



The maqāmāt as places of popular practice: evolution and diversity. Case studies from Hebron and its region

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THE MAQAMAT AS PLACES OF POPULAR PRACTICES: EVOLUTION AND DIVERSITY

Case studies from Hebron and its region

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About the EU Funded Project “My Heritage! My Identity!”

In 2018, the European Union provided a grant to fund a project titled, “My Heritage! My Identity!”¹ in Palestine. The project is being jointly implemented by four partners: AFRAT - France (www.afrat.com), Bethlehem University / Institute for Community Partnership - Palestine (www.bethlehem.edu), Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People - Palestine (www.pcr.ps) and TÉTRAKTYS - France (www.tetraktys-association.org).

It aims to contribute to preserving and promoting cultural heritage located along the community-based walking Masār Ibrāhīm (trail) in Palestine, in an effort to enhance Palestinian citizenship and identity.

What’s more, the project offers activities that will contribute to the cohesiveness of the Palestinian people. It promotes inclusion and trust and aims to create a sense of belonging in order to positively influence relations among the diverse groups in Palestinian society.

For more information on the project, please visit the project website at the following link: www.myheritage.ps and the Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/myheritagemyidentity

¹ The original title of the EU project was “Promoting Governance and Citizenship in Palestine”. EU project reference: ENI/2017/390-692.

About the research process

The present research project has been developed within the framework of the EU funded project “My Heritage! My Identity!”.

The four project partners collaborated with academic experts from Palestine and France to identify six topics related to Palestinian cultural heritage. A scientific committee was established at the beginning of 2018 to select relevant topics.

The scientific committee is composed of the following scholars:

Palestinian researchers :



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Research fellow and lecturer
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Bethlehem University



Nazmi Amin Jubeh
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Wael Hamareh
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Kevin Trehuedic
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History & Archaeology (Paris Est-
Créteil University)



Jacques Barou
Research fellow and lecturer in
Ethnology & sociology (Political
Sciences Institute of Grenoble)

The scientific committee identified six topics, five of which were selected for completion:

- The Maqāmat as a place of popular practices: evolution and diversity
- From terraces to settlements: the testimony of Masār Ibrāhīm landscapes
- “The one who has olive oil will never be poor”. Material and political aspects of a Palestinian symbol.
- Architecture and ways of living: traditional and modern Palestinian villages and cities
- Hikāyāt Palestine through the Masār Ibrāhīm: dialects, oral memories and histories

Furthermore, the members of the committee have been involved throughout the research process to support the researchers.

Finally, three Palestinian members of the committee, Dr. Al Jubeh, Dr. Abed Rabo and Dr. Khader, were in charge of the final proof reading and copy editing of the research projects.

To discover the five researches, please visit the project website: www.myheritage.ps²

About the Author

Marion Lecoquierre is a French geographer currently teaching at the Aix-Marseille University, France. She has been conducting research in Palestine and Israel since 2011. She holds a PhD degree in Political and Social science from the European University Institute (Florence). Her thesis, entitled “Holding on to place, spatialities of resistance in Israel and Palestine” looks at the spatial dimension of local struggles, scrutinizing practices and representations of contention in Jerusalem, Hebron and al-Araqib. She has since then been awarded several postdoctoral grants by the French Research Center in Jerusalem (CRFJ), the French Institute in the Near East (IFPO) and the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’homme (FMSH). Her recent research projects concentrate on two broad themes, religious territorialities and the geopolitics of cities.

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Introduction

“The primitive features of Palestine are disappearing so quickly that before long most of them will be forgotten”. This is how Tawfik Canaan began his book *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*, one of the essential texts about the maqāmāt in Palestine, that was published in 1927. Several other scholars of the same period raised similar concerns about the quick and foreseen disappearance of Palestinian heritage, threatened by modernity, urbanization and various external influences.

Studying the maqāmāt (plural of “maqām”), the tombs or shrines of saints, prophets or other religious figures in Palestine (specifically the West Bank here), remains an interesting multi-entry approach into the society, as it tackles different but closely related dimensions: history and collective memory (Halbwachs, 1950), religion, culture, but also space as it is materially, symbolically and spiritually imbued with meaning. Speaking about the tomb of Moses (Nabi Mousa), Emma Aubin-Boltanski for example asserts that this maqām *“can be considered as a dialectic place: it constitutes a hinge, not only between the divine world and the human world, but between the past and the present”* (2013: 2). This report will precisely look at the maqāmāt as “hinges”, focusing not only on the permanence and evolution of their materiality and environment, but also on the practices taking place there, and what this reveals about the transformation of Palestinian society.

Despite Canaan’s alarmist premonition, the maqāmāt remain a part of the Palestinian landscape, at least materially. Their current inscription in the social and cultural life must, however, be interrogated: their place in Palestinian culture has indeed changed over the last 50 years. If they retain a strong religious and spiritual meaning, with the figures represented by these maqāmāt still revered, a lot of the practices and rituals traditionally connected to their presence are largely vanishing. This is due to a variety of causes, some of them historical: the creation of the state of Israel, followed by the 1948 war, resulted in the destruction of numerous Palestinian villages and their maqāmāt. Some of them, still standing, are now in Israeli territory. The occupation has also resulted in severe material damages and has prevented access to some areas and maqāmāt such as that of Sheikh Bilal Ibn Rahbah and its sacred trees on a hill now integrated into the

settlement of Elon Moreh, near Nablus. The level of education, as well as a more dogmatic form of Islam, also appear as fundamental factors to explain this evolution (see section 3.3.).

There are different types of maqāmāt, explored at length in various books and articles, with typologies based on who built them, their size, shape, location, etc. We will here differentiate them in terms of their “aura” or “magnetism” (Preston, 1992), meaning their importance, influence, and area of polarization, from the most important ones, centered on important prophets and attracting people from a large area, to more regional ones, down to local shrines that have a very limited range and reputation. The maqāmāt that were studied in the field for this report cover these differences and hierarchy, from the Haram al-Ibrahimi in Hebron, a major sacred place, to important maqāmāt linked to Prophets (Lut/ Lot; Yunis/ Jonas and Nuh/ Noah), to that of Sheikh al-‘Abed, a virtually unknown character, in the village of al-Tabaqa (see 1.1.).

Approach: representative case-studies around Hebron and the figure of Abraham

Maqāmāt are present all over historical Palestine, but for the purpose of this research project we concentrated mostly on the southern West Bank and the region of Hebron. The maps of Masār Ibrāhīm indeed show a high concentration of maqāmāt in the area, with many maqāmāt of Prophets, many of which are often directly linked to the figure of Abraham (see section 2.1. and part 4.). Hebron itself is a holy city, centered on the Haram al-Ibrahimi (Mosque of Abraham, usually called Cave of Patriarchs in English), a sanctuary sacred due to the various maqāmāt it encloses, and the tombs supposedly located underneath (see section 2.1).

The main maqāmāt considered here are located in Hebron (Haram al-Ibrahimi), in Bani Na'im (Lut, Yaqin and Fatima), in Halhul, where the Nabi Yunis shrine shelters Prophet Jonas' cenotaph, in Dura with the maqām of Nabi Nuh (shrine of Prophet Noah) built by the Ottomans, and the maqām of sheikh Mohammad al-‘Abed in al-Tabaqa (south of Dura). These maqāmāt cover a wide range of figures, from Patriarchs and Prophets to local *awliya* (saints), and a variety of places - from a holy city to a village shrine. Other maqāmāt will be mentioned in the course of the report to present a counterpoint to or complement the reflection. Rachel's Tomb and the Milk Grotto in Bethlehem, for example, have been considered as shrines that could enrich this study for several

reasons. First, they are located in or near Bethlehem, on the route of the Masār. Both are dedicated to women, like the maqām of Fatima in Bani Na'im, which introduces an interesting gender aspect. The Milk Grotto is, moreover, a Christian shrine that can be put in parallel to many others in Bethlehem, Beit Sahour or al-Khader, Nablus or Jericho. Rachel's Tomb is also an interesting example of the changing practices related to the power dynamics and military occupation, being a contested site similar to Hebron that has been separated from Bethlehem by the Israeli separation wall and is now off-limit to Muslims. Shrines in the north of the West Bank, around Nablus and Sebastia, could unfortunately not be studied during the fieldwork because of time limits and difficulties met on the ground.

The case studies chosen here are representative of many of the maqāmāt that can be found in the West Bank and of the different practices that are related to them. However, it is important to underline that this research does not aim at presenting an exhaustive typology of the existing maqāmāt. The many shrines that exist in Palestine also encompass other figures or objects that are only briefly mentioned or could sometimes not be included: Sufi saints, martyrs, companions of Salah Ed-Din, ancestors, but also natural elements such as trees, springs or caves. Of course, an in-depth study, realized over few years, would be necessary to show the subtleties and the local particularities or exceptions that exist concerning this multitude.

This report centers mainly on Muslim sites and practices as Islam is the majority's religion of the West Bank and represents the majority of the believers frequenting those shrines in the region of Hebron. Jewish presence and practices were also considered with regards to the Cave of Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb. Christians do not have a striking presence in the region of Hebron, except in the "Maskobiyya", the compound of the Russian Orthodox Church located in the center of the city. They have an ancestral and very meaningful presence in Bethlehem.

Methodology: interdisciplinarity and multiple sources

This research, concentrating on changes, has a central diachronic dimension: showing the evolution of representations and practices indeed called for a comparison over time. From this perspective, this report has a strong historical dimension that aims at juxtaposing and crossing past and present, through texts, pictures and testimonies that highlight the transformations but also the permanence in those sites in terms of habitual visits, architecture, rituals, etc. In order to

document those changes and continuities over time, I relied on fieldwork research, academic literature, old texts, and photography. The fieldwork was carried out following an ethnographic methodology relying on semi structured interviews as well as informal conversations and observations. There are obvious limits to this approach, including access to the Muslim section of the Haram in Hebron during prayer times, which was, for example, impossible, limiting the observations of the practices taking place at that moment.

To allow for a comparison over time, I drew on texts from the medieval era, notably on Muqaddasi (al-Maqdisi), whose travel account was written around 985 CE, Ibn Battuta and his “Travels in Asia and Africa” (1325-1354), and Mujir ed-Din who wrote his “Glorious history of Jerusalem and Hebron” at the end of the 15th century. I also drew on authors from the turn of the 19th-20th century like C. Conder, T. Drake, J. Freese, J. Finn, C. Wilson, G. Le Strange and Z. Vilnay, among others. The accounts of these orientalist explorations of Palestine contain the description of numerous places, often concentrating on religious sites or more generally on the landmarks that connected the region to a mythical biblical past.

Not foreseen in the concept note as a part of the study’s systematic methodology, these old texts appeared as a logical recourse since the fieldwork confirmed that numerous pieces of information and memories have been lost or that several narratives logically coexist. These texts point out some variations, but also some continuity, in narrative and interpretation over the centuries, that will be highlighted throughout the report. The medieval texts can, for example, provide information on material elements that have disappeared (slabs, writings).

Excerpts of texts are inserted in boxes throughout this report and in the Annex to shed a different light on those sites and to highlight historical accounts. When many extracts follow each other, the title of each box indicates the author and year of publication or the writing of the text, in order to situate them more effectively in time and with respect to each other. They are usually presented in a chronological order, but the juxtaposition of various sources from the same period also highlights how different persons, who went to the same places at more or less the same time, came back with different information and vision about of those sites, putting the stress on some facts, missing others, recording local practices or, on the contrary, concentrating on the biblical stories.

Another interesting resource – which would require more in-depth research - is the survey of the maqāmāt launched by the Palestinian Awqaf (institution in charge of religious endowment) in 1984. Local imams or employees filled a questionnaire about cemeteries and maqāmāt in the West Bank, answering questions about the presence of a maqām or tomb of prophets, saints or sheikh in the village; the knowledge of the local people about the maqām; its material description (width, height...); the existence of holidays; need for renovation, etc. This survey presents an interesting description of the places, and sometimes of practices and tradition, but also includes pictures taken at the time. These documents were reviewed at the Center for Revival of Heritage and Islamic Research in Abu Dis.

Recent research also tackles the topic and offers excellent insights into the current situation: researchers such as Emma Aubin-Boltanski, Glenn Bowman, Andrew Petersen, Mahmoud Yazbak or Ytzhak Reiter have produced remarkable in-depth analysis of the Palestinian shrines. However, further research still needs to be conducted. The sheer number of existing maqāmāt and their centuries-old existence ensures that there is still a lot to do. The existing scholarship is necessarily very specialized, often treating one particular place, period or a specific type of maqām. Many of them concentrate on historical and archaeological sources; moreover, actualized fieldwork research seems to be rare, and mention of current practices even rarer. Nabi Mousa (figure 2) and Nabi Saleh are the most researched sites, because of the continuity of traditions like the *mawasim* (seasonal festivals) and the fact that they have been reinvested in and reinvented religiously and politically (Aubin-Boltanski, 2003, 2007, 2013). Contested places such as Nabi Samuel (figure 1) or the original maqām of Nabi Saleh, the access to which has been in dispute between Muslims and Jews, are also among the most studied maqāmāt (Reiter, 2009). Finally, the maqāmāt now located in Israel also seem more represented in the recent literature (see, for example, Yazbak, 2010, 2011), probably as a result of either the perceived threat to their existence or the access researchers have to them.

