

## From Church and Forum to Mosque and *Sūq*: The Evolution of Mediterranean Cities during the Umayyad Period

De la iglesia y el foro a la mezquita y el *sūq*:  
la evolución de las ciudades mediterráneas durante  
el periodo omeya

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This article's aim is to explore the interplay between the Muslim occupation of cities and those cities' urban development during this period. How did the Muslims manage to integrate themselves as a new ruling class in functioning urban tissues with almost no destruction of churches and synagogues? I suggest that the Muslims employed a uniform, premeditated policy, whose surviving physical manifestation is the proximity between churches and mosques, mostly in cities' centers. I further suggest that this proximity transformed the cities' markets from *fora* and *cardisnes* into *aswāq*.

**Key words:** Umayyads; Muslim conquest; urban structures; markets; churches; mosques; Mediterranean.

El objetivo de este artículo es estudiar la interacción entre la ocupación musulmana de ciudades y su desarrollo urbano durante este período. ¿Cómo gestionaron los musulmanes su integración como nueva élite gobernante en el funcionamiento de las estructuras urbanas sin destruir las iglesias y las sinagogas? Los musulmanes utilizaron una política uniforme y predeterminada, cuya manifestación física sobrevive en forma de la proximidad entre iglesias y mezquitas, sobre todo en los centros urbanos. Además, esta proximidad transformó los mercados de los foros y *cardisnes* en *aswāq*.

**Palabras clave:** Omeyas; conquista musulmana; estructuras urbanas; mercados; iglesias; mezquitas; Mediterráneo.

### Preface

The contiguity between churches and mosques is a remarkable feature in the urban landscape of many Middle Eastern cities conquered by the Muslims during the Hijrī first century. Prominent scholars have provided various explanations to this phenomenon.

I would like to emphasize that this article deals exclusively with the transformation of pre-existing cities, which Hugh Kennedy called *inherited cities*, under Muslim rule.<sup>1</sup> Cities which were established by the Muslims, such as Ramla and 'Anjar merit a separate discussion.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, large rural settlements from the Byzantine period which were not considered *poleis*, such as Shivta and Umm Jimāl are outside the scope of this study.<sup>3</sup>

## Sources

The contiguity between churches and mosques was well-known long before modern studies described it. For example, the existence of the 'Umar Mosque near the southern entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem reflects a tradition of building mosques near churches. Yet, generally speaking, literary sources are scarce and usually do not tell us why were mosques situated in these specific locations. Contemporary readership was either acquainted with the urban considerations made by Muslim authorities, or did not pay heed to such issues. Therefore, this study is based mainly on the results of many recent archaeological excavations.

Extensive excavations were conducted both in Jordan and in Israel during the last four decades, as well as several excavations which were carried out in Syria until the beginning of the still ongoing civil war in 2011.

Gideon Avni described most of the important excavations which took place in Israel and Jordan during the last decades in his book. These excavations revealed that many mosques were built near pre-existing churches.<sup>4</sup>

Alan Walmsley related to the main excavations in Jordan, as well as to those in Syria and in Israel.<sup>5</sup> These works provide a panoramic view of the state of archaeological research in the area of Bilād al-

<sup>1</sup> Kennedy, "Inherited Cities", pp. 95-100.

<sup>2</sup> Luz, "The Construction of an Islamic City in Palestine", pp. 27-54; Hillenbrand, "'Anjar and Early Islamic Urbanism", pp. 59-98.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, "From *Polis* to *Madina*", p. 14; Hirschfeld, "Settlement of the Negev during the Byzantine Period", p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition*.

<sup>5</sup> Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria*, pp. 76-90; Walmsley, "Remodelling Urban Landscapes", pp. 143-149.

