body to his family, as did Ḥajjāj [b. Yūsuf] with [ʿAbdallāh] Ibn Zubayr,²⁵ when his killing and his crucifixion took place, he was transferred to his mother. It is well-known that al-Ḥajjāj aimed to kill Ibn Zubayr, and that the wars that went on between the two [al-Ḥajjāj and Ibn Zubayr], are much worse than what happened between Ḥusayn and his opponents.

[In the next paragraph Ibn Taymiyya provides examples from the time of Ḥusayn in which the heads of rebels were returned to their families, together with their bodies.]

The sixth aspect: It is totally unknown whether someone belonging to the Sunna or the Shīʿa ever came to the region of Ashkelon, in order to bury the head of Ḥusayn there. There was no pilgrimage to it and it was not visited. Similarly, they [the Shīʿīs] did not visit previously the new sites of pilgrimage that were added to the worship of the head in our time, such as the site in Aleppo. If those sites would really exist, wouldn't People visit them? But they came to Karbalāʾ only, since the body [of Ḥusayn] is there. This is the proof that people in the past did not know that the head is in any of these sites, but they knew and believed that the body is in Karbalāʾ. They even came to it in the time of Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal, in the third/ninth century] and others. Even in his *Masāʾil* [*al-Masāʾil wa-l-rasāʾil*, The Questions and the Epistles, a book by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal], on the question about the acts in his tomb, mentioned by Abū Bakr al-Khallāl,²⁶ in his *Jāmiʿ al-kabīr* [The Great Collection] in the chapter dealing with the pilgrimage to mausoleums, none of the scholars mentioned that they saw a site of the head in any of these places, except Medina. So, we acknowledged, that if it were true, the earlier scholars would know better about it. If they had believed it, they would have performed what they were accustomed to pilgrimage, and would have made it public and spoken about it, as they spoke about their parallel tombs of saints. But since this was not clarified by earlier scholars, not in words or in acts, it proves that the presence of the head in these sites is false. But God knows best.

The seventh aspect: It is said that the people of knowledge in every time and period still mention the mausoleum in Cairo that is attributed to Ḥusayn. This is lie and falsehood, just as they note this concerning similar invented mausoleums, like the mausoleums in Damascus, which are attributed to the Companions Ubayy b. Kaʿb [d. 29/649] and Uways al-Qarnī [d. 36/ 657], or to [the ancient

25 This example concerns the end of ʿAbdallāh b. Zubayr's rebellion against the Umayyad caliphate, when ʿAbdallāh was killed in 73/692 by Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 96/714), the governor of Iraq.

26 Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923) was a student of Ibn Ḥanbal in Baghdad.

Arabian prophet] Hūd, or Noah and others, or the mausoleum attributed in Ḥarrān to the Companion Jābir b. ‘Abdallāh [d. 78/697] and in the Arabian Peninsula to the Companions ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf [d. 34/654] and ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar [d. 74/693] and others, and in Iraq to ‘Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib, d. 40/661], may God be pleased with him and others, and likewise the other mausoleums attributed to the prophets, apart from the grave of our Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him, and Abraham, peace be upon him.

Since many of the mausoleums are lies, the scholars in every period were aware that these are invented lies, and the known books and compositions of the scholars are full of such examples. Everyone who follows this issue and asked about it knows it. In their books and letters, scholars admit that this mausoleum in Cairo is one of the invented lies and they note it in their accounts. Even scholars living in this country Egypt, admit it. Abū l-Khaṭṭāb b. Diḥya, in his book entitled *al-‘ilm al-mashhūr* [see above], wrote a chapter about this mausoleum [in Cairo], in which he mentions the murder of Ḥusayn from reliable and unreliable reports, and even he notes that there is a consensus, that the mausoleum is a lie. He explains that the transferral from Ashkelon took place at the end of the ‘Ubaydi [Fāṭimid] dynasty and that it was invented for corrupt reasons, and that shortly after that God removed that dynasty and punished it by obtaining the opposite of its goal [i.e. destruction instead of victory]. This remained known among scholars and even among those of our inhabitants in the district of Egypt in Cairo and its surroundings.

[In the following short paragraph Ibn Taymiyya mention a list of shaykhs who transmitted information to him about the mausoleum in Cairo being fake.]

Those shaykhs who transmitted information to me from Ibn al-Qaṣṭalānī,²⁷ noted that he said that there was a Christian in that mausoleum. Moreover, al-Qurṭubī²⁸ and al-Qaṣṭalānī both noted the falsehood of the issue of this mausoleum in their books. Both clarified that it is a lie. The same was noted by Abū l-Khaṭṭāb b. Diḥya.²⁹ And Ibn Diḥya is the one that the [Mamlūk sultan] al-Kāmil built the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kāmiliyya for him,³⁰ and from him he received Abū

27 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Qaṣṭalānī (d. 686/1287) was a Sufi from Morocco who lived in Cairo and was an expert of *ḥadīth*.

28 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 672/1273) was a Mālikī scholar from Cordova, Spain.

29 Abū l-Khaṭṭāb b. Diḥya al-Kalbī (d. 633/1235) was a prolific scholar from Valencia, Spain. He was an Arabic grammarian and an expert in the *sīra* (life of the Prophet Muḥammad), which he taught at the Kāmiliyya.

30 The Kāmiliyya *madrassa* was founded in Cairo in the year 622/1225.

‘Umar b. Ṣalāḥ³¹ and many other scholars that learned about the organization of names and languages from him. In this, reliance is not on a single authority or on a specific person, but on a consensus among these scholars. It is well-known that in this country, there is no one better to rely upon in that matter, in knowledge and in accuracy, than on this kind of scholars. So, if all of them agreed that it is a lie and a fib, it is known that God does not blame Ḥusayn for it.

Some reliable scholars told me that those Shī‘īs who ordered the owner of the head of Ḥusayn not to expose it, fearing the evil of the common people³² in this country, due to their oppression of the Shī‘īs and their corruption, were in fact propagators of the Bāṭinī [Ismā‘īlī] Qarmaṭīs, who ruled over them for two hundred years. They planted among them the characteristics of heresy and hypocrisy and ignorance and heterodox innovations, of oppressing liars. That thing could only be uprooted after a period, when it [the Fāṭimid caliphate] was conquered, and the reign of the ‘Ubaydīs removed by the people of faith and the Sunna of the Nūriyya and Ṣālāḥiyya dynasty [i.e., those of Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, at the sixth/twelfth century]. Then it was settled by the people of Islam and the Sunna, and the world of belief became fairly widespread, but much hypocrisy and ignorance remained hidden. In every period, God makes belief and the Sunna apparent, and where it was not mentioned and was oppressed by hypocrisy and ignorance, that became widespread. God is the One that is asked to make apparent in the rest of the countries what He likes and what He prefers, which is the righteous path and the straight path, to turn his worshipers to goodness, by making Islam and the Sunna apparent, to fulfil what He promised in the Qur’ān, which is the superiority of His word, and the victory of the people of belief.

Many people believed and adopted tenets and values that are originally values of the unbelievers and the hypocrites. They are not aware of this and a lot of them even share with the Christians their holidays and the adoration of their sites, the periods of the year and the acts that they perform. They may not intend to do so, to admire what is heresy, but they are not aware that it is one of their characteristics, and if they knew it, they would stop it and regret it. It is the same with many people who embrace something from the people of hypocrisy, and do not know that it is the manner of the hypocrites, and do not know that it is the manner of the people of insincerity, since if they knew that, they would repent before God, because God forgives us and every sinner from among the believers.

31 Abū ‘Umar b. Ṣalāḥ (643/1246) was a Persian Shāfi‘ī scholar in Damascus.

32 The term used here is *‘amma*, i.e., the common people, a typical Shī‘ī nickname for the Sunnīs.

All of these words are about the falsehood of the claims concerning the presence of the head of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him, in Cairo or Ashkelon and the lie about it.

Then we say, whether it is true or false, the building of mosques on tombs is not from the religion of Muslims. Moreover, it is forbidden based on the reliable texts transmitted from the Prophet [Muḥammad], may God's peace and blessings be upon him, and the agreement of the leading scholars of the religion. Moreover, it is forbidden to turn tombs into mosques, whether by building a mosque on it, or by intending to pray next to them. Moreover, the leaders of the religion are in agreement on the prohibition of that, that no one is permitted to intend to pray next to a tomb of anyone, a prophet or not a prophet. Anyone who claims that intentionally praying next to a tomb of someone or in a mosque built on a tomb or a mausoleum and so on, is permitted by the *sharī'a* because it is recommended and is better than a prayer in a mosque without a tomb, whoever claims this has deviated from the religion and offended the consensus of the Muslims. And one who says this is obliged to repent, or he should be executed.

Furthermore, no one is permitted to pray in mosques that were constructed on graves, even if he did not intend to pray there. It is forbidden [to be there], not by agreement and not by aspiration. That is because of its similarity to the idolaters and the means of idolatry. It is obligated to warn against it and against other [sins] of this kind, according to the texts about this matter, from the leaders of Islam, from the scholars of the four schools, and others. Some of them declared that it is forbidden and some expressed their dislike. They do not consider this a question of prayer in a public graveyard, but some of them explain the prohibition of it [in terms of] the impurity of the ground and others [in terms of its] similarity to the [behavior of the] idolaters.

As for the mosques that are constructed on tombs, scholars forbade it, explaining their fear of *fitna* that could result from adoring a created being, as noted by al-Shāfi'ī [d. 204/820] and other Muslim leaders; and the Prophet Muḥammad forbade the prayer during sunrise and sunset, and when the sun is in the middle of the sky, and said that in this time the infidels bow to it. He prohibited this, since it was similar to their behavior. If the praying person does not intend to prostrate to a worshiped [person], how could he pray in mosques that were constructed to adore tombs? This issue is covered in detail elsewhere in my books.

Our purpose was to verify the place of the head of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him, and to clarify that the sites that are known to the people of Egypt and Syria as the mausoleum of Ḥusayn and his head, are a lie, an invention, they are untrue and false. But God knows best.