Of course, an extensive scientific literature exists on the archaeology and history of maqāmāt and of the region, going beyond the sources used here. The texts mentioned in this report are, nevertheless, essential references for the study of the situation today; it is not the purpose here to make an archaeological or historical study, but to draw on those sources to enrich the contemporary analysis about the maqāmāt. Moreover, the aim is not to indicate or decide which

interpretation has to be favoured or is true but to show the evolution and the existence of different traditions or explanations.

The historical dimension brought up by the medieval and orientalist literature was complemented by an attention to the spatial aspects of the religious practices, the various embedded scales and relations between the sites. Space represents an essential foundation for the analysis of these religious practices, moving and transforming through time. From this perspective, I included the use of photography as an integral part of the methodology, since the visual aspects of the maqāmāt and devotion are important for understanding the organization of the sacred sites and the accompanying practices. The pictures taken during fieldwork, chosen for their illustrative power but also for their aesthetic qualities and their possible future use in the planned “awareness tools”, can also be juxtaposed with older pictures, thus connecting the spatial and historical approaches. The pictures allow for a geographical analysis, but also support the diachronic approach outlined above.

The pictures taken by the Matsons (available on the Library of Congress website³), the Bonfils, and by the Dominicans of the French biblical school in Jerusalem, as well as some illustrations printed in orientalist books of the turn of the 19-20th century highlight in a striking way the evolution of those places. An intermediate period between the time in which these old photographs were taken and today’s situation is shown by some pictures from the archives of the Awqaf, which are kept at the Center for Revival of Heritage and Islamic Research in Abu Dis, attached to the questionnaires of the 1984 survey mentioned above. A very interesting resource, those pictures give an insight into recent changes and allow for a better understanding of the chronology of these changes.

Indeed, if people are largely absent from those pictures which often depict empty places, they can be put next to each other to highlight the evolution and developments of the maqāmāt in terms of organization and architecture. Some of them also document some practices, such as the presence of candles.

This project is made of two contributions: a main, extensive research paper, based on academic literature and fieldwork, and a synthesis aimed at a larger audience. As part of the research and

³ Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/>.

as an integral part of the methodology, some of the pictures have been included in this report (see the Annex). It has to be noted that those pictures have an illustrative purpose; under no circumstances do they sum up the situation or represent every event, practice or place that is under examination.

Outline of the report

This report is organized into five main parts, each of which links together a review of the literature, elements from the fieldwork, and reflections arising from those elements. The first part is dedicated to the maqāmāt in Palestine in general: it provides a definition of the term, explains their importance in Palestine and the literature existing on that topic. Another section is dedicated to the different types of existing maqāmāt but also their number and religious affiliations. The last section of this part tackles the question of the maqām as an object of historical and political struggle: in a context of conflict, where memory, history, religion and politics often clash, and where maqāmāt are often sacred for different religions, it is important to acknowledge the political stakes that surround them.

Relying on the diachronic methodology outlined above, associating historical texts to contemporary representations, and juxtaposing old pictures with views of the places taken in the 1920's and nowadays (in the Annex), the second part presents the maqāmāt that were examined on the ground, concentrating on the evolution of the narratives around their history, location, appearance. Presenting the different places under consideration allows for investigating not only where they are situated, who they are dedicated to, their names, etc. but also the conflicting narratives, traditions, representations and discourses that surround them. This is essential for tackling the third part, dedicated to the practices themselves as they largely depend on the importance, influence and history of the maqāmāt.

The third part presents a typology of the main practices observed or mentioned on the ground, bringing in the ancient literature and pictures when needed for the purpose of comparison. Those practices are divided into private and collective practices: the private practices range from the “classical” prayers to notes, candles, the tying of rags, and magic practices or beliefs. The collective practices center on holidays, celebrations and pilgrimage.

It is followed by an analysis of the most important, conspicuous explanations to account for the changes in practices, narrative and representations around the Palestinian maqāmāt, namely the increased access to education, the transformation of religious practices in general, notably with a more dogmatic or rigorist form of Islam, and the Israeli occupation.

Finally, the last part addresses the intangible heritage, focusing on the importance not only of the collective representations of the region as the Holy Land, but also of the figure of Abraham, who connects and divides religions and serves as a fundamental icon for the Hebronite identity.

1. The Maqāmāt in Palestine: history and religion at stakes

This part concentrates on the definition of a maqām, aiming at situating it, literally and metaphorically, in the Palestinian landscape. The second section is dedicated to the various types of maqāmāt that exist in Palestine in terms of numbers, figures represented and religion, in order to better contextualize this report. Even if the case studies are largely situated in the southern West Bank, are connected to Islam and largely to Prophets, this section underlines the intrinsic diversity of the Palestinian maqāmāt. The third section below tackles the political stakes around the shrines in Palestine, as they feed long-running debates on the topic that need to be acknowledged.

1.1. Definition and overview

A maqām is a sacred site. It is generally translated into a “shrine” as the term usually applies to places with a built structure and a specific type of architecture. The “model” or “ideal type” of the maqām is a simple, single sacred chamber whitewashed and domed, built around a cenotaph, a symbolic tomb-shaped structure that can be made of marble or cement, and represents a grave or a saintly presence. The room often has a mihrab and can be used as a mosque (figures 13, 26, 29). The cenotaphs are usually covered by a cloth, called a *starah* (Canaan, 1927: 29): green in the Muslim maqāmāt, some are very ancient with elaborate embroidery, like in the Haram in Hebron (see figure 37 and 45), while others are recent, very simple and made of synthetic fabric (see figures 24 and 26). In the maqām of Rachel near Bethlehem, now under Israeli control, the

cloth is dark blue, embroidered, and represents the surrounding landscape in an idealized biblical way (see figure 36).

The term *maqām* (sometimes written “*mukam*” or “*makam*”) can, however, designate the building, but also the room with the cenotaph or even the cenotaph itself. The term *maqām* can thus be considered a synecdoche, whereby the part refers to the whole and vice versa: the building and the cenotaph are related and almost interchangeable. While most of the *maqāmāt* studied here are those of “*anbiya*” or prophets, who have a major religious importance, others are those of “*awliya*” or saintly men, of lesser importance and whose identity is sometimes forgotten. Drake, in 1872, already underlined the ambiguities surrounding those places stating: “In European books and maps they are usually termed “*Welys*,” confounding the entombed with the tomb, the saint with the saint-house” (Drake, 1872: 179). *Maqāmāt* can be dedicated to a variety of figures: martyrs, Sufi saints, etc. They can also be incarnated in – or encompass – sacred trees, springs, stones, etc.

If many *maqāmāt* shelter tombs, it is not the rule. The term “*maqām*” comes from the verb “*qama*” which means standing: a *maqām* is the place where a person lived or passed and thus where they “stood” at one moment. Nabi Yunis and *maqām* Yaḳīn, studied in this report, represent, for example, places where the prophets Jonas and Lut respectively passed during their life (see 2.3. and 2.4.). They are “stations” (Aubin-Boltanski, 2013: 4; Conder, 1877: 90). Some *maqāmāt* do shelter tombs, often in a cave underground, which the cenotaph symbolizes at ground level. Some *maqāmāt* do not shelter cenotaphs but other holy elements: footprints, for example, as in the *Maqām* Yaḳīn in Bani Na’im (see 2.3. and figures 13, 14) whereas others can be just a tomb, without any building around, as the *maqām* of al-Sakawati on the hill of Tal Rumeida (figures 4 and 5).

In the Muslim tradition, a tomb (*qabr*) designates only a place where it has been verified that a body has been buried. There is a whole debate about the application of the term “*qabr*” to the *maqāmāt* and about their interchangeability. Indeed, the general popular position is that there is no certainty about the presence of a body in many *maqāmāt*; the two only graves that are known for sure to inter bodies are those of Abraham in Hebron and Mohammad in Medina. This was explained by interviewees in the field, and was also reported by Emma Aubin-Boltanski in her

research on Nabi Mousa (Aubin-Boltanski, 2013). Moreover, as will be developed below, the question of tombs in Islam is a very sensitive topic (see section 3.3.)

The maqāmāt are an intrinsic part of the Palestinian landscape, integrated in the urban fabric and scattered in the countryside, mostly on the top of the hills (Bowman 2013, see, for example, the figures 5 and 28 in the Annex). As sacred sites, the maqāmāt are testimonies to a double dimension, material and spiritual, directly connected to the holiness of the figures buried (or represented, in case of cenotaphs) there, but also to the sanctity of the land. They “*provide a means of access between the human world and divine realities*” (Brereton, 1987) and are part of the “sacred topography” of the Holy Land (al-Ard al-Muqaddasa in Arabic; Eretz haKoddesh in Hebrew, see 4.1.). They embody, through a specific architecture, the singularity of a place, and are differentiated from their environment as their sacredness implies specific attitudes, temporality, rituals or practices.

Beyond the strict limits of the maqāmāt, often marked by their walls, their surroundings are also imbued with sanctity: material and symbolic features such as cemeteries and trees often mark this specificity. As such, their direct environment retains a particular meaning and will be included in the analysis. As other holy sites, the maqāmāt have different areas of influence - or of polarization - depending on their importance: very localized spheres of influence for small shrines dedicated to minor figures, regional for some saints or well-known figures, and national or even international for central religious characters, such as Abraham.

For this study, I focused on different types of maqāmāt that take into account this diversity, encompassing at the same time different figures (prophets and saints; men and women) but also different ranges of influence, from the local to the international. The local scale is tackled through the examples of a “sheikh’s tomb”, located in al-Tabaqa - a little-known, isolated shrine, except for the neighboring villages where it retains its significance (see 2.6.) - as well as through the maqām of Fatima in Bani Na’im (see 2.3.). Although its existence has been documented for a long time in the literature, it is seldom studied *per se*. Other shrines dedicated to important prophetic figures (Lot, Noah, Jonas, respectively in Bani Na’im, Dura and Halhul, see 2.3., 2.4., 2.5.) have a wider, regional reputation. Finally, the Haram al-Ibrahimi (Cave of the Patriarchs) in Hebron - not a maqām in itself but rather a mosque that shelters seven maqāmāt - polarizes a

much wider space, attracting visitors and pilgrims from the whole world, being holy for the three monotheistic religions as the burial place of Abraham and other six important biblical figures.

1.2. A Palestinian sacred topography: variety of figures and meanings

Beyond the maqāmāt taken as case study, many other such shrines exist in the West Bank, constituting a very diverse religious landscape (see for example figures 1 to 6). Many maqāmāt, as shown by this report, are linked to Biblical or Quranic figures, and more precisely to Prophets. While this report concentrates on the region of Hebron, other maqāmāt in the North of the West Bank are connected to these kinds of major religious figures: in Nablus, for example, the tomb of Joseph and Jacob's well can be found.

Two different traditions are related to Joseph's tomb: its location is identified in either Hebron, as we will see below (see 2.1.), or in Nablus (Schem in Hebrew). If the first tradition is often favoured in Islam, the second tradition is strongly felt in Judaism - the fact that Joseph's tomb is located in Nablus is, however, also mentioned in Islam, as shown by Petersen (2018: 135) and is also claimed by Palestinian residents. Joseph's tomb is a strongly contested site, like the Haram in Hebron or Nabi Samuel (Reiter, 2009). Located at the heart of an Area A zone under Palestinian authority, the shrine is regularly visited by Jewish settlers from the neighboring area, leading to regular outbursts of violence and direct clashes⁴. Jacob's well, located nearby, is where Jacob supposedly camped and bought a plot of land next to the city, and where Jesus met the Samaritan woman who helped him and gave him water. The well is located in the Greek Orthodox Church of St Photini, next to Tell Balata, on a site sacred for centuries, where different churches stood. Another biblical figure, and a prophet for Muslims, is represented in Sebastia: St John the Baptist, known in Arabic as al-Nabi Yahya. Sources indicate that a Byzantine church was erected there, then a crusader one was built on top; after the Muslim conquest, the site became a mosque called Nabi Yahya (figure 6). This shrine represents the evolution of many sites in Palestine, making a palimpsest of faiths and religions that succeeded each other, overlapped, clashed or coexisted.

⁴ See for example: "Hundreds of Settlers Storm Joseph's Tomb in Nablus", *IMEMCnews*, 6 April 2018, <http://imemc.org/article/hundreds-of-settlers-storm-josephs-tomb-in-nablus/>; "At Joseph's Tomb, a microcosm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", M. Lidman, *The Times of Israel*, 20 October 2015, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/at-josephs-tomb-a-microcosm-of-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict/>; "Joseph's Tomb fight has just begun", N. Jeffay, *The JC*, 12 May 2011, <https://www.thejc.com/comment/analysis/joseph-s-tomb-fight-has-just-begun-1.22992>.

In addition to the shrines of prophets or major figures, many shrines in Palestine are dedicated to “*awliya*” or saint men (women saints are an extremely rare case). Some maqāmāt are dedicated to Muhammad’s companions or heroes of national culture, often linked to Salah-din (Aubin-Boltanski, 2005b; Frantzman & Bar, 2013). Many small maqāmāt are dedicated to sheikhs or Sufi figures, who have a very local influence. They are often presented as the most traditional maqāmāt, with the “ideal-type” architecture (a single domed chamber); many of them have no inscriptions and little or no historical references in the texts. Although they are common and very numerous, this type of shrine must not be overlooked, and the examples of al-Tabaqa and of the maqām of Fatima, discussed below, are important in that respect.