Shām. However, the works of Navarro and Jiménez about al-Andalus indicate that knowledge about the transition between the Visigoth and Muslim periods there is poorly documented and archaeological findings about it are almost nonexistent.<sup>6</sup>

### Previous studies

During the last forty years, many important studies were published about early Muslim urbanism in the Levant and in the Iberian Peninsula. Amikam El'ad published in 1982 an influential article, in which he analyzed the history of Palestine's coastal cities during the early Muslim period.<sup>7</sup>

In 1985, Hugh Kennedy published a seminal article on this topic, titled *From Polis to Madina*, in which he claimed that Syrian cities were undergoing a long process of stagnation and decline which began before the Muslim conquest. Kennedy wrote an additional article in 1998, in which he compared between the urban history of al-Andalus and that of Syria. Kennedy concluded that the decline of some Andalusian and Syrian cities began before the Muslim conquest, and that the transformation of these cities from Roman-Byzantine cities into Islamic cities was mostly gradual, rather than abrupt.<sup>8</sup>

Donald Whitcomb published important articles about many cities in the Middle East during the Early Muslim period, such as Fustāt, 'Aqaba, and Jerusalem. Whitcomb also published articles about the urbanization process during the early Muslim period, in which he defined new, Islamic cities as *amsār* and suggested that the Holy Land's urban network changed significantly during the eleventh century.<sup>9</sup>

Alan Walmsley added important research on the continuity and transformation of the area. Walmsley suggested that the proximity

<sup>6</sup> Navarro and Jiménez, *Las ciudades de Alandalús*, pp. 28-32.

<sup>7</sup> El'ad, "The Coastal Cities of Palestine", pp. 146-167.

<sup>8</sup> Kennedy, "From *Polis* to *Madina*", pp. 3-27; Kennedy, "From Antiquity to Islam", pp. 53-64.

<sup>9</sup> Whitcomb, *Ayla: Art and Industry*; Whitcomb, "Amsar in Syria? Syrian Cities", pp. 13-33; Whitcomb, "Islam and the Socio-Cultural Transition", pp. 488-501; Whitcomb, "An Umayyad Legacy", pp. 403-416; Whitcomb, "Jerusalem and the Beginnings", pp. 399-416.

between churches and mosques stemmed from economic interests - namely, both churches and mosques were built near markets.<sup>10</sup>

In 2007, Julio Navarro and Pedro Jiménez published a book and an article about the cities of al-Andalus. They also compared cities in al-Andalus and Syria.<sup>11</sup> However, these important studies dealt extensively with the evolution of cities built from the ground up by the Muslims, as well as with rural settlements which underwent a process of urbanization. These subjects are excluded from this study.

In a 2013 article and in a recent book, Mattia Guidetti suggested that the contiguity of mosques and churches stemmed from Muslim veneration of the conquered cities' sacred spaces.<sup>12</sup>

Ronnie Ellenblum dealt with Muslim urbanism indirectly; he suggested that many of the classical cities survived until the eleventh century. According to Ellenblum's opinion, these cities collapsed suddenly during the eleventh century, as result of nomadic incursions provoked by droughts.<sup>13</sup>

Gideon Avni published a study which examined earlier works in light of the many archaeological excavations which took place during the last three decades in Israel and elsewhere in the Middle East.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Amān* agreements and their manifestations in the topography of conquered cities**

According to literary sources composed a century or more after the great Muslims conquests, the main method the Muslims used to conquer cities was pacifying the local population. The Muslims signed *Amān* agreements which guaranteed the life, safety, property and religious liberty of the local population in return to submission and

<sup>10</sup> Walmsley, "Production, Exchange and Regional Trade", pp. 272-283 and 290-300; Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria*, pp. 77-90; Walmsley, "Trends in the Urban History", pp. 271-284; Walmsley, "Remodelling Urban Landscapes", pp. 143-149.

<sup>11</sup> Navarro and Jiménez, *Las ciudades de Alandalús*; Navarro and Jiménez, "The Evolution of the Andalusi Urban Landscape", pp. 115-142.

<sup>12</sup> Guidetti, "Sacred Topography in Medieval Syria", pp. 339-364; Guidetti, "The Contiguity between Churches and Mosques", pp. 229-258.