Israeli Documents: Hūnīn 1948—the Missed Opportunity

a. The following document reports (in Hebrew) about a meeting between the Shīrī-Matāwli delegation from Hūnīn and representatives of the Israeli Bureau of Minorities in the Galilee. It was transmitted to the minister of minorities and repeated in the following document with some additions.¹

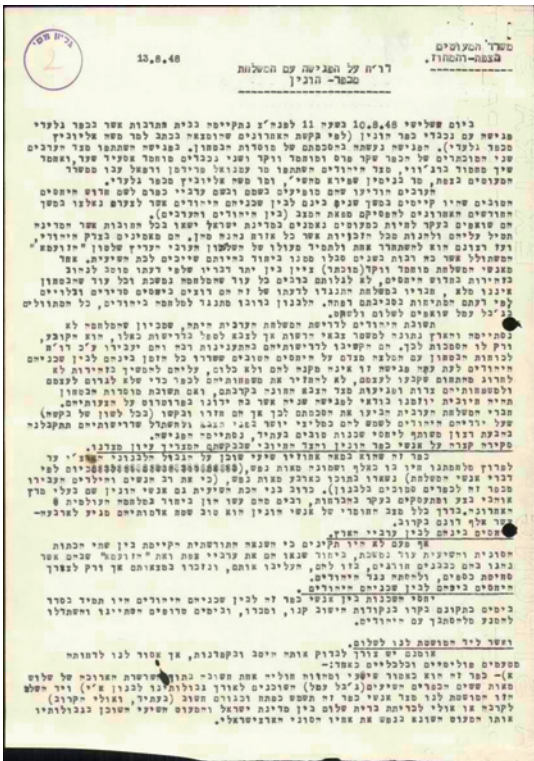


FIGURE 26

1 Israeli State Archive, file G (ג) 36/310.

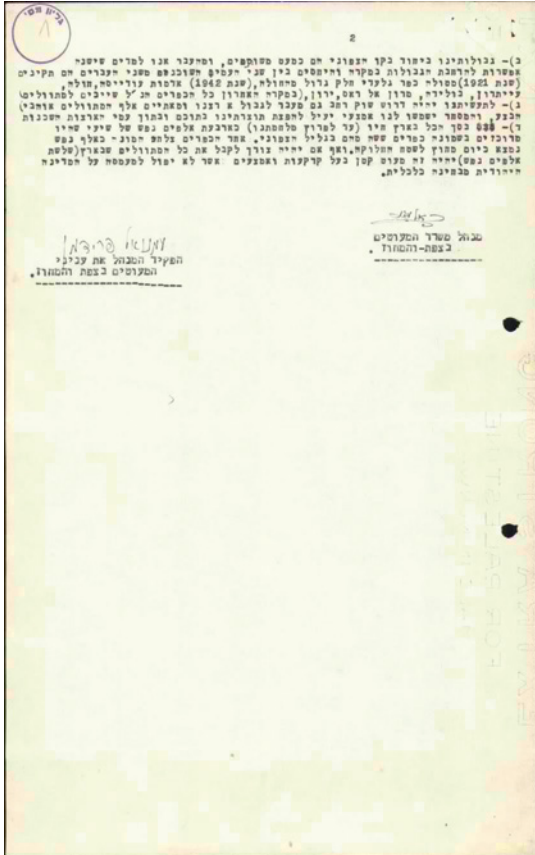


FIGURE 27
 (see the translation of this document below, in document b. paragraphs 1-7)

b. The following identical document, with the additional notes of the minister of minorities, is transmitted to the prime minister and the defense minister.

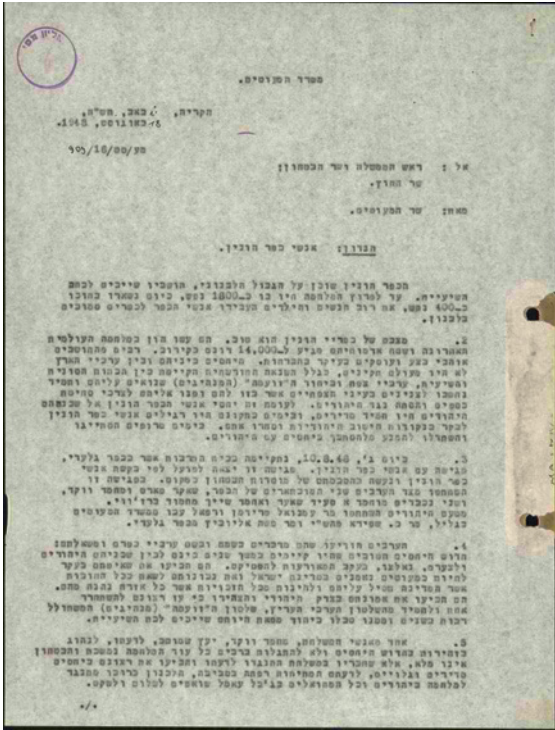


FIGURE 28

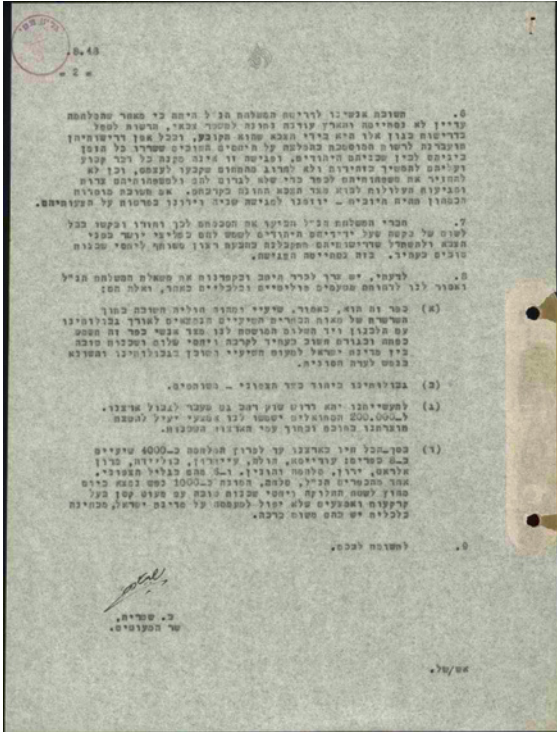


FIGURE 29

Translation

p. 1

The Bureau of Minorities

The Kirya [governmental center], 9 Av 5708 [Hebrew calendar date]

18 August 1948

To: Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs

From: Minister of Minorities

The issue: The people of Hūnīn

1. The village of Hūnīn is located at the Lebanese border, its inhabitants belong to the Shīrī sect. Before the war began it contained 1,800 people and today only some 400 people remain; the men in the village have transferred most of the women and children to villages in Lebanon.

2. The situation of the Hūnīn villagers is good. They have earned a fortune during the last world war and the size of their land reaches 14 thousand dunam [some 3,460 acres] approximately. Many of its villagers are greedy and deal in smuggling. The relations between them and the Arabs of Israel were never good. Due to the traditional hatred

between the two sects, the Sunnī and the Shī'ī, the Arabs of Safed, mainly the *zu'amā'* [the Sunnī leaders] among them are hated. They [the Shī'īs] were disrespected and scorned and they [the Sunnī leaders] only turned to them for blackmail and to incite them against the Jews. Nevertheless, the relations between the people of Hūnīn and their Jewish neighbors were always good and in normal times, the villagers used to visit the Jewish settlements and trade with them. In difficult times, they hesitated and avoided trouble by being involved in relations with the Jews.

3. In Tuesday 10 October [19]48, a meeting with the people of Hūnīn took place in the House of Culture in Kfar Giladi [the neighboring Kibutz, south of Metula]. This meeting was initiated by the people of Hūnīn with the permission of the security authorities in the region. In this meeting on the Arab side two *mukhtārs* [heads of villages] participated: Shākīr Fāris and Muḥammad Wāqid, as well as two dignitaries: Muḥammad al-Sa'īd Shā'ir and Aḥmad Shaykh Maḥmūd Barjawī. From the Jewish side Mr. Emanuel Friedman and Rafael Abu from the Bureau of Minorities in the Galilee and Mr. B. Shapira from the Information Service [Intelligence of the Hagana] and Mr. Moshe Eliovitz from Kfar Giladi took part.

4. The Arabs said that they speak in their name and the name of the Arabs from their villages and their wish is [as follows]: to renew the good relationships that have existed for years between them and their Jewish neighbors, which unfortunately they had to stop, due to the circumstances. They have mainly declared their wish to live as a loyal minority in the State of Israel, and their will to undertake all the duties that the state demands from them, and to enjoy all the rights provided to every citizen. They have expressed their confidence in the Jewish justice [system], and they have declared their great aspiration to be rid of, once and for all, the authority of the Arab tyranny of the *zu'amā'*, who have mistreated them for many years, and [at whose hands] they have suffered mainly because of their belonging to the Shī'ī sect.

5. One of the members in the delegation, Muḥammad Wāqid, advised that it would be recommended to be careful with the renewal of relations, that it should not be revealed while the war is going on and the security is not complete. Nevertheless, his companions from the delegation opposed his view and expressed their wish for regular and open relations. According to their opinion, the tension in the region has diminished and most of the Lebanese oppose the war against the Jews, and all the Matāwliš in Jabal 'Āmil seek peace and prosperity.

p. 2

6. The answer of our people to the request of this delegation, was that since the war is not over yet and the land is still under military control, the authority to deal with this kind of request is in the hands of the army and [the IDF] takes these decisions. However, their requests will be transmitted to the appropriate authority, with the

recommendation for [the continuation of] the good relations, that existed all the time between them and their Jewish neighbors. This meeting does not provide anything permanent and should be continued with caution, without exceeding the limits that they have fixed for themselves, and it does not include returning their families, in order to avoid problems for them and their families, and avoiding possible harm from the army, which is camping near them. If the response of the security authority is positive, they will be invited for a second meeting and the details of their proposals will be dealt with.

7. The members of the above-mentioned delegation declared their acceptance of this, and asked once again that their Jewish friends serve as their advocates when dealing with the army and make an effort for their request to be accepted, and aspire for good neighborly relations in the future. That is how the meeting ended.

8. In my opinion, it is important to research and seriously consider the request of the above-mentioned delegation and not reject them because of political and economic reasons, which are:

(a) This village, as already said, is Shīṭī and constitutes an important link in the chain of the hundred Shīṭī villages located along our borders with Lebanon and the hand of peace extended to us by the population of this village will serve as an opportunity and an important element in the future for relationships, peace ties, and good neighborly relations between Israel and the Shīṭī minority who lives along our border and who are mostly hated by the Sunnī community.

(b) We share the same borders mainly in the north side (of the country).

(c) Our industry will need a large market also beyond our country. The 200,000 Matāwliš would serve as a useful means to distribute our products among them and among the people of the neighboring countries.