Looking at detailed maps from the British mandate (Survey of Palestine) made at the 1:20 000 and 1: 10 000 scale as well as at names from the Palestine Index Gazetteer and British aerial photographs, Frantzman and Bar identified 682 existing Sheikhs’ tombs between 1938 and 1942 (see map in Frantzman & Bar, 2013: 101). Many of those small local tombs do not exist anymore, having been destroyed or abandoned. However, the sheer number of the small maqāmāt located in this study gives an idea of their importance in local life but also of their number today and dispersal in the landscape. The same authors indicate in their article that another research found 184 tombs in 1965 in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, a figure that indicates a very significant decline in number.

This type of maqāmāt is sometimes mentioned in the texts, but they are seldom studied in their present configurations. Salah al-Houdalieh, for example, studied the maqām of Sheikh Shihab ed-Din in Saffa, north of Jerusalem, showing the construction process and historical evolution of the shrine, centered on a main chamber with two domes that protect two tombs – the Sheikh and his sons - “*covered with several large pieces of green cloth layered one upon the other*” (Al-Houdalieh, 2010). The recent publication of Petersen (2018) concentrates explicitly on this type of shrines, looking at shrines sponsored by Sultans, at Sheikh’s Tombs and at Sufi, Shi’a, Druze and Bahai shrines, but concentrating on their “architecture and history” (ibid.: 4).

If the “ideal-type” of the maqām situates it on top of a hill, many maqāmāt are urban, integrated in the urban fabric of cities. In Hebron, for example, maqāmāt other than those studied were surveyed: some are located next to the checkpoint leading to the Cave of Patriarchs, one in the street under the mosque of Ali Bakka, while another, which is destroyed, is situated next to

Shuhada street and is inaccessible because of military orders forbidding access to the artery, and yet another is located on the hill of Tell Rumeida (figures 4 and 5).

As for the religious aspect, maqāmāt are generally associated with Islam, as attested by both the ancient and recent literature. In 1921 Canaan spoke of “*Mohammedan sanctuaries*” (Canaan, 1927), Frantzman and Bar consider them “*Muslim sacred tombs*” (Frantzman & Bar, 2013) and Petersen, in his 2018 book entitled *Bones of contention*, designates them as “*Muslim Shrines*”. Their importance in the region is often traced back by the Palestinians to the Fatimid period, with a tradition kept or encouraged then by the Mamluks and Ottomans rulers. The influence of the Sufi movement also has to be underlined: as for Shi’a practices, the Sufis are usually associated with the veneration of and visits to saints (Frantzman & Bar, 2013; Petersen, 2018).

The term of maqāmāt, however, is linked to a language, Arabic, spoken by believers of different faiths. As such, it is used also by non-Muslims: in Palestine, Christian shrines are also included in this category. Jacob’s well, mentioned above, or the Milk Grotto (Bethlehem), studied in this report, are indeed considered as Christian maqāmāt. Sugase (2014), for example, studies the “Maqāmāt al-Khader” dedicated to St George in the eastern Mediterranean, showing their concentration in Palestine and Israel (Sugase, 2014: 86). She defines the maqām as “*a place where the saint has appeared*” and points out two types of maqāmāt related to al-Khader in the region: “*Islamic facility (such as a mosque)*” and “*Christian churches*” (ibid.: 86). Bowman, in a 1993 article, studies Christian holy places in the West Bank, concentrating on the Mar Elyas Greek Orthodox monastery and the shrine of Bir el-Saiyideh (‘The Well of the Lady’) in Beit Sahour. Concerning the latter, established after apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the town in 1983, he states:

“The Beit Sahur municipality had built a shrine over the cistern expressly for the use of both Muslims and Christians of all denominations. The exterior appeared distinctly modern, and, apart from the cross surmounting it, it bore less resemblance to a church than it did to a traditional Islamic makam (a building with a domed chamber characterizing a Muslim shrine)” (Bowman, 1993: 450).

This again shows that the maqāmāt are generally attached to Islam but can also be related to Christian practices. Bowman’s article points out two important characteristics of the Palestinian

shrines: first, they are often considered as cross-faith places. They can also be vested with heavy political meaning. Through the example of the scouts' parades in Bethlehem and Beit Sahour, the author shows how religious manifestations can be occasions to express a common national identity and show a common history of resistance against the Israeli occupation and external threats, reconstructing a local "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006) that doesn't, however, resolve internal conflict.

Many studies on the maqāmāt concentrate on the fact that some of those shrines have been "shared" between the various Palestinian communities and faiths in a fluctuating religious landscape made of conquests and changing beliefs. Literature from the beginning of the 20th century insists that local arrangements among the various religions was the rule, and personal practices were largely free from any dogmatic approach. Tawfik Canaan, for example, states: *"the various ideas described in the following pages are common to both Mohammedans and Christians among the Palestinian peasantry; where the two groups differ the differences are only superficial"* (Canaan 1927: vi). Various authors similarly underline that for a long time, cross visits and inter-communal sharing of shrines by different Palestinian communities were common. Hasluck, in his study of "Christianity and Islam under the Sultans," also points out that *"The difference between a Mohammedan and a Christian saint (...) reduces itself largely to a matter of names"* (Hasluck, 1929: 81). He also uses the term of "mixed cult" (ibid.) to tackle the places frequented by both religions. If these descriptions of shared holy places and mixed popular practices have to be put in context, as they can be the result of ideological or religious positions, of a folkloristic approach or even of class contempt (see 1.3.), they still indicate a phenomenon that if it was not hegemonic, was anyway widespread.

Many holy sites in the Mediterranean (Albera & Couroucli, 2012) and historical Palestine (Bowman, 2012; Yazbak, 2010) are still studied as "shared" places, allowing coexistence and implying religious and cultural contact and exchange, with an implicit positive approach. A common sacred place indeed means that the religions represented share some beliefs and thus agree on some points. If this configuration indeed exists, multi-faith sacred sites also inherently carry the bases for conflict, with each tradition, practice, and narrative attached to those places also diverging depending on the faith. Contested sacred sites are often tackled under the same category. The term "shared" can thus be misleading, as it encompasses two meanings: co-

presence and mutual acceptance as well as division. The case of the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron illustrates this ambiguity as it combines both senses: it is “shared” symbolically as a common sacred space, as the Cave of the Patriarchs and the city are both sacred for Islam and Judaism (and in a lesser way, for Christianity) since all three religions agree that it is the place where Abraham and other biblical figures are buried. It is also “shared” materially, since the space is being used by believers from two different faiths. However, in this sense, the term “shared” is not adapted. If they are formally present in the same building, the Muslim and Jewish believers are indeed separated, the space being materially divided into two exclusive areas to prevent the escalation of tension, the division being enforced by the Israeli military authorities (see 2.1.). The term “shared” often has positive connotations, and as such can downplay or even ignore power relationships.

If some sacred places still have common meanings and importance in Palestine for different religions and local communities, the boundaries between faiths and their practices became more rigid over time. Many actors from different backgrounds insist on maintaining religious identities and encourage sectarianism: Israel, which applies different policies towards Christian and Muslim Palestinians, radical Muslim parties such as Hamas or Hizb ut-Tahrir, but also the Christian churches, which are often headed by foreign representatives who are cut off from their lay community (ibid.: 442). A sharp decrease of the Christian population in Palestine, attributed to these policies, make the religious cohabitation often more difficult than it used to be a century ago. Maqāmāt are nowadays seldom shared materially – and when it is the case, as in Hebron, it is often through spatial division and military control. The cases of Nabi Samuel and Rachel’s Tomb offer similar examples of places whose religious meaning is common, which became disputed, and where practices have been either forcefully shared or made exclusive through military constraints (figures 33, 34 and 35). Petersen points out that “*previously shared tombs have become politicized and used as a means of justifying territorial acquisitions*” (Petersen, 2018: 138). However, some mutual practices can still be observed such as in the case of the Milk Grotto in Bethlehem, a Christian site where Muslim believers also come to pray (see 2.7.).

1.3. Maqāmāt and political/ chronological disputes

The maqāmāt, scattered through Palestine, were often presented in the literature of the early 20th century as embodying the authentic Palestinian spirit, that of the *fellahin*, a people connected with the land, largely dedicated to agricultural activities. This folkloristic approach, concentrating on customs and superstitions, also had a political goal: in the face of the increasing Jewish presence in Palestine, it was used to claim a continuity with ancient traditions, notably Canaanites (Tamari, 2009).

As material landmarks and testimonies to the past in a region where the past is disputed, contested, and used in very political and instrumental ways, the maqāmāt have been presented through a perspective that made them evidence of a continuity through time. Because of their place in the landscape, their presence over the whole territory and their links to local traditions, the maqāmāt were often connected to the *fellahin*, the peasants, who were presented as the authentic dwellers of the land and those who upheld ancient traditions and rites, in contrast to the urban dwellers who got corrupted by modern beliefs and ways of thinking. Conder affirmed that the “*religion of the peasantry*” consisted in “*worship[ing] at these shrines*” and that the peasants “*attach[ed] more importance to the favour and protection of the village Mukam than to Allah himself, or to Mohammed his prophet*” (Conder, 1877: 89). Agreeing with him, Canaan claimed that the *fellahin* were “*heirs and to some extent descendants of the heathen inhabitants of prebiblical times, who built the first high places*” (Canaan, 1927: 280). In 1921, McCown also presented those religious practices as linked to “*primitive and elementary form*” of religion (1921: 47).

This “authenticity” or “purity” of the *fellahin* practice is presented by some authors as having “*remained virtually unchanged for thousands of years*” and allowing for a glimpse into “*customs, practices and rites of primitive times*” (Canaan, 1927: vi). In his remarkable article, “Lepers, Lunatics, and Saints: The Nativist Ethnography of Tawfiq Canaan and His Circle,” Salim Tamari shows how this “nativist orientalism” attempted “*to establish pre-Islamic (and pre-Hebraic) cultural roots for a reconstructed Palestinian national identity*” (Tamari, 2009: 98). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict unfolds mainly around matters of territorial control; however, a temporal dimension is also central, with the central claim of Zionism that Israel is a land belonging to the Jewish people

because of God's promise and its ancient presence in the region. Arguments to prove the ancient roots of the Palestinian people in the region have thus been used to counter this view, in order to show the continuity and legitimacy of their presence. Presenting the Palestinians as heirs to ancient civilizations - specifically the Jebusites and Canaanites – who accumulated and adapted through time various cultures and religious changes, from Judaism to Christianity and Islam, favoring their connection to the land, guaranteeing a constant presence and a direct link with the past (Bowman, 2013) thus had a political implication. Today, one still has to remain wary of essentializing interpretations that risk to “fetishise local traditions” (Tamari, 2009: 26) or to romanticize their importance when tackling the topic of maqāmāt.

2. The maqāmāt between past and present: converging and conflicting narratives

This second part intends to present each maqām studied in the field, underlining historical elements as well as the different narratives and representations connected to those sites. Name of the place, location, place of passage or of burial, identity of the figure commemorated and revered are all elements that contribute to the constantly changing representations surrounding those maqāmāt. Indeed, the history of the maqāmāt, the connections established between the population, local or not, and the places, their inclusion in the collective memory, the way they are constructed, interpreted etc. are elements that have an impact on the narratives and practices connected to each maqām and partly influences their evolution.

This diachronic presentation of the main maqāmāt taken as representative case studies shows the contradictions and convergences existing in the narratives around those sites. They are the object of numerous discourses, from medieval travelers describing a new land to modern time orientalist eager to find the places mentioned in the holy scriptures, to scholars gazing at their surroundings with an analytic eye, each one drawing on their own different traditions, backed by their own objectives and interests. Specific practices will be discussed in the following part (see 3.), to allow for a better overview and comparison among them.

2.1. Hebron

Hebron is often presented as the fourth holy city in Islam⁵ and is the second sacred site in Judaism⁶. The Cave of the Patriarchs (Haram al-Ibrahimi in Arabic, the “Mosque of Abraham”; Me’arat haMachpelah in Hebrew, meaning the “double cave”), the religious core of the city, is situated in the old city and represents the epicenter of this research project. It draws its sanctity from the figure of Abraham, considered as a common forefather by the three monotheisms. Hebron is indeed known for being the burial place of Abraham (Ibrahim in Arabic) and other Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Bible.

The Haram itself is not a maqām but a mosque and a sanctuary. The building, however, contains seven maqāmāt, small chambers with cenotaphs inside that include those of Abraham and Sara; Isaac (Is’haq in Arabic); Rebecca (Ribka); Leah (Layka) and Jacob (Yaakub). In the “Annex”, built later, called the Yusuf mosque on numerous old maps of the Haram, can be found the last maqām, which is often forgotten, that of Yusuf (Joseph) for Muslims and of Esau, brother of Jacob, in the Jewish tradition. Jews indeed believe that Joseph is buried in Nablus, in another maqām located at the entrance of the city (see 1.1.). If Joseph is considered a Patriarch, Esau is not. The Haram is often excluded from studies on Palestinian maqāmāt, for its “exceptional” status which does *“not easily relate to the typical shrines of Medieval and Ottoman Palestine”* (Petersen, 2018: 153).