<sup>13</sup> Ellenblum, *The Collapse of the Eastern Mediterranean*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup> Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine*.

poll-tax.<sup>15</sup> Levy-Rubin suggested that “the ancient Graeco-Roman tradition was brought to fore by the conquered populations, dictating the character of the agreements made between the Muslims and the inhabitants of the cities”.<sup>16</sup>

I maintain that the signing of *Amān* agreements (or similar agreements) was a Muslim initiative. Furthermore, the mosque-church proximity was the result of the Arab conquerors’ implementation of these agreements. In other words, the peaceful take-over of pre-existing cities was the outcome of a strategic plan which included the following components:

- a. Peaceful surrender of the local population.
- b. Preservation of the well-being and of the communal institutions of the conquered population.
- c. Immigration of Arabs/Muslims to the conquered city.
- d. Conversion of the city into a Muslim city, by building a central mosque.

The existence of such a plan is indicated by the actions of the conquerors in the occupied cities.

In the next pages, I will attempt to demonstrate that the Arabs implemented *Amān* terms not only in the places where such agreements were mentioned in early-Muslim sources, but also in places which were allegedly forcibly conquered. The Arabs did not destroy cities during the first century of their conquests. Some cities, such as Lydda, declined during the early Muslim period despite being peacefully conquered.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, most cities survived the early stages of the Muslim conquest, even if the Muslims have reportedly treated resisting cities harshly during the first years of their occupation. Such an attitude has been reported in some cases, but it is hardly corroborated by archaeological evidence. Thus, although ‘Asqalān was allegedly demolished after being retaken from the Byzantines during the 680s, archaeological findings indicate that the city flourished during the early-Muslim period.<sup>18</sup> Alexandria received an *Amān*, but later rebelled and was

<sup>15</sup> Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, pp. 42-56.

<sup>16</sup> Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae*, vol. I, pp. 131-133; Hoffman, “Ascalon on the Levantine Coast”, pp. 25-49.

reportedly destroyed; nevertheless, it continued to be a major city with an important Christian community until 1365.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, despite a seven-year-long siege and a supposedly violent conquest of Caesarea Maritima, the provincial capital of Palestina Prima, archaeological findings do not indicate that the city was severely damaged during the conquest.<sup>20</sup> Apparently, cities which were forcibly conquered were treated almost exactly the same as neighboring cities which surrendered peacefully. This policy had important implications on the conquered cities' urban landscape: these cities had already existed for centuries prior to the Muslim conquest and their centers were usually intensively built. Therefore, the building of mosques in the cities' centers caused severe planning problems, which demanded creative solutions.

As afore mentioned, *Amān* agreements guaranteed the conquered populations' lives, property, and religious freedom.<sup>21</sup> Historical sources suggest that some cities, such as Jerusalem and Damascus, surrendered,<sup>22</sup> whereas others, such as Caesarea, were taken by force.<sup>23</sup> Milka Levy-Rubin, who wrote about the nature of *Amān* agreements, concluded that: "the existence of such documents (*Amān*), drawn up between the Muslim conquerors and the conquered populations of the East, cannot be doubted".<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Levy-Rubin emphasized that the main features of *Amān* agreements were uniform.<sup>25</sup> The historicity of *Amān* agreements is beyond the scope of this paper; yet, I suggest that there was no noticeable difference between the fate of the cities that resisted according to later sources, and those which preferred to surrender. In both cases, the Muslims acted as if an agreement has been signed. No conquered city has been razed throughout Mediterranean area, even if it fiercely resisted for years. The Muslim conduct towards conquered cities could not be accidental. Evidently, the decision how to deal with the conquered cities' populations was not left to the commander on the

<sup>19</sup> Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, p. 51; Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity*, p. 144; Mojsov, *Alexandria Lost*, pp. 107-113.

<sup>20</sup> Arnon, *Caesarea Maritima*, p. 13; Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae*, vol. II, pp. 252-253.

<sup>21</sup> Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, pp. 32-50.

<sup>22</sup> Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, p. 42, 52; Khalek, "Patterns of Habitation in Post-Conquest", p. 141.

<sup>23</sup> Arnon, *Caesarea Maritima*, p. 11; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 153.

<sup>24</sup> Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, p. 57.