(d) Until the beginning of the war, there was in our country a total of about 4,000 Shīṭīs in eight villages: ‘Adaysā [‘Adayse near Marj‘ayūn], Hūla [sic=Hūla], ‘Aytarūn, Blida, Marūn al-Ra’s, Yarūn [four villages in the region of Bint Jbeil], Malḥame, and Hūnīn and six [villages] in northern Galilee. One of the above-mentioned villages, Malḥame, is inhabited by 1,000 villagers and is located outside the Partition Plan [of the UN 1947]. Good neighborliness with a small minority possessing lands and means that are not an economic burden on the State of Israel, is a blessing.

9. For your consideration.

Signed:

B. (Behor) Shitrit

Minister of Minorities

c. The Bureau of Foreign Affairs doubts the chances in the success of the negotiations.

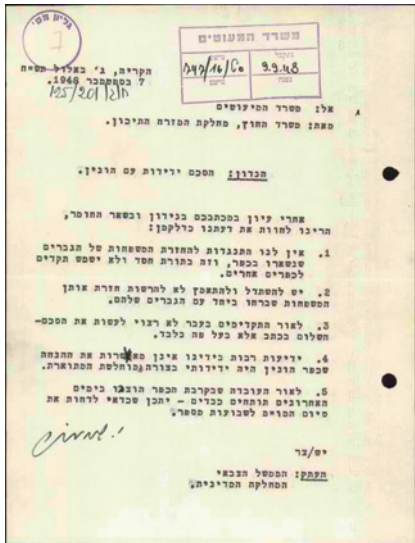


FIGURE 30

Translation

The Kirya, 3 Elul, 5708

7 September 1948

To: The Bureau of Minorities

From: The Bureau of Foreign Affairs, Middle East Department

The issue: Agreement of friendship with Hūnīn

After reference to your letter of concern and the rest of the material, our opinion is as follows:

1. We do not have objections to the return of the families of the men who remained in the village as a gesture that will not serve as a precedent to other villages.
2. Efforts should be made to not permit the return of such families that fled together with their men.
3. In light of previous precedents, it is undesirable to make a written peace agreement, but only an oral one [should be made].
4. Much of the information we possess does not confirm the thesis that the village of Hūnīn was friendly in the complete way described.
5. In light of the fact that near the village heavy guns were stationed in recent days, maybe it would be favorable to postpone the conclusion of the negotiations until after a few weeks.

Copies: The military administration

The International Department

d. Crossfire between an Israeli unit and Hūnīn ends the negotiations.

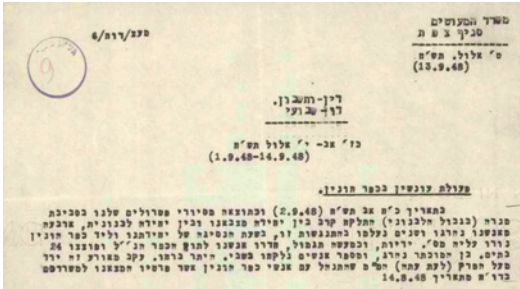


FIGURE 31

The Bureau of Minorities

Safed branch

18 Elul 5708 (Hebrew calendar date)

13 September [19]48

Two-week report

(1 September [19]48–14 September [19]48)

Penal action in the village of Hūnīn

On the date of 18 Elul 5708 (Hebrew calendar date followed by a Gregorian/civil date 2 September [19]48) as a result of our patrol tours in the region of Manāra (on the border with Lebanon), crossfire developed between a unit of our army and a Lebanese unit. Four of our men were killed and two disappeared during this event. When our forces retreated near the village of Hūnīn, they were shot at. As retaliation, our men penetrated the above-mentioned village and blew up 24 houses. The son of the *mukhtār* died and some people were taken as captives. The rest fled. Following this event, the negotiations, which took place with the people of Hūnīn village, which we reported to your bureau in a report from 14 August [19]48, are off the table.

e. The Bureau of Minorities confirms that negotiations cannot be renewed.



FIGURE 32

The Bureau of Minorities

The Kirya, 8 Elul 5708

24 September 1948

To: Emanuel Friedman, Rosh Pina

From: Bureau of Minorities

The issue: Two-week report

The report dating from 13 September [19]48 was received in our bureau and transmitted to the minister for his consideration; his instructions are as follows:

As to paragraph (a), after the events that occurred, the matter is off the table of course.

Interviews with Two Palestinian Shaykhs Who Converted to Shī'ism

1. The Imām Yūnis Badrān from al-Bī'na, east of Acre
2. Shaykh Aḥmad Shahwān from Iksāl, a village south of Nazareth

1 The Imām Yūnis Badrān from al-Bī'na

I have translated the following interviews (parts a and b) with the Imām Yūnis Badrān from al-Bī'na into English, because his is the first case of a Palestinian *imām* converting to Shī'ism. The interviews, which are available on the internet,¹ are in modern standard Arabic, with some words in colloquial Arabic. In the first interview (a) from 2006, Yūnis Badrān is asked about his conversion and in the second (b) from 2007, almost one year after his conversion, he explains his decision to renounce his conversion to Shī'ism.

a.

25 October 2006

Ṣawt al-Balad ['The Sound of the Village'] revealed that the Sunnī *imām* of a mosque in Galilee converted to Shī'ism.

We conducted the following interview in the offices of Ṣawt al-Balad with Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Yaqīn Yūnis Badrān (aged 37), the *imām* of Nūr Mosque in the village of al-Bī'na in Galilee, about the announcement of his conversion to Shī'ism, which raised a number of questions, especially in this particular time. He answered our questions with the utmost courage, defending his conversion to Shī'ism and different Shī'ī attitudes such as infallibility of the twelve Imāms, his decision that he cannot turn back from, and several matters that are subjects of dispute and discussion between the Shī'a and the members of the Sunna. The following is the interview we have recorded, word for word:

¹ See the original interview in the present form online, for example: A Sunnī site: <https://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=82622>. A Shī'ī site: <http://www.yahosein.com/vb/showthread.php?t=64622>.

Interviewer (I): Without doubt, your decision to convert to Shī'ism was surprising and difficult, especially because you serve as *imām* in a mosque and you were born to a Sunnī family, and there are no Shī'īs in your village or your region.

Yūnis Badrān (YB): To be honest, the decision was taken three years ago. The thinking was in that direction, from the time of my studies at the Faculty of Sharī'a and Islamic Sciences at Umm al-Fakhm,² at the beginning of the 1970s. The decision was difficult of course, especially since I am aware of the circumstances in which we live and the religious situation of our people. Nevertheless, the most important thing is that I was convinced in that decision totally, and the recent circumstances were a kind of opportunity, since our population in the world witnessed the truth of the Shī'a after the last war, that they [the Shī'īs] are Muslims like us, and this was made clear to the people. I felt that now is the proper time to declare the issue of my conversion to Shī'ism, which means my belonging to the Shī'a. As an *imām* of a mosque, I send a message, which must be honest and come as part of my message, which I carry.

I: Why did this decision come at this particular time? Don't you fear an angry reaction from the worshippers that you meet?

YB: A very strong reaction would be expected, if the greatest shaykhs of the Sunna and, above all, Dr. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, had not declared that the Shī'a are Muslims and that they are part of us, and that they have the same rights and duties that we have, and particularly because al-Qaraḍāwī represents a high authority for the Sunnī Muslims. The reaction, without doubt, will be calm, restrained, and understanding. That is why I do not fear the reaction. If it were not accepted, my conversion to Shī'ism would have to remain my secret, and I would keep it to myself. Shī'ism became for me like another Muslim school, like the Shāfi'i, the Ḥanafī, and others.

I: How did people around you take this matter?

YB: The people who are closest to me, and my parents in particular, knew my open-minded mentality, and knew that I discuss any matter from a neutral side, even if I belong to one side and not the other. That is why my position was right or approximately right, and I am not clearing myself from errors. And with this, the matter was received among my family with understanding.

I: Did he convert to Shī'ism as well?

² Umm al-Fakhm is located in the Haifa District, overlooking Wadi Ara, 20 kilometers northwest of Jenin.

YB: They have no objection to converting to Shī'ism, as long as it does not contradict the basic laws, which are derived from the Book of God and the messenger (Muḥammad), may God bless him, and indeed, it is so.

I: Could we say that Shaykh Nūr [al-Dīn] is trying to seek the truth? And do you think that the Shī'a is the surviving group³ and the other groups are astray, although among them are the members of the Sunna?

YB: I was a Sunnī defending the Shī'a and today I am a Shī'ī and I am still defending the line of the Shī'a, with the same methods. But the great trouble is the classification of who is from the people of "there is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is His messenger," and what opinion they claim and what ideas they imagine or what direction they think is better, whether they are the group that is astray or the surviving group. This contradicts what Islam stands for. I am honestly saying that everyone who says "there is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is His messenger" will survive and belongs to the religion of Islam, and this is what we will be judged for, not for belonging to one school or another.

I: And we are trying to inquire into the question of your joining the Shī'a, since you are the first Shī'ī Muslim *imām* in the country. We felt that some of your brothers among the *imāms* object to your position. In addition, we know that there a lot of pressure was put on you to renounce the Shī'a and to return to become a member of the Sunna.

YB: Yes, this is true. Nevertheless, it remains within a condition that I consider a sickness. As long as we suffer from it, not only at the level of a Sunnī who became a Shī'ī, but there were in the past and still are, similar sick conditions. As that of a member of the Islamic movement, who leaves the movement and is considered in the eyes of its members as if he left Islam, and people avoid praying behind him and are permitted to kill him, and many *fatwās* [judicial opinions] are passed against him from all directions. Or a Wahhābī who becomes a Sufi or a Sufi who becomes a Wahhābī, is treated as if he left the religion and the faith, with all the sorrow that accompanies such a change. It is as if his Islam stops when he leaves the movement, the school, or the ideology. It is considered like leaving Islam. The effort of some people to make me return to the Sunna can also be considered a sick condition that Muslims suffer from.

3 The term *al-firqa al-nājiya* ('the surviving group') derives from a well-known tradition in the Sunna, that Islam will split into seventy-three factions, all of whom will end in hell except the "surviving group," which follows the right path. See, for example, 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'ummāl fi sunan al-aqwāl wa-l-a'māl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1971), 1:117–118.

I: Is it true that some of the Muslim worshipers reject you as an *imām* after you became a Shī'a?