The building, famous for its Herodian enclosure made of large stones and dating back to the 1st century, is located above a “double cave” that gave its Hebrew name to the place (Me’arat haMachpelah), where the Patriarchs and Matriarchs are believed to be buried⁷. Two entrances to the cave are known: one has been condemned, the other consists in a narrow pit adorned with an open flower-shaped marble slab protected by a metal covering and in which four olive oil candles are lowered every morning (see map p.28 and figure 46 in the Annex).

⁵ The main three holy cities of Islam are Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. The title of fourth holy city is contested and claimed by various cities, as Harar in Ethiopia.

⁶ Bethlehem would be the second holy city in importance in the region for the Christians. However, as shown below, Hebron also retains importance for Christians.

⁷ For an overview of the archaeological and historical knowledge existing about the subterranean level of the Cave of Patriarchs and discussion of its organization, see Barbé, 2017.

The value of Hebron has been recognized by the 2017 UNESCO decision to list the old city as a World Cultural Heritage site, marking it moreover as World Heritage in Danger⁸. The application was based mostly on the architectural value of the Mamluk structures of the old city and the importance of the Ibrahimi mosque. The situation of the mosque is particular, but also representative of the contemporary situation in Palestine: the Cave of the Patriarchs is indeed both a “shared site,” by which the three monotheisms share a common devotion towards the same religious figures, and at the same time a highly contested site, materially divided, marked by centuries of difficult religious coexistence, episodes of open conflict, and a diversity of practices, traditions and narratives.

Each cenotaph of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs are sheltered in small chambers with locked doors and fenced windows. All of them are covered with green cloth richly embroidered. In 1883, Conder and Kitchener described “deep green coverings” for the males’ cenotaphs, and “crimson silk” ones for Rebecca and the other Matriarchs (Conder & Kitchener, 1883: 338). It must be noted here that the ancient piece of fabric that used to cover the cenotaph of Abraham, visible on old pictures, has disappeared and has been replaced by another, simpler one.

The Figure of Abraham

The sanctity of the Haram is especially linked to the figure of Abraham. As such, it links together elements of “sharing,” of common beliefs, making it, a “shared place” at the spiritual level. It is indeed holy for Islam, Judaism and Christianity because of a common central sacred figure, Abraham, the founder of monotheism.

For Muslims, Abraham is the most important figure in the region after the Prophet Mohammad and is revered for his relationship with God, who took him as his companion: this gave the city its Arabic name (al-Khaleel, “the friend” [of God], from Surah 4,125), and for a lot of inhabitants, he also gave it its identity as a figure of hospitality (see part 4). At the end of the 10th cent., Muqaddasi already designated the city as “Habra (Hebron), the village of Abraham the Friend of God” (Mukaddasi [c.985] & Le Strange, 1886, 50). Some Hebronites insist that his figure directly connects Hebron to Mecca, where he built the Kaaba (see section 4.2.). Abraham is also central

⁸ Old City of Hebron/ Al-Khalil, UNESCO World Heritage Center, <https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/1565/>.

to Judaism as the first one to make an alliance with God – as his son Isaac and grandson Jacob after him – and to transmit his laws to men.

Divided holy spaces

Hebron is at the same time a holy and a divided city. The recent political history of the city cannot be overlooked: just like the city, the mosque and the maqāmāt are both sacred and divided. The Haram is deeply modified by its internal division, which has a direct impact on the practices of believers who have to undergo physical constraints, limiting and controlling their access and movement (Lecoquierre, 2019; forthcoming).

The first important date to take into account in this process of division is the Six Day War of 1967, during which Israel conquered and occupied the West Bank, including Hebron, which had been under Jordanian authority since 1948. The occupation of the West Bank and the subsequent installation and growing number of Jewish settlers in Hebron imposed a new reality on the mosque, with access allowed to both Muslims and Jews according to a new time schedule (Reiter, 2017: 248; Lecoquierre, forthcoming).

The massacre perpetrated on February 25, 1994 by Baruch Goldstein in the Haram, killing 29 Palestinians, represented another turning point. The Israeli Commission of Inquiry that looked into the event and made recommendations⁹ confirmed the division established in the mosque after the massacre. New rules were formalized, with a strict spatial separation between the Palestinian and Jewish population. The subsequent Protocol concerning the Redeployment in Hebron divided the city into two areas, H1 and H2¹⁰.

Since then, the mosque has been separated into two areas, one dedicated to the Muslims and the other reserved for the Jewish believers. Three maqāmāt are visible exclusively from the Jewish side (Leah, Jacob and Joseph/ Esau), while Isaac and Rebecca are visible only from the Muslim side. The maqāmāt of Abraham and Sara are central and are visible from both sides. The

⁹ Commission Of Inquiry on the Massacre At The Tomb Of The Patriarchs In Hebron, 26 June 1994, <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/aboutisrael/state/law/pages/commission%20of%20inquiry-%20massacre%20at%20the%20tomb%20of%20the.aspx>.

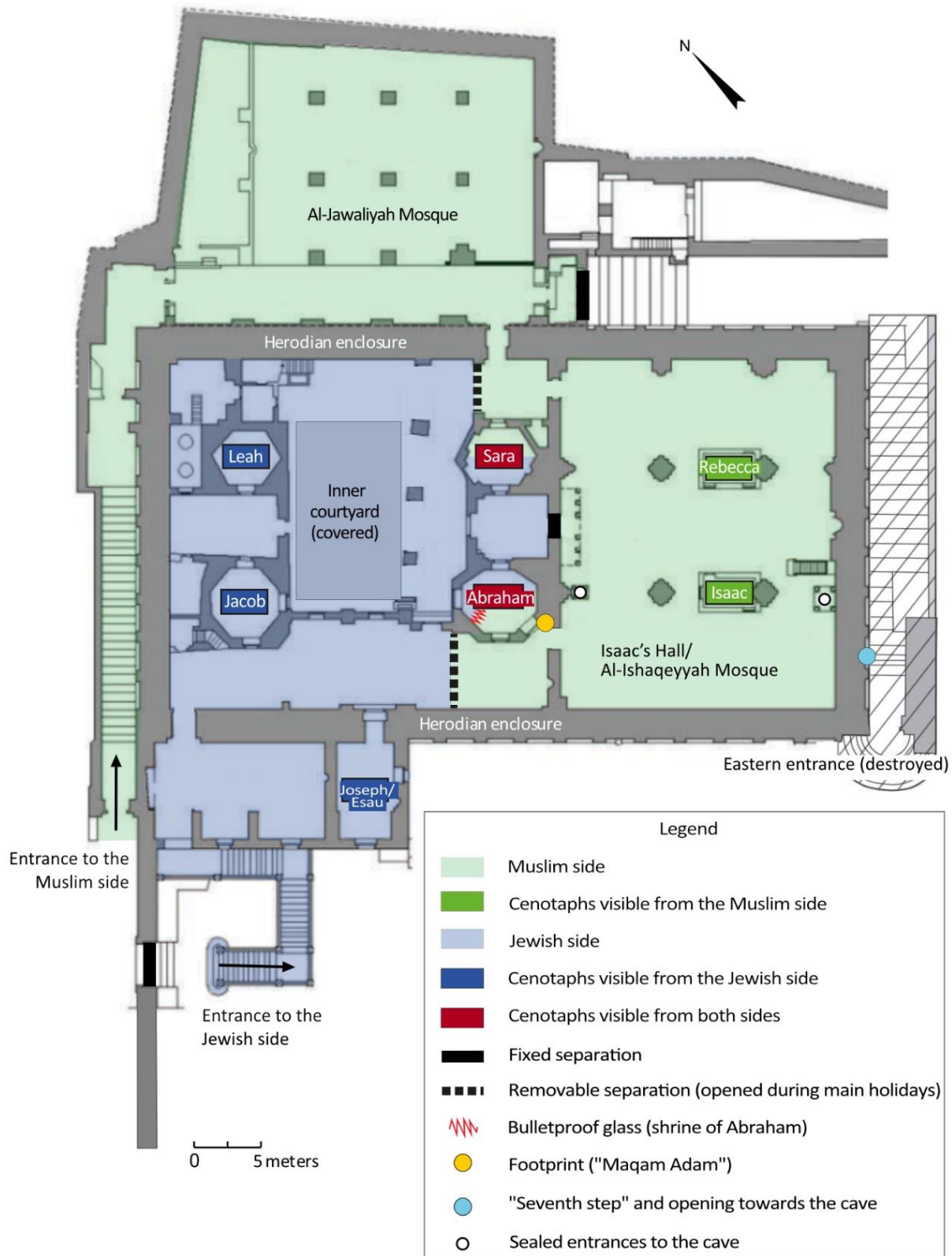
¹⁰ Protocol concerning the Redeployment in Hebron, 17 January 1997, <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/protocol%20concerning%20the%20redeployment%20in%20hebron.aspx>.

maqām of Abraham is particular in that it is the only place where believers from each side can see each other. It is also internally divided by a bulletproof glass (see map p. 28 and figure 7).

The division of the city and the division of the Haram are essential to understanding the situation in Hebron nowadays, both in terms of daily life and religious practices we are considering here. H1, the western part of the city, is under Palestinian Authority, while H2 covers the old city, including the area of the Haram and the Israeli settlements scattered within the old city. H2 is under Israeli authority, enforced through a massive military presence. In H2, the Palestinians are submitted to many measures of control and surveillance that hinder their daily life, fragment the space and damage the local social fabric (Lecoquierre, forthcoming). Checkpoints, roadblock, fences, CCTV cameras, military areas, streets forbidden to Palestinian cars or even to pedestrians, in the case of the central Shuhada Street that connects the settlements together and was once the vibrant center of the city's life, are among the elements modifying the urban landscape and the Palestinians' lives. The old city, largely deserted by its inhabitants in the face of the difficult living conditions and the decisions such as the closure of many of the Palestinian shops by military orders, has become largely a "ghost town." Accessing the Haram means necessarily passing through at least two checkpoints (except for the few residents of the area directly next to the Haram): one to access the central area of H1, "sanctuarized" by specific control measures, and the other to access the mosque. The waiting in line, common humiliations, interrogations and confiscations of identity papers prevent – or deter – many Hebronites from coming to the Haram.

It is important to consider these spatial configurations to understand the evolution of the practices accepted within the sanctuary and the shifting status quo and balance of power within the mosque: the division strongly impacts the type of practices taking place in the Haram and the possible spatiality of the practices. The spatial division of the Haram is also crucial when it comes to narratives and the way the place is lived and perceived. It reflects the situation in the whole city where a struggle for legitimacy and sovereignty is taking place, and where both parties, Palestinians and Israelis, are trying to impose their narratives, often directed towards the tourists and visitors, through guided visits and signs (Lecoquierre, 2019). This reflects the power balance in the old city.

The organization of the Cave of the Patriarchs/ Haram al-Ibrahimi



Sources: Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town, World Heritage Nomination Document, 2017; Vincent, McKay, 1923; fieldwork. Marion Lecoquierre, 2019.

Conflicting narratives

The fact that the Haram is a “shared” holy site in terms of its fundamental meaning and value in its links to Abraham does not preclude disagreements on other points. The various faiths represented on the ground nowadays – Muslim and Jewish – thus have varying narratives and traditions about the place. In the mosque, a small niche protected by metal bars, located next to the maqām of Abraham, contains a rock that is said in the Jewish tradition to show the imprint of Adam’s heel, who left it there after being chased out of the Garden of Eden. The book *Hébron, Le Haram el-Khalil, Sépulture des Patriarches* written by L.H. Vincent and E.J. Mackay, published in 1923, even presents this footprint as “the maqām of Adam” (Vincent & Mackay, 1923). The same niche is considered by some Muslims to show the footprint of the Prophet, left on his nightly journey from Mecca to Jerusalem (see figure 9). Both these traditions are already indicated by Conder and Kitchener in 1883:

“This sacred footprint, variously called that of Adam, or of the Prophet (Kadam en Neby), is preserved in one corner of the vaulted gallery leading to the upper tomb of Joseph, in the end wall of which a Mihrab, or prayer recess, has been constructed close to the footprint.”

(Conder & Kitchener, 1883: 342)

In the Jewish tradition, the Cave of the Patriarchs is located above the entrance to the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve are also believed to be buried in the vicinity (Røislien, 2007).¹¹ Abraham supposedly discovered their tombs and the gate to the Garden of Eden and that is why he bought precisely this plot of land. The biblical name of the place, Kiryat Arba (given to one of the settlements next to the city), or “City of the four”, is often explained as indicating it to be the city where the four biblical couples lie: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Leah, and Isaac and Rebecca.

The topic of land property is important in the narrative of the Jewish settler community living in Hebron, as it brings together religious belief and political objective. According to the Torah, Abraham bought the land where the Cave of Machpelah was situated to bury his wife Sarah. This transaction is presented by the settlers as the first land deed and property in history, and

¹¹ See for example “Adam and Eve in Hebron”, Jewish Community in Hebron, September 26, 2016, <http://en.hebron.org.il/history/558>.

sometimes as a conscious strategy on the part of Abraham. One of the public figures of the Jewish community in Hebron and their former spokesperson, David Wilder, while accompanying a group of tourists in the Haram thus explained that instead of accepting the land as a gift, as offered by its owner Ephron the Hittite (Genesis, 23), Abraham insisted on buying the place “because he knew that otherwise someone would later ask to have it back”. The movie shown to tourists in the museum located in the settlement of Bet Hadassah also claims that in so doing, Abraham “planned the future”¹².