<sup>25</sup> Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, pp. 40-41.

ground; otherwise, Muslim policies towards conquered cities should have been more varied. This suggestion provides non-narrative support to the view that the Muslim armies acted under a centralized authority.<sup>26</sup> Apparently, Muslims implemented the terms which were included in the *Amān* agreements according to later sources, regardless of the conditions which led to the occupation of a certain city. This happened because the Muslims who left the Arab Peninsula since the 630s onwards had a rather limited army.<sup>27</sup> This fact forced the Muslim conquerors to design a policy which enabled them to minimize casualties, leave smaller garrisons behind and save precious time. Therefore, the Muslims tried to appease the local populations and win their trust and collaboration.<sup>28</sup> This policy forced the conquerors to fulfil their promises; the booty they gained was limited, they could not destroy churches and synagogues, or expel residents.

Another problem provoked by this policy was the difficulty it posed to becoming an important player in the conquered cities. The conquered cities existed for centuries and their centers were often densely built. Therefore, it was difficult to add important structures like a central mosque or a governor's house in the cities' centers without destroying important structures. The Muslims used two main methods to tackle this problem: in some places, they built new cities, such as Fustāt,<sup>29</sup> Ramla<sup>30</sup> and Qairawān.<sup>31</sup> Building new cities or neighborhoods was an effective solution; the conquerors were not committed to the well-being of an indigenous population and they did not have to consider earlier structures. This paper will focus on the Muslim policy in the usual case: inherited cities from the Byzantine period.

In cities where a central church was built near the city's center, the construction of the mosque near the central church was almost

<sup>26</sup> Donner, "Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy", p. 350.

<sup>27</sup> Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 119; Hoyland, *In God's Path*, p. 42; Jandora, "Developments in Islamic Warfare", p. 101; Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, p. 57; Levzion, "Toward a Comparative Study of Islamization", p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>29</sup> Dridi, "Christians of Fustat", pp. 39-40; Whitcomb, "An Umayyad Legacy for the Early", p. 403.

<sup>30</sup> Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine*, pp. 159-174; Whitcomb, *Ayla: Art and Industry*, pp. 17-19.

<sup>31</sup> Mazzoli-Guintard, "Damasco, Fustāt, Qayrawān y Córdoba", pp. 86-87; Marçais, *Tunis et Kairouan*, pp. 9-16.



inevitable, except in rare cases, such as in Baysān, where the central church stood outside the city's center.<sup>32</sup> In most cases the Muslims refrained from destroying the central church, and yet, needed to build a mosque in the city's center. Therefore, they built the mosque adjacent to the existing church. This rule has a noticeable exception—Damascus, the Umayyad capital, where the central Umayyad mosque eventually replaced the local cathedral.<sup>33</sup> A similar narrative also exists in another Umayyad capital—Cordoba. Yet, in this case, textual evidence is rather tardive, and according to recent research, archaeological evidence does not support the possibility that the great mosque of Cordoba was built on top of an earlier church.<sup>34</sup>

### Cathedrals and Jām'i

Mosques were often built near pre-existing central churches, a phenomenon that is attested in many settlements conquered by the Muslims, both urban and rural. At first sight, this contiguity seems to be an act of propaganda. Apparently, the Muslims wanted to manifest their religion's superiority over the conquered populations' faiths. Since they guaranteed the safety and the physical integrity of churches, their destruction or confiscation was mostly impractical. Therefore, they manifested their religion's superiority by building mosques near churches.<sup>35</sup>

Presumably, in most cases, the co-existence of a mosque and of a church or synagogue in a rural settlement implies that some local people converted to Islam. Having only a handful of epigraphic remains, as well as few documentary and literary sources about the rural population, it is impossible to determine whether the Muslims who lived in rural settlements were locals or immigrants. However, although immigration cannot be overruled, it seems likely that in most cases immigrants settled in urban areas rather than in rural settlements.

<sup>32</sup> Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations 1921-1923*, pp. 18-30; Mazar, *Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean*, p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, pp. 47-48; Finbarr, *The Great Mosque of Damascus*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>34</sup> Arce-Sainz, "La supuesta basílica de San Vicente en Córdoba", pp. 12-15.

<sup>35</sup> Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine*, p. 337.