YB: I did not hear this and even if it happened that one of the worshipers rejected me as an *imām*, I will fulfil my mission as usual, just like I would if a member of the Islamic movement refused to pray behind me.

I: Tell me honestly, how could you alter your faith?

YB: I did not alter and never will alter my faith in one God, and this is the true meaning of "there is no God but Allāh." My belonging to the Shī'a is an ideological tie not a religious one, which means that I would not say that one who is not a Shī'i is an infidel. In addition, I did not say when I was Sunnī, that one who is not a Sunnī is an infidel.

I: What would you like to say to your opponents, who do not accept the Shī'a, or otherwise said, what would you say to those who oppose the plurality of schools, opinions, and positions?

YB: I would say to them what the Prophet Muḥammad, may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his family,⁴ said, "Beware of limiting what is widespread."⁵ There is an adjustment to the human logic, that he should progress in his thinking with Islam, and then he will arrive at conclusions, which will change and vary from time to time and from one place to another. One should be careful of saying, "nothing is better than what has been in the past." I support the idea, "do not impose your era on your children, since they were born in an era which is different from your time."

I: Does what happened following the mad war [the Israeli-Lebanese 2006 war], influence the personal level of your conversion to the Shī'a?

YB: Not at all. Some people told me, Brother! Some of us sympathize with a particular attitude or another. It is said that one of us may raise "noise and scandal," but it is a matter that vanishes after it ends. Nevertheless, I say, I am not a person who would make "noise and scandal," if the expression fits, and by doing so, modify the faith and alter the behavior and change the path. The source of my convictions is assured and remains where truth is.

I: Is it true that you try to establish a Shī'i community in the village and the region?

4 This time he uses a Shī'i blessing, and adds a blessing on Muḥammad's family, i.e., to the *ahl al-bayt*.

5 This is a *ḥadīth* transmitted by Abū Hurayra, saying that the Prophet Muḥammad criticized someone who prayed for mercy only for the prophet and himself and not for anyone else, he said to the man:

"You have diminished a widespread matter", i.e., you have limited a blessing which is for many people. See Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-'Aynī, *Umdat al-qārī fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2003), 3:263.

YB: I do not believe in the issue of organizations and groups, and especially in the recent period and after several experiences. This is because the majority of society, without generalizing, people who are members of organizations, factions, or ideologies do not have the ability to understand a point of view and a different opinion and accept it. On the contrary, it is blind fanaticism. If there is no sincerity in your speech, it should be in your heart. In reality, both are far from the saying, “what I believe is true, but could be wrong and the belief of the other is wrong, but could be true.”⁶

I: What is your reaction to the opinion of the greatest Sunnī scholars, namely, that the Shīʿa are *rāfiḍa*, and that they believe that the Qurʾān was altered and diminished, and that the Companions of the messenger [Muḥammad], except some people, committed apostasy after the death of the messenger, and that the twelve Imāms of the Shīʿa are infallible, and that they know the unseen, and all the information that is derived from the angels, the prophets, and the messengers? That they are not like other human beings, as transmitted in the book, *The Shīʿa and the mutʿa*, by the author Niẓām al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Aʿzamī?⁷

YB: As to their saying that Shīʿīs believe that the Qurʾān was altered, this is totally wrong, and I recall the name of a Sunnī who said: “I object to the saying that Shīʿīs believe that the Qurʾān was altered.” Nevertheless, I say that there are meanings which came down to verses from the Qurʾān, which were not explained or clarified, but the Shīʿa believe that the Qurʾān, which is in our hands in its binding, is the one that came down to the messenger Muḥammad, may God’s peace and blessings be upon him. As to their claim that the Shīʿa believe in the apostasy of some of the Companions, I say why not? There were indeed the wars of the apostasy, in the time of Abū Bakr the righteous, against people from the Companions who committed apostasy and left Islam. As for the twelve Imāms, the issue of infallibility is possible for any person, but it is certain in the case of prophets of God and his messengers. Don’t you see that a baby in his creation is infallible from several sins and mistakes, and does not have any thought of lies, conspiracies, or crimes? He is a clean and pure creation. If infallibility is given to someone whose mind is not perfect, why wouldn’t it be given to someone who was given intelligence? And if we mean by that the twelve Imāms, who are from the family of the *āl*

6 This is a well-known saying of Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, the third-/ninth-century Sunnī scholar.

7 Niẓām al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Aʿzamī is a Sunnī shaykh who attacked Shīʿī tenets in the introduction of Muḥammad Mālallāh’s book entitled *al-Shīʿa wa-l-mutʿa* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiyya, 1986).

al-bayt [*ahl al-bayt*], why should we doubt such a thing about them? Some of us acquit his brother of several crimes and immunize him from them, and it used to be the same with the Companions of the messenger of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him and his family, who were not from his close family. As for the unseen, there are some matters that are known only to God, and there are some matters that God reveals to whom He wishes. As for the saying that they are not like the rest of humanity, I say, like the prophet who is a human being but not like the rest of humanity and these Imāms are part of the messenger of God.

I: Don't you think that insisting on converting to the Shī'ī school may provoke a *fitna* that we do not need, especially given that the society does not lack *fitnas*, difficulties, and problems in this period?

YB: I say with complete honesty that this is how they are between them [the Islamic movements]. They are not capable of treating the epidemic sicknesses that abound among them and that they have created, or that have been created for them by their precedents. If a different opinion appears, they disregard the conditions of splits and divisions and each one and each school and each faction and each movement and each group, and you have a lot of this phenomenon without limits, each of them comes to tell you that you are the reason for the *fitna* and they forget that their movement became two movements or more. Their opinion became two opinions or more and their group became two groups.

b.

5 August 2007

The Imām from al-Bi'na who changed his religion to Shī'ism regretted
From Amīn Bashīr, reporter of Panet and the Panorama newspaper⁸

First report: The Panet site reporter and *Panorama Newspaper* revealed that Shaykh Nūr al-Yaqīn Badrān from al-Bi'na renounced his decision to convert to the Shī'ī school and will remain a Sunnī. Shaykh Nūr al-Yaqīn Badrān, the *imām* of Nūr Mosque in al-Bi'na took this decision a couple of days earlier, but the Panet site revealed Nūr al-Yaqīn Badrān's decision today, a number of days after his decision. As follows, the contents of the news transmitted to us by the reporter of Panet and the *Panorama Newspaper's* Amīn Bashīr this afternoon, includes new information concerning the decision of Shaykh Nūr al-Yaqīn Badrān. It is published for the first time: Nūr al-Yaqīn Badrān (38 years old) works as the *imām* of Nūr Mosque in al-Bi'na village and he is a graduate of the Da'wa

⁸ <http://www.panet.co.il/article/39546>.

and Islamic Sciences College in Umm al-Faḥm. The ideology that he presented concerning his conversion into Shī'ism during his sermon last Friday had a great influence on the Muslims in the village and out of it.

These words were transmitted with the speed of lightning and talks began here and there, concerning his qualifications to be an *imām* to the Muslims in the village, since they are in the Sunnī school. Some of the people presented complaints to the department of religions in the ministry of interior affairs, refusing to accept that the *imām* is a Shī'ī and Sunnīs pray behind him.

We are the only newspaper publishing this complete interview concerning the certitude that Shaykh Nūr al-Yaqīn Badrān is Sunnī and did not alter for a day the school that he was born to, and that he refuses every accusation that was pointed at him and that he considers it a misunderstanding.

Imām Nūr al-Yaqīn Badrān said: everything that was heard concerning the whole process of thinking that I have proposed is strange for people who thought that this proposition of thinking is an attempt to alter the religion that we hold. As if I embraced a religion that is different from the one I hold now. This comes from ignorance, which caused confusion. Nevertheless, I proposed that thinking to broaden the horizons of the brain. Even if such a thinking was proposed, it should not be objected to or scorned, especially because in the last war [Lebanon 2006] people asked if the Shī'a are [part of] Islam or not.

Nevertheless, we have heard Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī, who said it does not harm the Islamic Resistance (*muqāwama*)⁹ that they are from the Shī'a, since the Shī'īs are from the people of "there is no God but Allāh," and they are a part that is not separate from the Muslim community, and they agree with us on many fundamentals and differ from us in some branches.¹⁰

Nūr al-Yaqīn Badrān added: I consider what Shakyh al-Qaraḏāwī transmitted, based on the law, different from the thinking of ordinary people, that the Shī'a are Muslims. I wanted to make forward progress, and I said: there was no ideology of Shī'a, or even of Shī'ī tendency among us, and I said that especially when that ideology was not proposed in the background of the war [in Lebanon, 2006], but rather given the interest in the faith of the family of the messenger of God Muḥammad, may God's peace and blessing be upon him.

9 The *muqāwama* is the Arabic name of the 'resistance axis' against Israel, which includes Hizbullah; Iran, which is its founder and sponsor; and the Syrian Ba'ath regime.

10 Islamic laws can be divided into fundamental laws, which are called *uṣūl* (sing. *aṣl*, roots) and apply to all Muslims, and laws that developed later, called *furū'* (sing. *far'*, branches), which are ancillary and differ from one school to another.

And he said: There is no kind of focus or interest of the Sunnīs on the family of the messenger of God. But, I think that not being interested, as if someone who is not interested specifically in the family of the Prophet is an infidel; is a rejected thinking, to declare any person an infidel (*takfīr*), since the messenger Muḥammad, may God's peace and blessing be upon him, said: "I was ordered to fight against people until they witness that there is no god but Allāh, Muḥammad is the messenger of God", and if they said it [the *shahāda*, testimony of faith], they protect themselves from me as a Muslim in their blood and property, except from their duty and judgment before God."¹¹

Imām Nūr al-Yaqīn continued, saying, based on this claim: I would like for people to not be afraid to hold beliefs here and there, and I have learned that the honorable al-Azhar¹² is teaching the Shī'ī school, so there is nothing to prevent our proposing it to people. Because people do not have the ability to deal with this proposition, and because people refrained from regretting their words, I left the followers of the Sunna and the community and embraced Shī'ism; the gap between me and the people became very large and almost reached accusations of heresy. So, I wanted to repeat, it is not that I denied the Sunna of the messenger of God, and I did not deny anything from the book of God or respect for the Companions of the messenger of God. Nevertheless, people understood it like this, and that is how they grasped the matter. As the messenger of God said, may God's peace and blessing be upon him: "I have been ordered to be polite with people" and I said that I remained Sunnī. If this matter is so, I return to the Sunna, although in my proposition of thinking, I was not denying the people of Sunna and the community, but I remained truly a part of the Sunna, as the *qāḍī* of Syria, who is a Sunnī, said: "I am Shī'ī in my loyalty [to the family of the prophet] and Sunnī in my pattern of behavior."¹³

Imām Nūr al-Yaqīn stressed that the word Shī'a raises a kind of unrest among people: And because of this concept, I emphasize that I am Sunnī from the

11 This is a well-known *ḥadīth* from Abū Hurayra, see, for example, in Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi-sharḥ al-Nawawī* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'at al-Miṣriyya bi-l-Azhar, 1929), 1:206.