This Jewish narrative of land ownership attached to Abraham is reinforced through another story linked to the Cave of the Patriarchs: that around the maqām of Esau (considered that of Joseph by Muslims). Son of Isaac and Rebecca, twin brother of Jacob born few minutes before him, it is said he renounced his rights as a first-born and thus his rights to a burial place in this family cave for a dish of lentils. He then opposed his brother’s burial in the cave claiming it was his right and property and was killed for it by his nephew; his head rolled into the cave, where his cenotaph now stands. Those narratives seek to establish the right of the Jewish community to the place, and the legitimacy of their claims, as rooted in an ancient religious episode.

2.2. Around the Haram

If the Haram and its maqāmāt are polarizing central sacred places, one must not ignore the web of places and practices that surround them. In Hebron, it is essential to enlarge the perspective to take into account the immediate surroundings of the Haram, also imbued with sacred meaning. A holy site has an area of influence, with a “gradient” of sacredness starting from its core and decreasing towards the exterior world: the ground immediately around a sacred place usually acquires some of its sanctity giving way to the creation of cemeteries, of specific rituals, etc. In Hebron, two places directly connected to the Haram through the figure of Abraham have to be included in this research. Though not maqāmāt as such, they are part of the sacred landscape and contribute to the sanctity of the place.

¹² Movie presenting the history of the Jewish community in Hebron, Bet Hadassah museum, Hebron.

First, the tree of Mamre, or Abraham's oak, is located within Hebron, inside a property leased by the Awqaf to the Russian Orthodox Church - the *metochion* (ecclesiastical representation) of the Holy Trinity is locally called the "Maskobiyya." It includes the Church of the Holy Forefathers and the oak of Mamre. The oak represents the place where Abraham received the three angels who came as travelers and were welcomed by Abraham with great hospitality and generosity, offering them water, bread, and a calf killed for the occasion (Genesis, 18)¹³. He invites them to rest "under the tree" where they summon Sarah to tell her that despite her old age, she will have a son. This episode is depicted various times in the church (see figure 55). The site of the dwelling of Abraham and apparition of the angels is also located at Mamre, the archaeological site called Ramat al-Khalil located at the northern entrance of Hebron, the current location being considered as a later tradition.

*"As we approach the environs of Hebron, on the left of the paved and walled road, a wide gateway leads through some vineyards to a large building, the Russian hospice, erected just behind a very fine old tree, the traditional oak of Mamre (...). **For at least three hundred years this tree, which is not a terebinth (elah), but an ilex, or evergreen holm oak (Quercus pseudo-coccifera), has been visited by pilgrims and known as Abraham's oak. That, however, was in another place, Ramet or Mamre, and was a terebinth.** It has long since gone, and this noble tree will soon follow, for within the last twenty-five years it has lost more than half its limbs, and is **rapidly sinking into decrepitude** (...). It used to spread its shadow over a circumference of one hundred yards, and its trunk measures thirty-two feet in circumference at a height of six feet from the ground".*

(Wilson, 1880: 183)

The sacred tree is now largely destroyed as a result of time and the numerous pilgrims who sought to have a piece of it (figures 10 and 11).

The second place that can be included in the sacred geography of Hebron is the centuries-old Ibrahimi soup kitchen run by the Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs. If it is not a sacred place, it has a kind of sacred reputation and tradition in the city. Now a modern soup kitchen for the

¹³ See for example "Abraham à Hébron", Manoël Pénicaud, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJObXGAYBUK>.

needy or anyone who presents himself (figures 56 and 57), it is located next to the Haram. As an ongoing tradition and practice linked to the figure of Abraham, its importance will be developed further below (see section 4.2.).

2.3. Bani Na'im

Bani Na'im¹⁴ is located few kilometers east of Hebron. It seems to be the most interesting case here and the one that has the most potential in terms of heritage and tourism development, since it serves as a site for several maqāmāt that combine an architectural dimensions, old religious traditions and practices, shared sacred spaces, different narratives and beliefs, an evocative setting, etc.

The city is usually associated with the figure of Lot (Lut in Arabic), the nephew of Abraham, and with Abraham himself. A local tradition places the conversation that Abraham had with God about the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah on the site of the town (Genesis, 18; Qur'an 11: 74). Three shrines can be found there, including Maqām Yaqin, Maqām Fatima and Maqām Lut. Maqām Yaqin and Maqām Fatima are in the same location, often designated under the generic term of maqām Yaqin. Maqām Lut is located within the city of Beni Na'im. All three are mentioned in ancient texts: if the "function" and identity of the maqām of Lut is never debated, the maqāmāt of Fatima and Yaqin appear in different ways in the texts but also in contemporary discourses, with different names, origins and *raison d'être*. An exhaustive research about the place, its origins and its various traditions, drawing on medieval sources and contemporary testimonies would be an interesting contribution to the history of Palestine and its sacred and religious topography.

Maqām Yaqin

The most important shrine in the sacred topography of Bani Na'im is Maqām Yaqin. It is located south of the city on the top of a hill, overlooking the surrounding olive terraces and the desert hills of the Judean desert towards the Dead Sea. An ancient wall, around 30 meters long and 20 meters large, surrounds the internal space, where the maqām is nestled in an angle (figures 12). The maqām itself has a mihrab in the southern facing wall, and a stone sunk in the ground protected by metallic protections. On this rock two footprints can be seen (see figures 13 and 50).

¹⁴ Many different orthographs are used in the old texts: Beni Nayim, Beny Naim, Bani Nêm...

A second pair of footprints can be seen outside of the maqām, some twenty meters to the west, protected by a “*huwetiye*h” (small circular enclosure) made of stones (figure 14). These two pairs of footprints are attributed to Lot and Abraham, either while they were watching Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed, or when they worshipped God afterwards, thanking him for saving them. Some say that beside the feet one can also see the imprints of their knees, hands and forehead. Imprints of holy persons are quite characteristic of maqāmāt: Canaan points out that “one of the great characteristics of *awliā* is that they may leave the imprints of their hands, feet, knees, etc., in the solid rock. Such a sign is found only in the case of very important prophets” (Canaan, 1927: 241).

This spatial configuration of the sacred site seems to be unchanged for centuries (see texts below). Few changes can, however, be noted: Maqām Yaqin had for a long time a guard living on the site and was used as a mosque where people were coming to pray. An Israeli military watchtower has been installed on the top of the hill next to the maqām during the second Intifada, preventing access to the site until 2015 according to residents of the city.

This place is often designated in the literature or by people as “Nabi Yaqin”. One explanation for this name could be that some authors identify “Yaqin” with Cain, son of Adam and also a prophet (nabi), the maqām being sometimes presented as his tomb (see, for example, the excerpts from Conder and Kitchener and Vilnay below). However, residents of the village insist on the fact that this is an improper name as “Yaqin” does not refer to a prophet but to a moment. The same three angels who visited Abraham to announce the birth of Isaac also warned him of the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (also called “Madaen Lut”, the “cities of Lot”), sinful cities that refused the message of God and his Prophet Lut. The imam of the Bani Na’im explained how Abraham and Lot, fleeing Sodom, turned around once arrived on the hill where the maqām stands today and saw the cities being destroyed by God, by turning them upside down. They both realized at that moment and on this very spot that the promise of God was true. “Yaqin” comes from “*tayaqqana*” which means “to know for sure”. The maqām thus celebrates a moment of realization that God is powerful and keeps his promises. This narrative can be found in old texts which call the maqām the “Mosque of conviction” or the “Mosque of truth” (see text below)¹⁵.

¹⁵ Some recent articles also refer to the site as “Nabi Yatin” or “Maqām an-Nabi Yatin (Shrine of the Truthful Prophet)”. Having

MUQADDASI, circ. 985

*"A league distant from Hebron is a small mountain, which overlooks the Lake of Sughar (the Dead Sea) and the site of the Cities of Lot. Here stands a mosque built by Abu Bakr as Sabahi, called Al Masjid Al Yakin. In this mosque is seen the bedstead of Abraham, which is now sunk about an ell into the earth. **It is related that when Abraham first saw from here, afar off, the Cities of Lot, he stood as one rooted, saying, "Verily I now bear witness, for the word of the Lord is The Truth.' (Al Yakin)"***

NOTE [LE STRANGE]: Now known as Khurbat Yakîn and Makam Nabi Yakîn, see Survey of Western Palestine, Memoirs, iii., p. 371. The Bedstead of Abraham' is at ' the present day known as Cain's Grave.' The mosque is said by Ulaimi, to have been built in a.h. 352, a.d. 963.

(Mukaddasi, in Le Strange, 1886: 52)

IBN BATTUTA, 1325-1354

*"In the vicinity of the turba of Lot is the Mosque of al-Yaqin, which is situated upon a high hill and has a brightness and a glow which no other mosque possesses. (...) In this mosque, closed by the door, there is a spot sunk in solid rock, in where there has been formed the figure of a mihrab, only large enough to accommodate a single worshipper. It is said that **Abraham prostrated himself in this spot in gratitude to God Most High on the destruction of the men of Lot, and the place where he prostrated himself moved and sank down a little way in the ground"**.*

NOTE [from the publisher]: The "Mosque of Conviction" is to the South of Beni Na'yim. It was built in 963 on an existing pre-islamic site, and received its name from the legend that Abraham, on seeing the destruction of the cities, exclaimed "I bear witness for the Word of the Lord is the Truth" (al-Yaqin)

(Ibn Battuta, [1325-1354] 2017: 76)

never heard this name on the ground or found it in any historical sources and considering that this name is used in two Wikipedia articles about the area ("Lot in Islam" and "Bani Naim"), it can be hypothesized that it is an error that has spread due to people using those articles as a source, as very little information is available in the academic literature or online about the site. It could, however, also well be the other way around, with the articles of Wikipedia drawing on another article where this name is indicated and reproducing the name – this primary source has however not been found at this point. For example on "Bani Na'im", *Welcome to Palestine*, <https://www.welcometopalestine.com/destinations/hebron/bani-naim/>; "Lot in Islam", *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lot_in_Islam; "Bani Na'im", *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bani_Na%27im; "Graves of the Prophets and Companions", *The Voice of the Cape*, 21 August 2015, <https://www.vocfm.co.za/graves-of-the-prophets-and-companions/>.

MUJIR ED-DIN, C. 1495

« A une parasange d'Hébron se trouve une petite montagne qui domine le lac de Zoghar (la mer Morte) et l'emplacement des villes de Loth. L'on y voit un Masdjed bâti par Abou-Bekr Mohammad ebn Isma'il es-Sobâhy; il renferme la place où s'endormit Abraham, enfoncée dans la roche d'environ une coudée. On dit que quand Abraham vit les villes de Loth soulevées dans les airs, il s'arrêta ou s'endormit ; puis, il s'écria « Je rends témoignage que c'est la vérité évidente. » C'est pourquoi ce Masdjed fut nommé le Masdjed de la vérité évidente (Masdjed el haqq el yaqîn). Sa construction eut lieu dans le mois de cha'bân de l'année 352 (août-septembre 923 de J.-C) ».

(Mujir ed-Din, c. 1495 translated by Sauvaire, 1876: 24)

CONDER & KITCHENER, 1883

“Khirbet Yukin (Lw). — Foundations, caves, and cisterns.

On the east a well, and beyond this the Mukâm of Neby Yukin, a modern building, which is very conspicuous from the desert. It has an Arabic inscription over the door. (...). Inside this is a sunk place like a grave, about 6 feet long and 6 inches deep, with old stones. **This is supposed to be the site of Cain's grave.** Its length is directed north and south, unlike a Moslem tomb. (...)

- Visited 25th July, 1881.

Guérin, who does not appear to have heard of Cain's grave, speaks of a **little mosque at Yukîn consecrated to Neby Lot**. Close beside this mosque is a grotto, in which Lot is said to have stopped after his flight from Sodom. There are also the prints on the rock of two feet, said to be the prints of Lot's feet”.

(Conder & Kitchener, 1883: 371-372)

CANAAN, 1927

“On the height of the mountain el-Martûm, near the village of Bani N'êm, a **maqâm is built for the supposed prophet Yaqîn**. In the room we notice a **rock encircled with an iron frame**. **This rock shows the impressions of two feet and of two hands**. It is related that Abraham was ordered by God to come to this place, where he could observe the destruction of Sodom and

Gomorrhah. (...) **Outside this maqām there is another rock showing also the impressions of two feet.** They are said to be those of Lot. This rock is surrounded by a huwetiyeḥ”.

[NOTE] “Mudjir ed-Din says the shrine was called masdjad el-Yaqīn, because Abraham said, when Sodom and the other cities were destroyed: “Hada hua-l-haqqu-l-yaqīn”, **This is the sure truth**, (el-uns ed-djalīl p. 35)”.