Since the Muslims were a tiny minority in their newly established empire, most of them probably lived in urban communities, rather than in villages. Such a reality is reflected in *al-Ya'qūbī's* ninth century book, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, which described the cities of Syria and of al-Andalus. According to this book, many cities included groups of Arab immigrants, which suggest that most Arabs settled in urban settlements.<sup>36</sup> In this way the immigrants could have become a new urban elite, on which Muslim authorities could rely. I suggest that the conversion of rural settlements was mostly the result of the conversion of local inhabitants, rather than the result of a sudden influx of Muslim residents. Thus, in Susīya, to the south of Hebron, a mosque was established in the atrium of the local synagogue,<sup>37</sup> whereas in Shivta, in the central Negev desert, mosques were built near and within the churches' precincts.<sup>38</sup>

The islamization of rural settlements was probably a rather swift process. Once a village's population began the conversion process, it was accomplished either by the islamization of the entire population, or by the desertion of the original religion's parishioners. Yet, during a certain period of time, Islam and the previous religion co-existed. Rural settlements were usually occupied peacefully, following the surrender or the conquest of the regional capital, and subsequently, their inhabitants did not receive *Amān*. Nevertheless, the Muslims did not destroy local churches or synagogues, but incorporated a mosque into the complex of the previous religious precinct. This phenomenon occurred because, in the rural settlements, Muslims were often from the same families as the parishioners of the previous religion, and because religious buildings were often the only public buildings in the settlement. Therefore, assuming that most of the local folk remained in their homes, the respect Muslims had to their families and to their previous co-parishioners' beliefs, as well as the unavailability of other public spaces, led local Muslims to build mosques within the precinct of the local church or synagogue.

In rural settlements, Guidetti's suggestion that the mosque–church contiguity stemmed from a Muslim adaptation of local sacred traditions

<sup>36</sup> Al-Jākūbī, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 7, pp. 327-330, 354-355.

<sup>37</sup> Gutman, Yeivin and Netzer, "Excavations in the Synagogue", p. 128.

<sup>38</sup> Moor, "Mosque and Church", p. 75.

seems very convincing.<sup>39</sup> People belonged to the same families, shared the same traditions and lived in the same landscape. Therefore, they were likely to continue venerating the same places, even if they changed their religion.

According to Janet Abu-Lughod, the most important element which makes a city a “Muslim city” is the distinction between members of the *Umma* and outsiders.<sup>40</sup> The proximity between churches and mosques suggests that this principle was irrelevant during the early days of the Muslim Caliphate. Evidently, the establishment of mosques near churches, whether dictated by central authorities or by local rulers, indicates that the segregation between Muslims and non-Muslims was not implemented in the public sphere of the recently conquered cities.

In most urban settlements in which such proximity is attested, the central church and the *Jām ‘i* stood in the city’s center. The establishment of a central mosque in this location was crucial for establishing the primacy of Islam over other religions. Churches and synagogues were tolerated, but the idea that the city’s central religious building would not be a mosque was unbearable. Yet, these explanations are based on modern scholars’ theories, rather than on contemporary sources. One important exception is the well-known tradition about ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb’s visit to the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and the establishment of a mosque nearby.<sup>41</sup> This tradition is nowadays commemorated in the ‘Umar Mosque, immediately to the south of the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. However, while the current doorway to the church was built during the Crusader period, many centuries after ‘Umar’s visit, the existence of a mosque near the Byzantine entrance to the Holy Sepulchre, to the east of the building, is corroborated by a Fatimid inscription forbidding non-Muslims to enter a mosque, found by Charles Clermont-Ganneau at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Gideon Avni suggested that during the Fatimid period, Jerusalem’s Muslim population increased, and that subsequently, Muslims began residing in the Christian area.<sup>43</sup> This interpretation does not seem to reflect the reality of tenth-century Jerusalem. The

<sup>39</sup> Guidetti, “The Contiguity between Churches and Mosques”, p. 256.

<sup>40</sup> Abu-Lughod, “The Islamic City-Historic Myth”, p. 172.

<sup>41</sup> Abu-Munshar, *Islamic Jerusalem and its Christians*, p. 110.

<sup>42</sup> Clermont-Ganneau, “La basilique de Constantin”, pp. 351-355.