12 Al-Azhar in Cairo is the most important Sunnī institute nowadays. In the early 1960s, the shaykh of al-Azhar, Maḥmūd Shalṭūt, issued a *fatwā* declaring the Ja'fariyya the fifth school in Islam. This decision was confirmed in 2016 by al-Azhar's most senior authority, Aḥmad al-Ṭayyib on Al-Neel TV, see <http://ijtihadnet.com/fatwa-al-azhars-grand-imam-shia/>.

13 This phrase, which was said in 2006 by the *muftī* of the Syrian regime Badr al-Dīn Ḥassūn, was published in several Arab newspapers in November 2006, see: <https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2006/11/27/29435.html>.

people of the Sunna and the community, and if you want me to say that I renounce it, then I do renounce it and I am Sunnī and this is not extraordinary.

And concerning his meeting with officials from the Bureau of Internal Affairs, Imām Nūr al-Yaqīn said: The department of religions in the [Israeli] Ministry of Interior called me and I met some of them. They told me that they read what was published, citing me in the newspapers. They asked about my inclination, if I am Shī'ī in my inclination. I stressed that I remained Sunnī in my school and never regretted it. I only proposed this matter as a way of thinking. Nevertheless, people misunderstood it. That is why I regretted this thinking, which people found suspicious. Then they assured me, since I remained what I was before, that “you can continue in your work as a Sunnī *imām* of the mosque”.

2 Shaykh Aḥmad Shahwān from Iksāl

I have translated the following interview with Aḥmad Shahwān from modern standard Arabic. This interview, from November 2010, appears on several Arabic websites:¹⁴

Shaykh Aḥmad Shahwān: Our number is growing and there is no connection with the Shī'a of the Arab world

Khulūd Maṣālḥa, Bukrā site—archive published 20 November 2010

Shaykh Shahwān (71 years old): I chose the fundamentals of my religion!

Concerning the issue of conversion to Shī'ism, Shaykh Aḥmad Shahwān from Iksāl village near the town of Nazareth said: “In the year 1998, I converted from the Sunnī school to the Shī'ī school. This was after I heard a number of records and lectures from Shaykh Aḥmad al-Wā'ilī¹⁵ on several religion occasions.

And he added, “during a period of time, I recorded all the lectures of Shaykh al-Wā'ilī and listened to them two or three times, and then I realized that I am a Muslim, but far from the roots of Islam. Then I decided to embrace the Shī'ī school, although there is nothing wrong with the Sunnī school and the Shāfi'ī one in particular.¹⁶

14 The main source of the shaykh's interview can be found online, at <http://www.bokra.net/Article-114742>.

See also <http://www.alshirazi.com/world/news/2015/01/009.htm>.

15 Aḥmad al-Wā'ilī l-Kinānī (1928–2003) was a talented lecturer in Najaf in Iraq.

16 Among Muslim Palestinians, the Shāfi'ī school is the most commonly practiced of the four Sunnī schools.

On the Shī'ī school, Shaykh Shahwān said, "my conversion to Shī'ism came after I was convinced that it is the pure source and that his claim [that of al-Wā'ilī, who was considered a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad], is that of his father and that of his grandfather, and that of the messenger of God, may God's peace and blessing be upon him."

And he added, "according to the books of history, Shī'ism is Islam itself and the righteous Muslim must follow Shī'ism and be loyal to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. In addition, Shī'ism is a pillar from the pillars of authentic Islam, its basis was established by the Prophet Muḥammad, may God's peace and blessing be upon him, during his lifetime and he confirmed it before his death on the day of Ghadīr Khumm, when he declared that the *wilāya* [guardianship is] to 'Alī after him."¹⁷

And he said, "the other Muslim factions are invented and were founded by the leaders and the sultans and others, in order to disregard Islam, which the Prophet Muḥammad intended in the beginning, and it is said that they [the factions which are not Shī'a] were invented some 150 years after Islam!"

The Saqīfa of Banī Sā'ida¹⁸ is the catastrophe of Islam!

And Shaykh Shahwān added, talking about the pledge of allegiance to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq as caliph, he said, "the Saqīfa of Banī Sā'ida is the catastrophe of Islam, since the Companions were assembled on the Saqīfa of Banī Sā'ida to choose a caliph in the absence of the respectable members of the tribe of Hāshim, such as 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who were preparing the Prophet for burial when the summons to the Saqīfa came. The Saqīfa meeting ended with the selection of Abū Bakr b. Abī Quḥāfa as caliph, according to the meeting of those assembled in the Saqīfa from the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār.¹⁹ After

17 The pond of Khumm is where, according to Shī'ī faith, one year before his death (that is in 10/631), the Prophet Muḥammad appointed 'Alī as his successor. Sunnīs disregard this *ḥadīth*, as they consider it unreliable. See L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Ghadīr Khumm," *EP*² (1991), 2:992–993.

18 The Saqīfa of Banī Sā'ida was the place in Medina where the first caliph Abū Bakr was nominated by the Muhājirūn (the Muslims that emigrated from Mecca to Medina) and the Anṣār (the local Muslims from Medina who backed Muḥammad). This dramatic act, which took place after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, was never considered legal in Shī'ism. According to Shī'īs, 'Alī was appointed by the Prophet Muḥammad during the latter's lifetime in Ghadīr Khumm.

19 Concerning the affair of the Saqīfa after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, see, in detail, Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 27–67.

the Saqīfa, a group of the Companions, such as Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, ‘Ammār b. Yāsir, al-Miqdād b. ‘Amr, and al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām²⁰ began meeting in ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s house, to oppose Abū Bakr’s selection.”

And Shaykh Shahwān added, “the Saqīfa was gathered although it was known that the caliphate was meant for ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Is it logical that our noble messenger would leave a land which he built for 23 years without a leader?”

The Shī‘a in Palestine ... There are Shī‘ī *imāms* of mosques and the majority are in Dabūriyya!

Concerning the arrival of the Shī‘a to the land of Palestine, knowing that the Muslims in Palestine are from the Sunna, he said, “at the end of the 2000s a group of intelligent young people started returning to the basics of religion, and converted to Shī‘ism, some of them attorneys, doctors, teachers, and the like, and most of them are conscious, educated young people.”

And he added, “at the end of the 2000s the Shī‘ī school spread in all of Palestine, in Gaza, Nablus, Jenin, Acre, Haifa, and the villages inside the borders of 1948.”

According to Shaykh Aḥmad Shahwān, the majority of the Shī‘a are in Gaza.

Concerning the Shī‘a in the villages inside the borders of 1948, Shaykh Shahwān said, “the greatest percentage of the Shī‘a today is located in the village of Dabūriyya.”

And he added, “there are hundreds of intelligent young people who embraced the Shī‘ī school and there are even *imāms* of mosques who converted to the Shī‘ī school. But, we cannot reveal their names.”

The controversy between Sunna and Shī‘a goes unnoticed.

Concerning the attitude of the population of the village toward his being Shī‘ī, Shaykh Shahwān said: “the population of the village in Iksāl knows that I am a Shī‘ī and they do not harm me, since everyone has his own religion and is backed by God”.

20 These figures are considered ‘Alī’s most loyal followers. See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 4:151.

He added, "Sometimes we have different opinions concerning some matters. Nevertheless, the disagreement does not damage amicability, especially since I belong to the Ja'farī school of the Shī'a, which is a bit similar to the Shāfi'ī school of the Sunnis, to which most of the Palestinians in the country belong."

And he said, "of course there are things which anger me in fact and which I do not accept, in addition to the disagreement concerning the rule of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, such as the doubt concerning the conversion to Islam of Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of our messenger [and the father of 'Alī], as some believe that he died an idolater. This is a matter that we reject."

And he added, "of course we disagree, me and the people of my village on the question of combining the prayers, since it is permitted for us in Shī'ism to combine the *maghrib* and *'ishā'* prayers."²¹

He said, in Ramaḍān I break the fast only after it is dark, while the people of my village break the fast at the time of the call to pray the *maghrib* prayer, knowing that it is not dark yet at this time. So, after the call to pray *maghrib*, I wait for the indication from the television channel al-Manār,²² then I break the fast."

The *mut'a* [temporary] marriage ... is it different from the *misyār* [travel marriage]?

Concerning the *mut'a* marriage, which is prohibited according to the Sunnī school, Shaykh Shahwān said, "the *mut'a* marriage was not prohibited in Islam. Nevertheless, [the second caliph] 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb forbade it. I do not know why only the Shī'a, the source of Islam, exclusively kept the *mut'a* marriage. Knowing that there is the *misyār* marriage (the marriage of a Muslim during travel) in Islam, why not discuss it, since it is congruent to the *mut'a*, only with a different name?"

He said, "anyway, the *mut'a* marriage has its basic rules and conditions and the Twelver Shī'a base it on the generous verse: 'And lawful to you are all others beyond these, provided that you seek them in marriage with gifts from your

21 The five mandatory prayers in Islam are *fajr* (in the early morning before sunrise), *zuhr* (around noon), *'aṣr* (in the afternoon), *maghrib* (after sunset), and *'ishā'* (night). Shī'īs allow the combining of the second and third prayers, and the fourth and fifth prayers; thus, the five obligatory prayers are prayed in three sessions.

22 Al-Manār is the Shī'ī Hizbullah television channel in Lebanon.

property, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse. So for whatever you enjoy of marriage from them, give them their due compensation as an obligation. And there is no blame upon you for what you mutually agree to beyond the obligation. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise.²³

The holidays and holy places ... *'āshūrā'* in Ashkelon!

As for what concerns the holy places for the Shī'a, Shaykh Shahwān said, "of course we cannot travel to Iraq, Lebanon, or even to Iran for pilgrimage to the holy places, since these countries, as is well known to you, are known to be enemies of Israel."