(Canaan, 1927: 78)

VILNAY, 1932

“To the south of Beny Nayim, on a high hill, there is another **holy tomb called Nabi Yakin, the prophet Yakin, identified by some with Cain, the son of Adam.** It is related that here stood Abraham and observed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrhah. As it is written in the book of Genesis: “and Abraham rose up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord. And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrhah and towards all the land of the plain, and lo and behold, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace”.

The Arabs relate that when Abraham saw this destruction he exclaimed: Verily, I now bear witness, for the word of the Lord is Truth (in Arabic: Yakin), and **therefore this place was called: Al-Masjid al-Yakin, the Mosque of Truth.**

In a room of the Mosque is shown **a rock encircled with an iron frame. On the rock are seen the impressions of two feet and of two hands.** This is said to be the bedstead of Abraham, who left these impressions”.

(Vilnay, 1932: 197- 198)

Besides being a holy site, the place was seen a “recreational park”: people insisted that the hilltop used to be part of the village life for its beautiful view and enjoyable environment. As a result, people were visiting from nearby areas, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Halhul...; families used to go there to have barbecues, students to study and kids to play... One memory that was mentioned few times was that trees were planted there by the graduated students of the city’s high school in 1972.

Maqām Fatima

Next to Maqām Yaqin, outside its eastern corner, lies a small and low maqām with an interesting and little-known history. Seldom mentioned in the literature, it has, however, a big potential to become an important historical and heritage site that would need to be better looked into. The maqām itself is very inconspicuous, being largely covered with cement and with no writing on it (figures 16). A staircase leads to an underground room where the shape of a tomb can still be seen, but according to a resident of the village the tomb and the whole internal building have been destroyed and ripped open some 30 years ago (figure 19). The imam of the city’s main mosque affirmed that in that shrine “there was a stone plate, which was more than 900 years old, in qufic writing, with Qur’anic verses, indicating that this is the shrine of Fatima. It was stolen and sold”. The existence of this plate and their recent destruction is confirmed by various sources. The pictures of the place found in the Awqaf archives, taken in 1984, attest clearly that the tomb was untouched at that time (figures 17 and 18). They also show an old view of the maqām made of stones, very different from the cement seen today (figure 15). The study conducted by N. Abu Sara from the University of Hebron in 1987 on the “Zawiyat and maqāmāt of Hebron” shows those same pictures (Abu Sara, 1987). The book of K. Manasra on the history of the village also reproduces a picture of that slab under the title: “poetic inscription of Maqām Fatima” (Al-Manasra, 1999).

The text of this slab is mentioned by medieval authors. It also reveals another interesting point, namely a continuity around the uncertainty of this maqām’s name. Today, the maqām is indeed known under different names in Bani Na’im: Maqām Fatima, Maqām Banat al-Hassan w al-Hussein (Shrine of Hassan and Hussein’s daughters), or Banat Hussein (Daughters of Hussein), people strongly defending their opinions about the right name.

When comparing different ancient texts and translations, it appeared that these contradictory names evoked on the ground were also found there: different sources indeed mention Fatima being the daughter of Hassan - all mentioning Mujir ed-Din as a source for this -, other mentioning Hussein. It seemed useful to go back to the original Arabic text here to highlight how it is then used and translated.

MUJIR ED-DIN, c. 1495

بظاهر المسجد مغارة فيها قبر فاطمة بنت الحسين بن علي بن ابي طالب رضي الله عنهم أجمعين وعند
قبرها رخامة مكتوب عليها بالكوفي

اسكنت من كان في الا حشاء مسكنه بالرغم مني بين التراب والحجر
افديك فاطمة بنت ابن فاطمة بنت الأئمة بنت الانجم الزهر

(Mujir al-Din al-'Ulaymī, 1866: 67)

Sauvaire, who famously translated parts of Mujir ad-Din's work to French translated it as follows.
It can be noted that he left out one sentence, "Fatima daughter of Fatima's son".

SAUVAIRE, 1876 (translation of Mujir ed-Din)

« Au dehors du Masjed est une grotte qui contient le tombeau de Fatemeh, fille d'el-Hasan, fils d'Ali, fils d'Abou Taleb ; sur le tombeau on voit une plaque de marbre portant cette inscription en caractères coufiques :

J'ai fait habiter celle dont la demeure était dans mes entrailles, entre la terre et la pierre, et cela en dépit de moi-même.

Puissé-je te servir de rançon, ô Fâtémeh, fille des Imams, fille des étoiles brillantes. »

(Sauvaire, 1876: 24-25)

[Translation:

« Outside of the Mosque there is a cave that contains the grave of Fatemeh, daughter of el-Hasan, son of Ali, son of Abu Taleb; on the tomb one can see a marble plate bearing this inscription in Cufic characters:

"I made she who used to live in my loins live between soil and stone, despite my own will.

Wishing I might serve you as ransom, o Fatemeh, daughters of the Imams, daughter of the shining stars".]

Canaan mentions the maqām of Fatima only in a footnote, quoting the text reported by Mujir ed-Din (with a small mistake), as did Le Strange few years earlier in his book *Palestine under the Moslems*, also quoting Mujir ed-Din as a main source:

LE STRANGE, 1890

“Mujir ad Din in 1496 writes that outside the Masjid al Yakin was shown the tomb of Fatimah, the daughter of Al Hasan, son of the Khalif 'Ali”

(Le Strange, 1890: 552)

CANAAN, 1927

“The qufic inscription on the tomb of Fâtimeh the daughter of Hasan the grandson of the Prophet is:

سكنت من كان في الا حشاء مسكنه بالرغم مني بين التراب والحجر
 افديك فاطمه بنت ابن فاطمة بنت الأئمة بنت الانجم الزمر

See Mudjîr ed-Dîn I, 67”.

(Canaan, 1927: 20)

All those texts take Mujir ed-Din as a source and as a result, they all present Fatima as the daughter of Hassan, who is the firstborn of Fatima (daughter of the Prophet) and Ali, and the older brother of Hussein. In the absence of other indications this might be explained by the line “Fatima daughter of Fatima’s son”, which could indeed refer to Hassan, being the firstborn.

Ibn Battuta, who wrote before Mujir ed-Din, offers more details and mentions two slabs: one with a poetic inscription that corresponds to the lines quoted by Mujir ed-Din, although with two additional lines, and the other slab indicating clearly *“This is the tomb of Umm Salama Fatima daughter of al-Husain”*.

IBN BATTUTA, 1325-1354

*“In the neighbourhood of this mosque is a cave containing **the tomb of Fatima, daughter of al-Husain b. Ali** (upon them both be peace). At the head and foot of the grave are **two slabs of marble**, on one of which is written, engraved in a beautiful script: “In the name of God, the*

*merciful, the Compassionate. To God is the Might and the Permanence, and to Him belongeth what He hath created and fashioned. Upon His creatures hath He decreed dissolution, and the Apostle of God is an example [for mankind]. **This is the tomb of Umm Salama Fatima daughter of al-Husain** (God be pleased with him)".*

On the other slab is engraved: 'executed by Muhammad b. Abu Sahl the engraver at Cairo'; and underneath this are these verses:

*One whose dear dwelling was my breast,
 Here, in the chill embrace of earth and stone,
 Hast thou, my plaint unheeding, laid to rest.
 O grave of Fatima, daughter of Fatima's son,
 Born of the shining stars of Ali's race,
 O grave, what godly faith is now thine own,
 What virtue, purity, and modest grave!"*

(Ibn Battuta [1325-1354], 2017: 76-77)

Explaining the differences between the two texts, written a century apart, would require a study by specialized historians. However, some feasible explanations can be offered: the second slab could have been removed by the time Mujir ed-Din got to the place; the authors might have relied on secondary sources, without visiting the places; or during visits, elements might have been overlooked, etc.

If the hesitation between Hasan and Hussein seems to have persisted through time in those texts, only one "daughter", Fatima, is mentioned. However, one name that is given to the maqām in Bani Na'im is either "the daughters of Hussein" or "the daughters of Hassan and Hussein". According to K. Manasra, a history teacher residing in Bani Na'im who wrote a book about its history, the two daughters of Hussein fled the battle of Karbala and the persecutions in Iraq to go to Egypt. Their journey led them through Palestine; they passed in the area of Bani Na'im to avoid being seen in Hebron. Being probably tired and sick they rested there; one, Fatima, died and was buried in the maqām, while the other continued to Egypt.

One common denominator remains to these varying narratives: the maqām is linked to the Shi’a tradition, as Hasan and Hussein – referred in the poetic text as “the Imams” - were the sons of Ali and Fatima (herself daughter of the prophet), and thus at the very root of the Sunni-Shi’a schism. Petersen, in his chapter on Shi’a shrines in Palestine, does not mention this specific one (Petersen, 2018). However, one shrine he mentions is interesting as a possible complement or source to corroborate this narrative: the “*most important Shi’a shrine in Palestine*,” he states, was the “*mashhad in Ascalon*,” built “*to house the head of Husayn after he had been killed*” (Petersen, 2018: 108); his head was subsequently transported to Cairo (ibid.: 126). He underlines that although the original building has been destroyed by the Israeli army in 1950, “the location of this shrine continues to have considerable significance for Shi’a Muslims who come from as far away as India to visit the shrine” (ibid.)

Some of the locals explained that not so long ago, Shi’a pilgrims were performing pilgrimage to Maqam Fatima in Bani Na’im. Fabric can still be seen tied to the window of the shrine, as well as places where candles have been lit inside, showing that there were religious rituals taking place there recently (see figures 17 and 51, and part 3). Sheikh Tareq, whose family owns land next to the maqāmāt of Fatima and Yaqin, says his father remembers Shi’a coming on pilgrimage to the shrine because of its connection to “Ahl al-Bayt”, the family of the prophet (see 3.2.). He says that under the Jordanian rule over the West Bank, before 1967, religious tourism was flourishing, and people used to visit from Iraq, Iran, Egypt, etc. Another old resident of the village placed the date of those visits even at a later period, saying they lasted until the second Intifada around 2000 as Israel had for a long period of time good ties with Iran, and people with double nationalities could visit. It is however doubtful that those visits could have been numerous after the Islamic revolution in Iran. The importance of the maqām of Fatima and especially its popularity as a destination for Shi’a pilgrimage is something else to look into.

Maqām Lut

The third holy place and maqām in Bani Na’im is the Maqām of Lut (Maqām an-Nabi Lut) situated in the mosque in the city, called itself “Masjid Lût” (“the mosque of Lot”, figure 20). Lot, a prophet in Islam, is said to have lived there once he left Sodom; he died there, and the maqām is located on his burial place, the cenotaph thus indicating an actual tomb. The mosque, a rectangular

building with a minaret and a particular tower on an angle was, according to the imam, built on the location of an old church, a possibility also mentioned in other sources (Sharon, 1999). The maqām is located in the middle of the mosque: it is a white internal shrine, whose doors are closed and locked.

Although known from very ancient times (as far as St Jerome, 4th century), it is interesting to note that most authors concentrate on Maqām Yaqin, probably because it is connected to Abraham and to a specific episode of the holy texts. As can be seen from the extracts below, very little details are usually given about this maqām, with the exception of the Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae (vol.2) written by Moshe Sharon that concentrates on the various writings that can be found there (Sharon, 1999). Mujir ed-Din also mentions a tradition that was not alluded to on the ground, namely the presence of other sixty prophets buried on the same spot. The texts of Finn and Conder indicate a certain similarity with the traditions applied to Maqam Yaqin as the place from where Abraham and Lot saw the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

IBN BATTUTA, 1325-1354

*“(...) eastward of the sanctuary of al-Khalil is **the turba [funerary chapel] of Lot** (on him be peace). This is situated upon a high mound, from which one overlooks the Ghawr of Syria. Over his grave is a fine building, the grave itself being in a well-built and whitewashed chamber within, and there are no hangings over it”.*

(Ibn Battuta, 2017: 75)

MUJIR ED-DIN, C. 1495

*“The **tomb of Loth** is located in a burg called Kafr-Borayk, situated at around one parasang from the Mosque of Abraham. It is said that in the occidental cave, under the ancient sanctuary, are buried sixty prophets among whom twenty messengers. This place benefits from a large fame and became a destination of pilgrimage and devotion”*

(Mujir ed-Din, c. 1495 translated to french by Sauvaire, 1876: 24)

FINN, 1872

*“At Beni Naim is the **reputed sepulchre of the Prophet Lot**, according to the Moslems (...). This village commands a grand prospect of the Dead Sea, although there is no view of the kind from all the country around. **Is not this the place whence Abraham, after the departure of the angels, saw the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah rising as the smoke of a furnace?** (Gen. xix. 27, 28.) »*

(Finn, 1872: 291)

CONDER, 1877

*“Thus on the hill East of Hebron, near Beni Naim, **stands the Minaret and Sanctuary of Neby Lût**, and a tradition existed in the fourth century that it was **from this point that Lot and Abraham surveyed the Promised Land**. From this origin doubtless the modern site has arisen”.*

(Conder, 1877: 97)

WILSON, 1880

*“There is a curious tradition connected with Beni-N'aim, a lofty height just five miles south-east of Rameh, with a wely, called Neby Lut, **believed by Muhammedans to be the burial-place of Lot**. Here, they say, Abraham stood and interceded for Sodom. The place is worth a visit for the sake of the view from the top of the mosque. (...) The Muhammedans, in dedicating this as a holy site, appear to have seized on an old Christian tradition, for this height is evidently the Caphar Barucha of Jerome (...)”*

(Wilson, 1880: 188)

CANAAN, 1927

“The modern inhabitants place the tomb of Lot here. His sanctuary is certainly erected on the ruins of a church”.