<sup>43</sup> Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine*, p. 131.

well-known contemporary Jerusalemite geographer, al-Muqaddasī, deplored Jerusalem's religious profile in his book (ca. 985 CE). According to al-Muqaddasī, Christians and Jews constituted a majority of Jerusalem's population.<sup>44</sup> In addition, during the same period, the city's area decreased significantly. Based on these facts, it is difficult to claim that an influx of Muslim population required housing as far as the center of the Christian quarter. Therefore, I suggest that this inscription referred to an earlier mosque, built near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre's eastern entrance. This mosque was of secondary importance because of the mosques on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharīf, which were universally venerated by Muslims, and because Muslims did not live in Jerusalem's Christian Quarter. Therefore, the inscription in this site warned people not to enter to the mosque even if it was rarely used, or maybe even deserted, during the tenth century. This inscription was probably engraved during the Fatimid period, because Shi'ites usually did not allow non-Muslims to enter mosques.

In other cases, the circumstances which led to the establishment of a mosque adjacent to a church are less known. According to Ibn al-Shihna, the mosque in Aleppo was built in the church's courtyard.<sup>45</sup> in Mosul, the central mosque was built near the entrance to the local cathedral.<sup>46</sup> Similar phenomena were witnessed in many cities, such as Aleppo, Mardin, Resafa, Hims, 'Ammān, and Tiberias.<sup>47</sup>

The cathedral of Baysān-Scythopolis was built far from the Roman-Byzantine city's center.<sup>48</sup> There is no evidence that Muslims built a mosque near this church before it was destroyed, probably during the 749 AD earthquake.<sup>49</sup> Presumably, the case of Baysān

<sup>44</sup> Al-Muqaddasī, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>45</sup> Otha, *The History of Aleppo*, p. 71.

<sup>46</sup> Guidetti, "Sacred Topography in Medieval Syria", p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Sauvaget, *Alep*, pp. 75-76; Ulbert, "Beobachtungen im Westhofbereich der Grossen Basilika von Resafa", p. 404; Ulbert, "50 Jahre Forschungen in Resafa/Sergiopolis", p. 22; Walmsley, "The Newly-Discovered Congregational Mosque of Jarash in Jordan", pp. 17-24; Cytryn-Silverman, "City Centre of Early Islamic Tiberias (Tabariyya)", pp. 5-7; Cytryn, "Tiberias' Houses of Prayer in Context", pp. 242\*-245\*; Guidetti, "The Byzantine Heritage in the Dār al-Islām", p. 7; Guidetti, "Sacred Topography in Medieval Syria", pp. 346-348; Guidetti, "The Contiguity between Churches and Mosques", p. 237 and pp. 246-247; Genequand, "Formation et Devenir du Paysage Architectural Omeyyade", pp. 420-421.

<sup>48</sup> Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations 1921-1923*, pp. 18-30.

<sup>49</sup> Mazar, *Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean 1989-1996*, p. 42.

suggests that in the rare cities where the cathedral was built outside the city's center, the Muslims did not build their mosque near the cathedral. After 749, a central mosque was built on a hill south of the destroyed city center.<sup>50</sup>

In Jarash, the mosque was built in the city's center, on top of a decaying bathhouse, and other important Umayyad buildings were built in a scattered pattern within the earlier city center.<sup>51</sup>

In many Roman cities, the cathedral replaced a Temple, dedicated to the city's principal Deity.<sup>52</sup> Many Roman Temples were built near a *forum*. It is therefore logical that many cathedrals were built near pre-existing *fora*. Since the Romans did not establish new cities in the Middle East after the third century CE. These cities' centers were usually densely built by the seventh century. As a result, in many cities' centers, the *forum* was the only large open space in the city center that could enable the building of a central mosque. Therefore, the mosques which were built in *fora* were also built near the cities' pre-existing cathedrals.

This suggestion is clearly supported in Jerusalem, where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built near a Roman *forum*.<sup>53</sup> According to Katya Cytryn-Silverman, the mosque of Tiberias was built on top of a building that earlier scholars identified as an unfinished Roman temple, between the *cardo*, the cathedral and an apsidal building.<sup>54</sup> A similar practice has been recorded in Zaragoza, where the local mosque was built on top of the ruins of a Roman temple in the local *forum*.<sup>55</sup> In both cases, it seems highly unlikely that such central areas, near the cathedral and the *cardo*, were simply empty. Instead, I suggest that the mosques of Tiberias and Zaragoza were built in local *fora*.