And Shaykh Shahwān adds: "instead, at [the anniversary of the time] of the battle of Karbalā' and the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, we go to Ashkelon and there, it is said, there was the head of Imām Ḥusayn b. 'Alī. The site is near the hospital of Barzilai and the Israeli authorities preserve it in a way that is, in fact, surprising. Its historical value is even noted with an inscription."

As to the rituals to revive the memory of *'āshūrā'* and the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, Shaykh Shahwān said, "we revive the memory according to the followed rituals, such as crying for neglecting to save Imām Ḥusayn. Nevertheless, we do not beat ourselves until we shed blood, although it is practiced in other Shī'i schools."

The connection with the spiritual authorities takes place ... in the *ḥajj*

Concerning our question of whether the Shī'īs in the country organize themselves in the form of a group, Shaykh Shahwān said, "we work separately and with independent reasoning and we do not organize in a group."

Concerning the connection with religious authorities for studying, Shaykh Shahwān said, "in case we want to delve deeply into religious matters, which is our duty as Shī'īs, we connect with the *amūr*, which is a responsible rank for the Shī'a, by electronic mail and my children help me with that."

Concerning the meeting with the *umarā'* [pl. of *amūr*], Shaykh Aḥmad said, "we do not meet the *umarā'*, but when we go to *ḥajj* we meet them. I met them and

23 Qur'ān 4:24.

presented to them the picture of the situation and they were glad that the Shī'ī school is back in the land of Palestine!"

And he added, "in the past, we used to meet in Dabūriyya, but our only meeting nowadays takes place in Ashkelon. It happens once in the year."

Concerning the spiritual authorities whom Shaykh Shahwān follows, he said, "I follow the grand Āyatullāh [the highest Shī'ī rank] 'Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Sistānī,²⁴ who is one of the authorities of the Shī'a in Iraq."

Shahwān: We have no involvement in politics and we do not follow orders from Hizbullah.

Answering our question concerning the political approach of the Shī'a in the country, Shaykh Aḥmad Shahwān said, "we, as a result of our sensitive situation, do not speak about political matters, even with spiritual and the religious authorities. We do not know if the case of the situation of the Shī'a in Palestine of 1948 was discussed or not, but until now there has been no connection with us from Hizbullah or another party.

And he said, "even if some party contacted us, we would refuse to cooperate with them. This is because we do not have the ability for conflict. We focus only on religious matters."

Concerning the contradiction in which a Shī'ī person lives, since most of the states which embrace Shī'ism belong to enemy states and there is an obligation for members of the Shī'a to be organized and follow the orders of spiritual and religious authorities, Shaykh Aḥmad said, "the honorable Shaykh Naṣrallāh is a *sayyid* [i.e. a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad] and he is responsible for the Shī'a in Lebanon. As for us, we do not have a *sayyid* or higher authority, so we do not follow orders from anyone here."

Concerning the explosions [of al-Qaida terrorists] in Iraq Shaykh Shahwān said, "I am completely sure that a Muslim, whether he is a Shī'ī or a Sunnī, should not harm his Muslim brother. What is happening in Iraq is an American conspiracy. The Shī'īs and the Sunnīs are innocent of it on the day of judgment."

24 'Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Sistānī (b. 1930) is still the highest Shī'ī authority in Iraq; he teaches in several *hawzas* in Najaf. He inherited the position of Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā from Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū'ī in 1992.

My wives and my children are not Shī'īs!

The only thing left to say is that Shaykh Shahwān has two wives and fifteen children, but not all of them follow the Shī'ī school.

The two wives still belong to the Sunnī school of religion. Eight of the fifteen children follow the Shī'ī school of their religion.

A Shī'ī Supplication in the “Shī'īs of Palestine” Facebook Page

The translation of the following supplication (1) is followed by its denouncement on a Sunnī Saudi site (2).

1. A Shī'ī supplication for the *jumu'a* Friday prayer¹ appears on the Facebook page entitled “Shī'īs of Palestine.” This supplication emphasizes the importance of *jihād* and loyalty to the *ahl al-bayt*. Its original source is *Mafātīḥ al-Janān* by 'Abbās al-Qummī (1877–1940), a book of supplications that is commonly used in Shī'ī shrines.²



FIGURE 33

- 1 This prayer appears several times in the “Shī'at Filastīn” pages, for example: <https://www.facebook.com/palshia1214/> and <https://www.facebook.com/Shiite.Palestine/>.
- 2 'Abbās al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-Janān* (Qumm: Majma' Iḥyā' l-Thaqāfa l-Islāmiyya, n.d.), 71.

Supplication for Friday

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. Oh God! Pray for Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad!

Praise be to God the first before creation and before life and the last after the annihilation of everything, the One who knows all and nothing is forgotten from His memory, who never diminishes from those who thank Him, who never disappoints those who pray to Him, who never ignores the request of those who apply to Him. Oh God! I testify before You and a testimony before You is enough, and I testify before Your angels, the inhabitants of Your heavens and the bearers of Your throne, the prophets and the messengers that You have sent, the different creatures that You have created. I testify that You are God, there is no god beside you alone without partners or equal or substitute to Your word or alternative. [I testify] that Muḥammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him and his family, is Your worshiper and Your messenger, he fulfilled what You have charged him with for the worshipers and fulfilled the *jihād* for God with proper striving. I testify that he preached for the right for reward, he warned against what is true concerning the punishment. Oh God! Make me steady in Your religion as long as You keep me alive. My heart will not be diverted after You have guided me. This is a gift to me from You given from mercy, since You are the benefactor. Pray for Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad, and make me one of his followers and his Shī'a and gather me with his group and enable me to perform with success the obligation of Fridays, and the duties that You demanded me to obey on it. You have distributed its people [of the Shī'a] charity in the day of reward. Indeed, You are the cherished and the wise.

Followers of the *āl al-bayt*, peace be upon them, in occupied Palestine.

The Shī'a of Palestine

2. This supplication appears on the Durar al-Sunniyya website,³ with a note stating:

The rank is unreliable; it appears in the books of the Shī'a.

³ <https://dorar.net/fake-hadith/304>. The Durar al-Sunniyya is based in Saudi Arabia, headed by 'Alawī b. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Saqqāf. Its declared goal is to protect Sunnī tenets.

Interview with a Member of the Dāwūdī Bohrās

Interview with Dr. Mustafa Abdulhussein¹ from the Dāwūdī Bohrā Community in England concerning the *Mashhad* Ra's al-Ḥusayn Site in Ashkelon and Related Matters

Yaron Friedman (YF): May I ask what is your professional position and your role in the Bohrā community?

Dr. Mustafa Abdulhussein (MA): I am now retired from my profession, which was in education. I owned and managed a government-funded college in Manchester, United Kingdom. I spend most of my time working for my community in various capacities these days. I lead the community in Manchester, for example. I also do a number of legal writing and PR-related work for the central offices of the Dawah² in Mumbai.

YF: Could you please provide a short explanation concerning the relation of your community to the medieval Fāṭimid caliphate and Ismā'īlī Islam?

MA: As you probably know, the Bohrā community belongs to the Ismā'īlī Fāṭimid Ṭayyibī tradition. We believe in the Fāṭimid Imāms as our *imāms*. We believe in Imām al-Musta'īlī as the successor of the eighteenth Imām al-Mustanṣir,³ separating us from the Nizārī (Aga Khan) Ismā'īlīs. Our belief is that the twenty-first Imām, al-Ṭayyib, chose seclusion and therefore we do not recognize the last few Fāṭimid caliphs, from al-Ḥāfiẓ onward as true Imāms.⁴ Upon the seclusion of the Imām, the office of Dai al-Mutlaq [*dā'ī al-muṭlaq*] was instituted in Yemen, as the vicegerent of the Imām. Later, the seat of the Dawah [*da'wa*] was transferred to

1 This interview with Mustafa Abdulhussein (in London) was done by correspondence in English; his replies to my list of questions were sent on 4 September 2017. The original text of the answers appears with minimal editing; I did adapt foreign figures and terms to match the transliteration system used in this book. Terms and personalities mentioned in the interview are explained in the footnotes.

2 The term *da'wa* refers to propaganda or proselytizing.

3 Abū Tamīm Ma'ād al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh (d. 487/1094) was the eighth Fāṭimid caliph, known for his long sixty-year rule.

4 The Bohrās continue the line of Ismā'īlī Imāms to al-Ṭayyib Abū-l-Qāsim (who disappeared in 527/1132). The other branch of Ḥāfiẓī Ismā'īlīs believe that the Imāmate was transmitted to al-Ḥāfiẓ, the cousin of the last Imām who had no children, al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh, son of al-Musta'īlī, the tenth Fāṭimid caliph (d. 525/1130).

India, where it still is today. Sayyduna Mufaḍḍal Sayfuddīn is the current incumbent and is the fifty-third Dai al-Mutlaq.⁵

From a theological point of view, we are adherents of the Sharia [*sharī'a*] as defined in the works of luminaries during the Fāṭimid period, such as Sayyid Aḥmad al-Kirmānī, Sayyid Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī, Sayyid Qāḍī al-Num'ān, etc.⁶ Earlier works of Ismā'īlī faith such as the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafa* and [the works] of Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī also play an important role in defining our theology.⁷ After the practices of prayer, fasting, etc., the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn defines our rituals and practices. This is commemorated in every town and city where there is a presence of Bohrās in the first ten days of Muḥarram. The supplications of the Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn b. al-Ḥusayn form the bulk of our supplications. In both regards, we are not very different from the Ithnā 'Asharī Shī'a, but our beliefs in what constitutes the journey of salvation are very different. I can also refer you to some simple articles I wrote many years ago: "Bohrās," "Burhānuddīn, Sayyidnā Muḥammad" and "al-Jāmi'yah al-Sayfiyah" in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*.

YF: What is the importance for the Bohrās of the [mausoleum of the] head of Ḥusayn in Ashkelon? Is it less important than the site in Cairo?

MA: Where ever the head of Imām Ḥusayn stayed for a while becomes a sacred site for us. Askalaan (Ashkelon) is one such site. Of all the sites that are known to us regarding Imām Ḥusayn, Karbalā' is the most significant, as that is where he was slain and where his body is buried. Next in importance comes Cairo, as that is where the head is buried. Then comes Syria (Grand Mosque) where the head was displayed for some time and later buried. Then comes Ashkelon, as the sacred head lay buried there for some time too.

YF: What is the goal of your believers in performing the *ziyāra* to Ashkelon? Does prayer at this site result in spiritual contact with the Imām, according to your belief?