(Canaan, 1927: 292)

VILNAY, 1932

*“On the way from Hebron to the Dead sea, on the borders of the Desert of Judah, there is a village called Beni Nayim. **Here is found the tomb of Lot (Nabi Lut) in a little mosque.** From here can be seen the desert where Lot rambled with his flocks, and beyond it the Dead sea (...).”*

(Vilnay, 1932: 197)

The daughters of Lot are also supposedly buried on a nearby hill. According to Finn, who has been quoted in other recent texts, among which is the Wikipedia article about Bani Na'im: “[the maqām] *of his daughters being on an opposite hill at no great distance*” (1872: 291). Another maqām existing in the area of the village was, however, never mentioned, and when interrogated nobody recalled the existence of such maqām. Finn's account could be a mistake or a confusion with the daughter(s) of Hussein. Another possibility is that it could also be a forgotten maqām, possibly because of the alleged biblical story of incest between Lot and his daughters.

Beyond their proximity and possible economic and social relations, Bani Na'im is closely connected to Hebron. First, through the common story of Abraham and Lot, as Abraham is associated with Hebron as well as with Bani Na'im, while Lot is the “resident” figure of Bani Na'im, where he is believed to be buried. This connection is also illustrated by a story explained by the imam, who affirmed that from a cave located under the mosque, a tunnel runs from the mosque of Lot to the Haram of Abraham in Hebron. This “six- or seven-kilometers tunnel” was, according to him, sealed in the 1940s or 50s when yet another person, Issa Jde'a, disappeared after entering the tunnel trying to reach Hebron.

A project to refurbish the place, which is organized by the municipality of Bani Na'im in collaboration with a Turkish association that specializes in renovating Ottoman buildings, is currently underway for a budget of 1 million dollar. The internal mezzanine, added to allow a bigger number of faithful within the mosque, will be removed to respect the original structure of the mosque.

2.4. Halhul

Halhul, north of Hebron, is located on the way from Jerusalem and Bethlehem to Hebron and the Naqab. A bit off the main road is the Maqām of Nabi Yunis, or Prophet Jonas. The mosque, seemingly modern and uninteresting nowadays (figure 22), is an extension built around the centuries-old structure that represented a landmark in the region for a long time. Maqām Yaqin, Lut and Fatima were not found in old pictures of the region, whereas Nabi Yunis is often documented, probably because of its location on an important axis of trade on the way from Jerusalem to Hebron. Ibn Battuta passed there, and notes:

*“On my way there [Jerusalem] I visited the **tomb of Yunis** [Jonah] - on him be peace - over which there is a great building and a mosque”*

(Ibn Battuta, 2017: 77)

The place was also famous because of its particular shape, as expressed by Finn:

*“Leaving the Hebron road at 'Am Dirweh, we ascended the lofty hill to the little village and weli of Nebi Yunas, (Prophet Jonah) **which is so conspicuous an object far away in every direction, the minaret which rises from the building giving it very much the appearance of a rural church in Europe**”.*

(Finn, 1872: 290)

We can see the mosque in pictures from the beginning of the century, in those of the Dominicans, for example, who did archaeology work in the region, or in the photographs of the Matsons, with numerous pictures showing “the shrine of Neby Yunis” (see figure 21). The original stone mosque was destroyed, according to the sheikh, by a thunderstorm some 50 years ago, when a lightning struck its tower. Other people explained it was destroyed to make the road that passes in front of it, which seems improbable as the current mosque is an extension of the old one, built around the original frame – the dates indicated for those works were 1957 and 1973. Indeed, within the building the old triple arches of the ancient building can still be seen. The three arches of the front wall can still be seen within the mosque, even if two are integrated in the wall (figure 23). In the central part of the mosque stands the maqām and its cenotaph, in a closed chamber, fenced and hidden behind heavy curtains, usually not visible by the worshippers (figure 24).

Here too different narratives and interpretations can be found. Often presented as the tomb of Jonas, both in ancient and contemporary literature¹⁶, I was given a different explanation by one of the imams of the mosque, Sheikh Issam. According to him, the cenotaph represents one of these “stations” where the prophet passed. He explained that Jonas, who was a Prophet, tried to deliver God’s message to his people in Niniveh. Confronted with their refusal, he asked God to punish them. Allah said he would punish them three days later. As they still would not believe him, Yunis left his people without God’s order: as a result, he was caught in a huge storm while sailing on the sea and was subsequently swallowed by a whale. After remembering Allah, he was thrown out by the whale on the coast of Jaffa: he stopped in Halhul on his way back to Iraq, he stayed one year to get his strength back. He then went back to Niniveh where he found out that his people converted seeing the doom sent by God arrive.

The maqām thus celebrates, according to him, the place where Jonas lived after being thrown out of the whale in Jaffa. This could be one enduring explanation, or a modern rationalization of the fact that another tomb is known for Jonas, in Niniveh (Iraq, currently Mosul). At least five monuments to Nabi Yunis exist, according to Sheikh Issam: in Jaffa, Halhul, one in south Lebanon in a city called Jihon, one in Idlib in Syria, and the main one in Niniveh in Iraq, which was destroyed few years ago by Da’esh. Sheikh Issam prudently stated: *“the oldest part here is a cave under the ground. I think prophet Yunis lived there. Above the cave a mosque was built in 1226 by the nephew of Salah Din al Ayyubi to show that something happened with prophet Yunis here”*.

That cave has been closed before 1967, a fact that resonates with both Hebron and Bani Na’im where the underground caves are also sealed. It shows that the caves are actually the holiest places, the cenotaphs being mere symbols. All those caves, or underground places, as shown in the case of al-Tabaqa (see 2.6.) are vested with mysterious powers: they represent the real link with the spiritual and mystical world and are thus seen as dangerous.

¹⁶ See for example “Mosque of Nabi Yunus (Prophet Jonas)”, Discover Islamic art, *Museum with no Frontiers*, http://www.discoverislaamicart.org/database_item.php?id=monument;ISL:pa:Mon01:12:en; “Mosque of Prophet Yunus (upon him be peace)”, *Islamiclandmarks.com*, <https://www.islamiclandmarks.com/palestine-other/mosque-of-yunus-as>.

Jewish settlers regularly come to pray since November 2017 in front of Nabi Yunis, during the night and under military protection¹⁷. If it is considered a possible location for Jonas's tomb, it is also seen as "the traditional location of the tomb of the Biblical prophets Gad the Seer and Nathan the Prophet"¹⁸ by some Jewish believers.

‘AIN AYYUB

When researching the maqāmāt in Halhul, another place was brought to my attention: ‘Ain Ayyub (Job's spring). ‘Ain Ayyub is located few hundred meters from Nabi Yunis. A small spring of fresh water appears down the slope of the hill and is received in a small pool surrounded by stairs forming a small amphitheater. This is supposedly the place where Job, sick and exhausted by the various ordeals imposed by Satan to test his faith, collapsed. The local traditions say that God made this spring appear to wash and appease him, notably his skin disease (Job, 2: 7). Here, too, the imprints of the prophet were left in the rock; some say the main hole there was made by his heel, where he touched the ground to make the water appear, others claim that it shows where his head fell and that in the pool are other imprints left by his body that are hard to see now. The water is believed to have magical healing properties, especially for skin diseases (see 3.1.). This recalls other wells and springs dedicated to Job which were believed to have the same type of properties : *"several springs where the Palestinians believe that Job bathed and was thus cured of his diseases are still used for all sorts of affections"* (Canaan, 1927: 111).

2.5. Dura

In Dura stands the mosque of Nabi Nuh, or Prophet Noah, on a hill within the city. The maqām is quite recent and was built by the Ottomans (figure 25). As such, it is seldom mentioned in the old texts, and when mentioned always very briefly.

¹⁷ See for example "For first time in 18 years, Jews pray at biblical tombs in Palestinian village", AFP, The Times of Israel, 19 November 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/for-first-time-in-18-years-jews-pray-at-biblical-tombs-in-palestinian-village/>; "Jewish settlers storm Halhul city for rituals", *The Palestinian Information Center*, 26 July 2018, <https://english.palinfo.com/news/2018/07/26/Jewish-settlers-storm-Halhul-city-for-rituals>.

¹⁸ Tombs of Nathan and Gad - Jewish History in Halhul", Jewish Community in Hebron, 29 April 2018, <http://en.hebron.org.il/history/833>.

“Noah, again, is a favourite divinity, and has several sanctuaries; one at the ancient Adoraim (Dûra) in the south of Judah (...)”

(Conder, 1877: 98)

“Dura is the Biblical Adoraim, or Adora (...) The dome of Neby Nuh can be seen from the neighbourhood of ed Dawâimeh”

(Conder & Kitchener, 1883: 304)

The narratives around the place and the reason for its location there are much more uncertain than in the other places visited. An Awqaf mosque inspector in the city explained that around 400 years ago the Ottomans arrived with a map and claimed that the tomb of Noah was there. They explored, found a cave blocked with stones and built the shrine above it. The veracity of this history is disputed by the Islamic tradition which states that a Prophet is buried where he dies, without being brought back to his country of origin; since Palestine is “the land of the Prophets” through which all of them passed (see section 4.1.), according to popular belief, it could well be that Noah indeed died in Dura and was buried there, “but we are not sure about it.”

A cenotaph is present in the far room of the maqām, draped with a green and recent cloth (figure 26). It is also used to store carpets and other objects. The room in the front is the actual mosque where believers gather to pray. The original structure of the maqām here is also altered but remains visible; the stone structure and the dome are notably observable from the cemetery in the back.

2.6. Al-Tabaqa

The maqām of Sheikh Mohammad al-’Abed is the only “countryside” maqām studied here. It is important as a contrast to the maqāmāt of prophets discussed above, because it represents the numerous Palestinian maqāmāt dedicated to minor figures. It is isolated, on the top of a hill next to the village of al-Tabaqa, south west of Hebron, near the town of Dura. It corresponds to the traditional “model” of the maqām that includes a unique room with a mihrab, a dome (destroyed) and several trees planted nearby (figure 28,29 and 30). A low and narrow entry in one of the walls leads to the cave, below ground, where the tomb was probably situated, but the destruction there

makes it difficult to see (figures 30 and 31). Inhabitants of the village explained that there was a tomb, but it was destroyed (by children, according to them) who were looking for a treasure (see section 3.1.). A picture found in the Awqaf survey of 1984 shows that the dome of the maqām was only slightly destroyed at the time (figure 27).

The questionnaire from that same survey shows that the responses to the question about local knowledge, referred to al-'Abed as "Sheikh Zahed," a title common among Sufis which means "ascetic". According to the inhabitants of the village, Mohammad al-'Abed was "a Turk", an Ottoman. One member of the al-'Abed family with whom I met in Jerusalem explained that the Sheikh in that maqām is his great grandfather. Nobody in the family knew he had a maqām, or why he died in that area - there are no stories in the family about him, but one day, his uncle was sitting in the square in front of his home and a door-to-door salesman passed. He invited him to drink water, they talked, and his uncle presented himself as Ahmad Abed, so the man exclaimed: "we have a 'maqām 'Abed' in Dura, on 'jabal al-Tabaga' [the mountain of al-Tabaqa]. He was from a village called Al-Jannia", which is the village of origin of his interlocutor's family. This shows the various and changing narratives surrounding this maqām and the uncertainty about the figures it honors, but also the persistence of local traditions.

2.7. Bethlehem

Rachel's tomb

Famous for its picturesque environment recalling biblical times, it is one of the places most commonly represented in the pictures of the end of 19th and beginning of 20th century (see figure 32).

"Alone and separated from the family sepulchre [in Hebron], the little" dome of Rachel" stands between Jerusalem and Bethlehem".

(Conder, 1877: 94)

“This site has been shown from the fourth century to the present time in the same place. In 700 a.d. it is mentioned as surmounted by a pyramid. In 1100 a.d. the same description is given. In 1422 a Moslem building is noticed as standing over the place”.

(Conder & Kitchener, 1883: 54)

Rachel's Tomb is often presented as a typical case study of the common holy places in Palestine. The site is considered “a strong source of fecundity and resurrection” (Bowman, 2015), and has been revered by Christians, Muslims and Jews for centuries. Petersen, in his historical and archaeological description of the maqām, concludes that “for much of its history the shrine was considered as a Muslim holy place, although it was evidently also revered by people of other faiths” (Petersen, 2018: 133).

Traditionally linked to Bethlehem, the shrine has been annexed to Israel with the construction of the separation wall after 2005. Using an intricate design that would allow the maqām to be situated into the Israeli side, the wall zig zags from a guarded gate to an area marked for a parking lot next to the maqām through a protected corridor of access, the whole place being surrounded by wall and fences (figures 33 and 34). The drawing made by a member of the Anastas family in Till Roesken's movie “Videomapping: Aida, Palestine”¹⁹ shows how the wall fragmented the neighborhood and separated the Tomb from its direct environment. The Anastas house has been surrounded on three sides by the wall, turning it into “another tomb” (ibid.). The map realized for the Annex clarifies the complex layout of the wall and access to Rachel's Tomb, which became not only a religious symbol, but also a political referent incarnating Israeli sovereignty and identity through control of landmarks (figure 35).