<sup>50</sup> Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae*, vol. II, pp. 214-222.

<sup>51</sup> Walmsley, "The Newly-Discovered Congregational Mosque of Jarash in Jordan", pp. 21-22; Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine*, pp. 93-98.

<sup>52</sup> Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, p. 54; Bar, "Continuity and Change in the Cultic Topography", pp. 277-285; Chaniotis, "The Conversion of the Temple of Aphrodite", pp. 259-260.

<sup>53</sup> Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem*, pp. 12-14; Gibson and Taylor, *Beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem*, pp. 68-71.

<sup>54</sup> Cytryn-Silverman, "Tiberias, from its foundation to the Early Islamic Period", p. 195; Cytryn, "Tiberias' Houses of Prayer in Context", pp. 242\*-245\*.

<sup>55</sup> Hernández Vera, "La mezquita aljama de Zaragoza", p.75.

Building a mosque in the *forum* provided an elegant solution to a difficult problem. That way, the Muslims were able to build a mosque in the city's center, without demolishing the adjacent cathedral. Yet, wherever there was another central area available, the mosque's builders used it, and did not build within the *forum*.

### ***Forum, Cardo and Sūq***

The construction of a mosque within the forum perhaps solved the problem of building a mosque in the city's center without destroying pre-existing churches, yet it provoked other problems. For example, building within the forum required a reformation of cities' markets, since the Muslims would have wanted to foster trade rather than to limit it. Therefore, building a mosque within the *forum* often forced the conquerors to establish alternative markets. Thus, as a result of the Muslim desire to foster trade in Jerusalem, its western *cardo* was divided into three narrow, parallel streets which still exist today, tripling the number of the *cardo*'s shop.<sup>56</sup> Such a transformation also had substantial social implications. For example, while Roman-Byzantine *fora* were places where people could meet each other and assemble, in many Muslim cities, the only outdoor meeting places were mosques, synagogues and churches. This transformation's pace varied between cities. In some, it had already begun during the Byzantine period, while in others it would only begin after the early Muslim period.<sup>57</sup> Yet, whenever this transformation occurred, it must have had a substantial impact on cities' social matrix.<sup>58</sup>

### **Summary**

I suggest that the Muslim practice of building mosques near pre-existing churches was the result of a premeditated policy. Its crux was the Muslims' need to appease conquered populations in order to

<sup>56</sup> El'ad, "The Coastal Cities of Palestine", p. 38; Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine*, p. 123.

<sup>57</sup> Lavan, "From Polis to Emporium?", pp. 333-336.

<sup>58</sup> Kennedy, "From *Polis* to *Madina*", pp. 13-15.

continue their conquest campaigns. They had to economize their limited military forces, and therefore tried to avoid casualties, shorten sieges, and leave smaller garrisons in conquered cities. Thus, they invested substantial efforts in pacifying the conquered populations. They guaranteed the local inhabitants' safety, property rights and religious freedom. These practices took place all over the Mediterranean areas conquered by Muslims during the Hijra's first century. However, the Muslims also wanted to settle in the conquered cities. Such an ambition has been displayed by the construction of central mosques in the centers of pre-existing cities. Yet, building a mosque in a city center which existed for centuries without destroying standing buildings, one of the guarantees given to the conquered population, was a difficult problem. Therefore, they built the mosques in *fora*, which in were, in many cases, the only available land plots in the cities' centers. Since cathedrals were often built in or near *fora*, mosques were often built neighboring cathedrals. This was not always the only reason for church-mosque proximity. Other reasons, such as the desire to manifest Islam's supremacy, the humiliation of other religions' parishioners, or the Muslim veneration of local holy places, cannot be discarded. Nevertheless, land availability was a necessary condition. In the few cases churches were built outside the city center, mosques were built in the center, rather than next to the church. Likewise, wherever there was available land in the city center but outside the *forum*, the mosque was not built next to the church. The building of a mosque within the city's *forum* also provoked the transformation of the market system from *fora* and *cardines* into specialized *aswāq*. Nevertheless, the transformation from *fora* into *aswāq* was a gradual process in most cases, in some cases beginning during the Byzantine period.

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