MA: The *ziyāra* is an expression of devotion to the Imām. More than spiritual contact, it is an attempt to articulate and increase the link one already has with the

5 The *dā'ī al-muṭlaq* (absolute missionary) leads the community during the absence of the Imām.

6 These were fifth-/eleventh-century Fāṭimid scholars. Aḥmad b. 'Abdallāh al-Kirmānī was a Persian missionary of the caliph al-Ḥākim. Mūsā b. Dāwūd al-Shirāzī (470/1078) was *dā'ī l-du'āt* (chief missionary) of the later caliph al-Mustanshir. Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974) was the most important jurist of the Fāṭimids.

7 These terms belong to the early Ismā'īlī missionary activity in Iraq and Iran, which was secret. Al-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā (the 'Brethren of purity') was a secret society in Basra, Iraq. Their work was summarized in a collection of fifty-two epistles. See Y. Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā," *EI*² (1993), 3:1071–1076. Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī was a fourth-/tenth-century Iranian missionary who supported the Fāṭimids.

Imām. To relive his memory. To look at the site and relate to the fact that this is exactly where the martyred Imām's sacred head once lay.

YF: Could you please provide a short description of how the *ziyāra* ceremony is performed in Ashkelon. How might it differ, if at all, from this ceremony in other *mashhads*?

MA: When a site that holds or once held the remains of a prophet, Imām or another luminary is visited, the ritual consists of reciting a salutation to the person (let's say the Imām) associated with the site. It also involves supplications to God and ritual daily prayers if the visitation is at the time of prayer. The whole thing is an expression of love and devotion to the Imām and worship of God, which the Imām calls us to. Therefore, in terms of what we do at Ashkelon, it does not differ from what we do in Karbalā' or Cairo.

YF: Does Palestine, in general, have a special importance in the beliefs of the Bohrās or in their prayers?

MA: Not Palestine in general, but the holy sites there. In particular, the Masjid al-Aqṣā, as it is the third most important mosque in Islam. The burial sites of the biblical prophets and other sites such as Ashkelon come next.

YF: Are there other holy sites in Palestine, which are venerated by the Bohrās? My study of Shī'ī sites revealed medieval tombs of Sukayna bt. Ḥusayn and 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abbās in Tiberias, Fāṭima bt. Ḥusayn in Hebron, and a tomb of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Acre. Are they mentioned in the sacred texts of the Bohrās?

MA: We do not have a tradition to say that the burial of any of the above is in Palestine. Besides al-Aqṣā [Mosque] (and Ṣakhra [the Dome of the Rock]), burial sites of biblical prophets and Ashkelon, we also visit the grave of Hāshim b. 'Abd al-Manaf, the Prophet's great grandfather [in Gaza].

YF: Why does the location of the head of Ḥusayn not appear in any medieval Shī'ī source or any Sunnī source prior to the fifth/eleventh century?

MA: I am not sure, but some of the 'Abbāsids attempted to end the [practice of] *ziyāra* to Imām Ḥusayn in Karbalā' and Damascus, sometimes through extreme measures, including plowing the graves under in Karbalā' so that it would not be possible to identify the burial sites. One of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs transferred the head from Damascus (where it had stayed for about 200 years) to Ashkelon secretly in order to end *ziyāra* to it. Therefore, its location was not known and forgotten about. It was during the time of the eighteenth Fāṭimid Imām, al-Mustaṣfir (in the fifth/eleventh century), that the sacred head was discovered in Ashkelon. It was some sixty or so years later that it was moved from Ashkelon to Cairo.

YF: What is your response to Ibn Taymiyya's claim that the head of Ḥusayn was not in Ashkelon or in Cairo? Why do you think he refuted this belief?

MA: Ibn Taymiyya didn't believe in visitations to graves and burial sites and cast doubt on several popular sites of *ziyāra*, to demonstrate his point that people

were paying respects to nothing. The Wahhabīs do the same today. If one visits the Baqīʿ cemetery in Medina, the Wahhabīs take great pains to explain to the pilgrims that it is not possible to identify any grave for sure, in order to discourage the *ziyāra*.

- YF: Do the Bohrās consider the *mashhad* in Ashkelon a *ḥaram* [i.e., a sacred site]? If not, how do the Bohrās define the site? Are the objects surrounding it considered holy as well (e.g., the ground, trees, and stones)?
- MA: The community considers the site sacred, though the word *ḥaram* is not usually used for it. *Mashhad* is the term more commonly employed. I don't think everything around it can be considered "holy."
- YF: How frequently do the Bohrās perform the *ziyāra* to Ashkelon? Where do they come from (I was told that most of them are from India)? Is it part of a religious journey between Ismāʿīlī sites in the region?
- MA: Most of the community members are Indian in origin, even if they live in other parts of the world. There are some ethnic Yemeni Arabs too. There aren't any statistics on how frequently they visit Ashkelon. It largely depends on convenience. It is rarely visited on its own. Usually, the *ziyāra* of all the sites in Palestine and Jordan or even Egypt are done together. Only *ḥajj* (ritual pilgrimage to Mecca Mukarrama) is mandatory in the Ismāʿīlī tradition of Islam.
- YF: Are you aware of other Shīʿī groups who perform the *ziyāra* to Ashkelon nowadays (or in the past)?
- MA: I am not aware [of any].
- YF: According to my research, large Shīʿī communities (Imāmī and Ismāʿīlī) lived in the region that is now called Palestine/Israel (in medieval period, Jund Filastīn and Jund al-Urdunn). What do you think happened to them? Why did they disappear, while others remained (Sunnīs, Druzes, Jews, Christians)?
- MA: I do not know. However, Ismāʿīlīs were persecuted after the end of the Fāṭimid caliphate and so I would not be surprised if they were either forcibly converted or banished.
- YF: Do you believe that Shīʿīs will return to live in Palestine in the future as they did during the Fāṭimid period?
- MA: At the moment, it seems unlikely. There is also no belief that this will happen one day.
- YF: Could you please describe earlier pilgrimages of *dāʿī muṭlaq* leaders to Ashkelon in the past, such as that of Burhānuddīn.
- MA: The fifty-first *dāʿī*, Syedna Taher Saifuddin, his son and successor Syedna Mohammed Burhānuddīn, and his son and successor Sayyiduna Mufaḍḍal Sayfuddin have all visited the site at Ashkelon. Syedna Burhanuddin visited more than once. When they visit the site, they too recite the salutations, elegies, and

supplications to God as narrated above, and the Bohrās emulate precisely what they do.

YF: Do the Bohrā pilgrims to Ashkelon suffer from political problems or other obstacles?

MA: At present, no.

YF: Thank you very much for your willingness to answer my questions and for your time.

Timeline of Shī'ī History in Palestine

Umayyads

- Early second/eighth century: People from Palestine send a convoy to the Imām Ja'far al-Šādiq.

ʿAbbāsids

- Second half of the third/ninth century: The geographer al-Ya'qūbī mentions the settlement of the Shī'ī ʿĀmila tribe in the Jund Filasṭīn.
- 271/884: Muḥammad b. Ḥamza, a descendant of al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī, is murdered in Tiberias by Ṭughj b. Juff the Ikhshīdid.
- 289–90/902–03: The Ismā'īlī *mahdī* of Salamiyya, ʿAbdallāh al-Mahdī, hides in Ramla.
- First half of the fourth/tenth century: The Persian Shī'ī poet Kushājim sojourns in Ramla.

Fāṭimids

- Second half of the fourth/tenth century: The geographer Muḥammad al-Maḥdisī complains that all Tiberias, half of Nablus, and Qadas are Shī'īs.
- 360–67/970–77: The Qarmaṭī invasion of Palestine is centered in Ramla.
- 363–64/973–74: Authorities imposed Shī'ī customs in Palestine, two Sunnis from Ramla and Jerusalem who opposed it were detained and tortured.
- 386/996: Shī'ī messianic rebellion of Abū l-Futūḥ Ḥasan b. Ja'far, the *amīr* of Mecca in Ramla.
- First half of the fifth/eleventh century:
 - Shī'ī genealogist Najm al-Dīn al-ʿUmarī travels through Ramla, and mentions several Ṭālibiyyūn (descendants of the Imāms) in Jerusalem, Tiberias, and Ramla.
 - The Sunnī Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī complains that all of Urdunn (that is, Galilee), mainly Tiberias, is controlled by the Nuṣayrīs (now ʿAlawīs).
 - Druzes/Ḥākimī spread propaganda in Galilee (al-Buḡay'a) and Ḥamza's opponents are mentioned in Acre.

- Mid-fifth/eleventh century: The traveler Nāṣir Khusraw mentions Shī'īs in Tiberias and Fāṭimid investment and construction projects in Palestine.
- 410–16/1019–25: The Shī'ī scholar Muḥammad al-Karājukī, student of Shaykh al-Mufīd, settles in Ramla.
- 467/1074: The Turkish Atsiz Ibn Uwaq al-Khwarizmī invades Palestine and massacres the population of Tiberias (including Shī'īs); Turcomans resettle the deserted Ramla with local Sunnī farmers.
- 471/1078: The Fāṭimids recapture Palestine.
- 484/1090: Badr al-Jamālī claims that he found the head of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī in Ashkelon. His son al-Afḍal erected the Mashhad al-Ra's (lit., 'the mausoleum of the head').
- 485–93/1092–99: Muḥammad b. al-'Arabī of Granada, passing through Palestine, engages in polemical discussions with Imāmī and Bāṭinī (Ismā'īlī) Shī'īs in Acre and Tiberias.

Crusaders

- 495/1101: The crusaders destroy a Shī'ī library in Haifa founded by As'ad b. Abī Rawḥ from Tripoli (Lebanon).
- Sixth/twelfth century: Crusaders turn the shrine of 'Ālī b. Abī Tālib in *'ayn al-baqara* (lit., 'fountain of the cow') in Acre, into a church, then regret their actions and leave the site.
- 549/1153: The head of Ḥusayn is transferred from Ashkelon, which was captured by crusaders, to Cairo.
- 570/1174: The Persian traveler al-Harawī described Mashhad al-Ra's, which still existed in Ashkelon, though there was no longer a Shī'ī population.

Ayyūbids

- End of the sixth/twelfth century: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn captures the tomb of Sukayna in Tiberias, and renews its sanctity from the Fāṭimid period and turn it into a Sunnī sanctuary.
- 583/1187: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn destroys Ramla and Tiberias, two towns that had key Shī'ī communities in the past.
- 587/1191: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn destroys Ashkelon and transfers the *minbar* of the head of Ḥusayn mausoleum to Hebron.

Mamlüks

- Mid seventh/thirteenth century: The Persian geographer Zakariyyā al-Qazwīnī mentions Sunnī veneration of Mashhad al-Ra’s in Ashkelon.
- 694/1294: The Mamlük governor of Safed has inscriptions made on the tomb of Sukayna in Tiberias and makes it a *waqf*
- Eighth/fourteenth century:
 - The Black Death strikes the population of Palestine.
 - The Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya writes in a *fatwā* his refutation of the Mashhad al-Ra’s in Ashkelon.
- First half of the eighth/fourteenth century:
 - The geographer Ibn Baṭūṭṭa describes the Mashhad al-Ra’s in Ashkelon, but notes the absence of Shī’īs.
 - Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Makkī (“the first *shahīd*”) passes through Palestine, and does not mention a Shī’ī population.
 - The Sunnī geographer Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī and the historians al-‘Uthmānī and al-Qalqashandī mention Shī’īs in the district of Safed (including Hūnīn), after a silence of two centuries, during which Muslim scholars did not mention their presence in the region.

Ottomans

- Tenth/sixteenth century: Zayn al-Dīn b. ‘Alī al-Jubā’ī al-‘Āmilī (“the second *shahīd*”) passes through Palestine, and does not mention a Shī’ī population.
- Between the years 928/1521 and 930/1523: The Italian rabbi Moshe Bāsola mentions the tomb of Sukayna in Tiberias as that of Rachel, the wife of Rabi Akiva.
- End of the eleventh/seventeenth century: Collapse of the Druze Ma’n rule in northern Palestine, while the Ottomans are preoccupied with wars against Russia.
- Twelfth/eighteenth century: Pro-Ottoman historians Sulaymān al-Muḥāsini and Khalīl al-Murādi complain about the Shī’ī population in the district of Safed.
- 1163/1749: Battle near Tirbikha between the two leaders, Sunnī Zāhir al-Umar and Shī’ī Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār over the control of Shī’ī villages in northern Galilee.
- 1164/1751 and again in 1182/1768: A peace treaty is signed between Zāhir al-Umar and Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār in Acre, leaving the Shī’ī villages under al-Naṣṣār’s control.
- 1166/1752: al-Naṣṣār builds the mosque of Hūnīn.
- 1185/1771: Following al-Naṣṣār’s victory over ‘Uthmān Pasha, al-Naṣṣār builds the shrine of al-Nabī Yūsha’, becoming the most important Shī’ī site in Palestine.
- 1190/1776 and 1195/1780: Al-Jazzār, governor of Acre, launches punitive campaigns against the Shī’ī villages in Galilee and southern Lebanon.

- Between 1293/1876 and 1306/1888: The Ottoman governor Ra'ūf Pasha rebuilds the long-neglected *mashhad* of Ḥusayn, still as a Sunnī in Ashkelon.

British Mandate

- 1922: A British census shows 156 Shī'ī Matāwliš living in Palestine, mostly in al-Baṣṣa.
- 1923: Following border changes, seven Shī'ī villages in Palestine are transmitted from the French to the British Mandate, adding 3,191 Shī'īs to their population. Prior to the 1948 war (together with al-Baṣṣa) their population was more than 4,770 people.
- 1948: During the Israeli War of Independence Shī'īs from Palestine, mainly from Mālkiyya, volunteer to fight in Fawzī l-Qawuqjī's Arab Liberation Army.
 - Negotiations take place between Shī'ī Matāwli leaders of Hūnīn and the kibbutz of Kfar Giladi, but fail.
 - The Matāwliš of Galilee become refugees in Lebanon.

State of Israel

- 1998: A delegation of the Ismā'īli Dāwūdī Bohrās locate the cornerstone of the last shrine of the head of Ḥusayn, and receive authorization from Israel to build a modest open marble site for pilgrims.
- 2000: A few Shī'īs, ex-soldiers from the South Lebanese Army, and their families settled in Israel following its withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the dismantling of the SLA.
 - A temporary spread of Shī'ism in Galilee, mainly in Dabūriyya, following the second Israeli-Lebanese war (2006) and Hizbullah's declaration of victory.
- 2008: The municipality of Ashkelon posts a sign near the site the Bohrās make pilgrimages to in Ashkelon, explaining the history of the head of Ḥusayn.
- 2012: Palestinian solidarity with Hizbullah and conversions to Shī'ism among Israeli Arabs diminish following the organization's involvement in the Syrian war.
- 2014: The Shī'ī organization called al-Ṣābirīn, sponsored by Iran, is established in Gaza.
- 2016: Hamas movement in Gaza limits al-Ṣābirīn's activity.
- 2019: Hizbullah's leader in Lebanon still threatens to fight against Israel to recapture the seven Shī'ī villages in the Galilee.

Glossary of Shī'ī Terms in the Palestinian Context

ahl al-bayt "The people of the house," the five members that Shī'īs consider the holy family of the Prophet Muḥammad; the five include Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭima, his cousin 'Alī and his grandchildren Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Many of their descendants lived in Palestine in the fifth/eleventh century.

al-'amma "The mass/the ordinary people," a Shī'ī label for the Sunnīs, who were apparently the majority in Palestine during most of Muslim history.

'Āmila A Shī'ī tribe of Yemeni origin; they settled in the region of southern Lebanon and Galilee, called Jabal 'Āmil, in the third/ninth century.

'āshūrā' The tenth of the first month of Muḥarram, a day when Shī'īs mourn the murder of Ḥusayn in 61/680 in Karbalā'. This day was not celebrated publicly in Palestine.

āyat al-taḥīr The verse of purification in Qur'ān 33:33 (a verse that Shī'īs believe refers to the five members of the *ahl al-bayt*), that appears on the inscription of the shrine of Sukayna.

bāṭinī "Deep, esoteric," referring to the mystical belief of Ismā'īlī Shī'ī sects, called *bāṭinīyya*.

da'wa "Propaganda," used in medieval sources for the propaganda to spread Ismā'īlī faith in the region under Fāṭimid rule.

dā'ī (pl. *du'āt*) Propagandists mainly from Ismā'īlī sects; the *dā'ī muṭlaq* ('absolute missionary') is the spiritual leader of the Dāwūdī Bohrā.

dhū l-ḥiqār The sword of 'Alī.

faḍā'il "Merits" (sing. *faḍl*), a genre of praise of towns.

fīraq "Sects" (sing. *fīraqa*) in Islam.

fitna A conflict between Muslims, mainly between Sunnīs and Shī'īs.

ghayba "Occultation," the situation of the hidden Imām, since his disappearance. In Imāmī Shī'ism he is identified as the twelfth and the last Imām, who disappeared in Samarrā' in 260/873.

ghulāt "Exaggerators or extremists," frequently referred to the Nuṣayrīs, who were accused of *ghuluw*, whose exaggeration in their admiration of 'Alī reached the level of deification.

Imāmī: Also called: Twelver Shī'a. Mainstream or orthodox Shī'ism, belief in the line of the twelve Imāms.

iṣma The infallibility of the Imāms.

Karbalā' A site southwest of Baghdad, where Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad, was murdered along with most of his family.

mahdī "The guided one"; In Imāmī Shī'ism, he is identified with the twelfth Imām, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, who is in occultation and will return as Messiah at the end of time.

- mashhad* (pl. *mashāhid*) A mausoleum. Smaller shrines are called *mazār*, *maqām*, or *darīh* and *qabr*, “tomb.” In the medieval period, the two most important mausoleums were Ra’s al-Ḥusayn in Ashkelon and, in modern history, the al-Nabī Yūsha’ in Galilee.
- mawsim* (pl. *mawāsīm*) A popular annual feast or festival celebrated at sanctuaries, the most important in Palestine were taking place at the two main *mashāhid*.
- Matāwila or Matāwliṣ Name for Shī’īs in Lebanon and northern Palestine, from the twelfth/eighteenth century onward.
- muqāwama* The “resistance axis” against Israel; this includes Hizbullah, Iran, and the Syrian regime. It tries to enlist the Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Shī’ī al-Ṣābirīn movement.
- nakba* “The catastrophe,” a term used to refer to the fate of the Palestinians during the 1948 war; among the Shī’īs in Lebanon, it also referred to the period of the raids of al-Jazzār, ruler of Acre, against the Matāwliṣ in the late twelfth/eighteenth century.
- al-Qurā l-janūbiyya al-sab’* “The seven southern villages,” the Shī’ī villages annexed from Lebanon to the British Mandate in Palestine, following the 1923 border changes.
- rafd* Opposition, a (negative) medieval Sunnī term for Shī’ism; *rāfiḍa*, *rāfiḍī* (pl. *rawāfiḍ*) refers to Shī’īs; in Ottoman Turkish: *rafizi*.
- sabb al-ṣaḥāba* The practice of cursing the Companions of Muḥammad who opposed ‘Alī.
- al-Ṣābirīn A small Shī’ī movement created in the Gaza Strip in 2014 by members of Islamic Jihad who converted to Shī’ism. It is backed by Iran.
- shahīd* “Martyr,” the most important was the martyrdom of Ḥusayn in Karbalā’. The Banū l-Shahīd were Abū l-Ṭayyib’s Shī’ī family in Tiberias, descendants of ‘Abbās b. ‘Alī. Abū l-Ṭayyib, who was a Shī’ī martyr in Palestine, killed by the Ikhshīdīs in the third/ninth century.
- al-Sufyānī* Name for the evil leader of the Sunnī enemies of the Imāms; it is believed that this leader will be killed by the *mahdī* at the end of time.
- takfīr* Muslims accusing other Muslims of *kufīr* (heresy).
- taqiyya* Precautionary dissimulation; a Shī’ī obligation to keep his belief secret in times of danger.
- tashayyu’* Shī’ī tendencies or propaganda among Sunnīs.
- walī* A saint or a holy person buried in a shrine. Also, a title given to ‘Alī who is spiritually close to God.
- waṣī* “Successor,” a title given to ‘Alī, who Shī’īs consider to be the successor of the Prophet Muḥammad. The Shī’īs consider al-Nabī Yūsha’ (Joshua), to be the *waṣī* of Moses, therefore Joshua corresponds to ‘Alī in this way.
- ziyāra* Pilgrimage to holy sites.

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