The site is nowadays an exclusive Jewish shrine, cut from its environment and its traditional surrounding, such as the Muslim cemetery. The access to the shrine itself follows strict gender segregation between men and women. Many orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews come to pray near or directly next to the cenotaph (figure 36): Rachel, wife of Jacob, is indeed one of major

¹⁹ “Vidéocartographies : Aïda, Palestine”, Till Roeskens, 2009. In French on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/64089801> and Dérives.tv: <http://derives.tv/constellation/roeskens/> (37'52- 45'11).

figure in Judaism. The original maqām is difficult to imagine within the modern structure: covered, surrounded by new rooms and new materials, its historical meaning is largely lost in a political setting that turned it into a religious-nationalist symbol.

The Milk Grotto

One other site in Bethlehem, nearby the Nativity Church, itself a major sacred site, can be added to this study of shrines: the Milk Grotto, where it is said the Virgin Mary breastfed Jesus and drops of milk fell on the stone, turning it white. An old tradition says the rock is imbued with power, especially against sterility. Like Rachel's tomb, this holy place is chiefly associated with women's practices and religiosity (see section 3.1.).

Crisscrossing past and present, this juxtaposition of different narratives, ancient texts and contemporary discourses, and in the Annex, iconography representing different periods, reveals their contraposition as well as meeting points. The debates around the maqāmāt focus on their names, origins, and religious “identity” or legitimacy, but also the material evolution of those places, some of which are still visited, while others have been deserted. Some architectural features have remained and persisted throughout the centuries, whereas in other cases, the old building itself was destroyed or has disappeared under a new form, in keeping with the new practices on the site. Beyond changing traditions and narratives, we will concentrate in the next part on the evolution of practices.

3. Permanence and change: practices in and around the maqāmāt

Studying the evolution of practices and rituals in depth over time would require a long-term research as it implies entering the intimate circle of people, gaining their trust to discuss sensitive matters, meeting them outside of the worshipping places. The fieldwork realized within the framework of this program in over a month, thus represents a first approach. It allows already for some broad lines that will be presented here to emerge.

Some practices and rituals have indeed disappeared, others survive, maintained under a similar or slightly different form, or are renewed under new forms, where new relationships to the sacred are sketched.

The presentation of the sites above already hinted at some practices, old or contemporary, that can be observed at those sites: prayers, tied pieces of cloth, candles... For clarity, I will present here a typology of the practices evoked or observed. All of them have been grouped first into private practices, including the most common one, namely prayer, notes, candles, pieces of fabric and magic beliefs. A second section will look at collective moments, such as pilgrimage and holidays.

Many people interviewed insisted on two points: that those were old traditions that largely disappeared over the last 30-40 years, and that they are “haram,” forbidden in Islam as they suppose a kind of worship or rituals towards people, whereas worship, prayers, requests etc. should be directed exclusively towards God. These explanations, essential to understanding today’s practices and attitudes towards the maqāmāt, will be developed in a third section.

3.1. Private practices, common beliefs

Prayer

Due to the status of the maqāmāt as sacred places, prayer is the main practice to consider. However, different dimensions need to be taken into account: the type of prayer depends on the religion, the location of the maqām and the person buried or remembered there.

It is important to stress that many maqāmāt are located in active mosques, like in Nabi Nuh or Nabi Yunis, as well as in the Haram al-Ibrahimi, which host the regular Muslim prayers five times a day. These prayers represent the normal Muslim practice in mosques, not linked or directed to the maqām. Others used to be mosques but are not frequented anymore, such as Maqām Yaqin, where this type of practice disappeared.

In addition to these collective and ritualized prayers, personal prayers can also be realized in front of the maqāmāt, or addressed to the figure it honors. The observations conducted inside the Jewish and Muslim sides of the Abraham mosque, show that there is a difference between the

two faiths when it comes to personal prayers. Whereas direct prayer to intermediaries (saints, prophets...) is part of the Jewish rituals and as such is largely performed in front of all the maqāmāt (figure 39), it is debated in the Muslim tradition and is not always accepted; prayers made openly in front of the maqāmāt are thus less visible, less numerous and in some places are prevented by the imam (see 3.2. and 3.3.). Some people, however, do it: figure 38 in the Annex shows a Muslim woman praying in front of the maqām of Abraham. Even if that does not mean she is praying to Abraham himself, the place chosen, the body language and the fact that she was crying at that moment showed the importance of this specific prayer and place. Indian Muslim pilgrims also explained “we have to pray on their [the prophets] tombs at least once in our life!”. Proximity, and even contact, are important: many Jewish worshippers grab the window, touch the walls, in an effort to be closer to the holy presence. The Muslim woman depicted in the picture also passed her hand inside the maqām.

No specific prayers are designated for those maqāmāt in Muslim practices. Generally, the prayer recited is the *Fatiha*, the beginning chapter of the Qur’an, and in Hebron, according to a guard of the mosque, the *Salat al-Ibrahimiyyah* (Abraham’s prayer), which is part of the of the ritual “*salat*”, the prayer performed five times a day by devout Muslims: after the first portion of the prayer that glorifies God (*Tashahhud*) is the *Salawat*, or *Durood*, a prayer of salutation and blessing, which mentions Abraham alongside Muhammad:

“O Allah, let Your Peace come upon Muhammad and his family, as you have brought peace to Ibrahim and his family. Truly, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious. Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as you have blessed Ibrahim and his family. Truly, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious”.

This invocation is often mentioned by Hebronites to prove the connection of Muslims to Abraham.

Another practice related to prayer is that of “*nidhr*” (*nadhr* in literal Arabic), a vow or a promise to God. The Imam of Bani Na’im, Sheikh Tareq, said that “people used to do *nidhr* in the shrine [Maqam Yaqin or Fatima] because they thought it was a holy place. *Nidhr* is allowed, it is not *haram*. For example, people would promise to God to slaughter an animal if they have a baby or a job.” Similarly, in al-Tabaqa an old woman, Hajje Hatba, explained they used to do *nidhr* in the maqām with olive-oil candles.

There is, however, a clear opposition from the clergy and many believers to prayers addressed directly to the prophets, to *awliya* or other figures such as Fatima. Sheikh Issam, in Halhul, insisted that “Sometimes they [the visitors] grab the iron fence on and ask things from prophet Yunis... I tell them “why do you ask him, he died, he cannot do anything for you. He died! (...) Allah asked to ask him directly. Ask Allah, why Mohammad, Mousa or Issa, they cannot do anything for you, they died. Allah can give you, not the prophets”. All the imams I met insisted that this type of prayers is not acceptable and expressed their commitment to limit or prevent them (see also 3.3.).

On the Jewish side of the Cave of the Patriarchs, prayer in front of the maqāmāt and to the characters they represent is a common, regular practice (figure 39). An American visitor to the Haram explained that prayer often includes reading the writings about Abraham buying the cave and Sara’s death (Genesis, 23).

Another Jewish tradition, born out of constraint, is prayer at the “7th step”. At the former old entrance of the mosque, destroyed in 1969 by the Israeli army after an attack against Jewish worshippers, a staircase was going up against the wall of the Haram (see map p. 28 and figure 40 in the Annex). During the time of Muslim rule over the city (Mamluks, Ottomans, Jordanians) entrance to the building was forbidden to all non-Muslims and Jewish prayer was restricted to the seventh steps of the Cave’s eastern entrance. Even if the staircase does not exist anymore, and Jewish worshippers can access the Haram to pray, the symbolic place of the 7th step remains to this day a place of prayer (figures 42 and 43). Not a maqām as such, it is still considered a holy place due to the holiness of the Haram, the maqāmāt and the cave. A guide from Kiryat Arba explained that people still pray there because it is closer to the holy cave: a hole in the enclosure of the Haram indeed communicates with the cave underneath the mosque where the tombs of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs are believed to be situated (figure 43). The sign put up by the Jewish community of Hebron on the site says that “many Jews still pray at that site which has been hallowed by the prayer and tears of countless generations” (see figure 41), indicating that it is both a sign of respect and a rooted tradition²⁰. Some old Hebronites also said that before the division of the mosque some Jews insisted on praying at that location out of conviction because the Haram was a mosque and it was “not their place”.

²⁰ See also the website of the Jewish community of Hebron: <http://en.hebron.org.il/history/843>.

As for the Christian prayer, the intercession of saints is part of the rite. In the Haram they have access to both sides, but open prayer is probably not tolerated as it could be considered as a provocation, although I never saw anyone attempt it. It is interesting to note that the Briefing of the Russian Orthodox Church Bishops' Council from June 25, 2008 reports a debate about the possibility praying in such a shared setting: *"A great interest was shown in the possibility for saying Orthodox prayers at common Christian shrines found in non-Orthodox churches and sometimes even in non-Christian worship places, such as the remains of the forefather Abraham in the mosque in Hebron"*²¹, showing at the same time the importance the place retains for Christians and the dilemmas that can arise from "shared" sacred places.

Beyond the prayers, spoken or thought, immaterial, between the faithful and God, some material elements can support or complete the prayer, incarnate the *nidhr*, the devotion, the supplication, show one's passage, etc. Three main physical manifestations of devotion, particular practices that were observed in the field but are also described in ancient texts will be explained here: the use of notes, candles and cloth tied in the sacred space.

Notes

Prayers written on pieces of papers were found mainly on the Jewish side in Hebron. The practice of putting notes in the cracks of the wall at the "7th step" location recalls that of the Western Wall and small Western Wall in Jerusalem. It shows the holiness of the site: in Jerusalem, the holiest place in Judaism, the Western Wall represents the destroyed Temple and the presence of God. This practice, specific to the place, is thus reproduced in Hebron, although at a smaller scale. Notes are put in the cracks of the wall (figure 44), but also, as shown in picture 43 directly in the hole communicating with the cave located at the Seventh step. Here too, proximity and contact seem to play a role in the transmission of prayer to God through holy places. At the maqāmāt within the sanctuary some notes were also thrown next to the cenotaphs within the closed rooms: folded papers, but also business cards.

²¹ See Russian orthodox church, Official web site of the Department for external church relations, <https://mospat.ru/archive/en/2008/06/41581/>.

As for the Muslims, Sheikh Tareq (Bani Na'im) mentioned that the notes were an old practice and were mostly used as talismans against the evil eye: "they wrote things on a piece of paper, folded it in a way and hung it around their neck, put dust from the shrine, they believed it would protect them. The papers had words on them, something written from the Qu'ran. They were going to the shrine, folding it in a triangle, diamond shape, heart, and hung it around their neck, for they believed there was a benefit, protection, blessing, against impotence for example... People used to do that in Yaqin, but it is culture transferred from the Shi'a". This use of the Shi'a – and thus unorthodox – influence is probably a way to legitimize practices that are now seen as reprehensible. The use of talismans has indeed been documented – and criticized – in Sunni Islam since its beginning.

In the maqāmāt I visited I did not see any notes on the ground like in the Jewish parts of the Haram, neither did I directly observe such practice – which does not mean they do not happen. However, on the Muslim side of the maqām of Abraham prayer beads were seen on the ground, certainly thrown there on purpose. It should be noted that the iron bars that protect the windows and prevent entrance in the maqāmāt have been reinforced over the last years with a finer wire netting that hinders such practices; the wire netting is however only installed on the lower part of the windows, thus leaving space above. Most of the maqāmāt are closed and locked that way, with little or no direct opening, thus hindering this type of practice.

Candles

Candles seem also to play an important role for Muslims and Jews. In Islam, candles are often associated with the *nidhr*. In Maqām Fatima black traces on the walls showed that candles were burnt there. In the Haram al-Ibrahimi, under the cupola that covers the flower-shaped opening plunging into the cave, four olive-oil candles are lowered every morning at 8 by an employee of the mosque (figure 46). In pictures taken for the Awqaf survey of 1984, olive-oil candles can be seen in front of the maqāmāt of Sara and Isaac within the Haram, with lamp sometimes suspended in front of the cenotaph (see pictures 45). In all monotheist traditions olive oil has a strong symbolic meaning. In al-Tabaqa, Hajje Hatba, an old woman from the village, explained that every Friday she used to go to the maqām al-'Abed with candles and olive-oil; people from the village, especially women used to go there with those candles to do *nidhr* for sick relatives,

for example: “We were going to eat, to light some candles, pray for the martyrs and get some blessings”, but then “the Imam said it was not allowed anymore”. It changed around fifteen - twenty years ago, agreed the women present at the interview. The 1984 picture of Maqām Fatima clearly shows a wax candle burning on the ground (figure 17), raising the question of who put it there: a Muslim believer, thus marking a change in practice from olive-oil to wax candles - possibly for practical reasons?

In Islamic traditions, candles and lamps are indeed traditionally made of olive oil, not wax. The questionnaires provided by the Awqaf for the 1984 survey of cemeteries and maqāmāt includes one question on the lighting methods adopted in these places, proposing several answers: “with electricity; with oil (candles) or with gas”.

In her Ph.D. dissertation about the economy of olive oil in Palestine in the 19th century, Maissoun Sharkawi underlines that “those who were unable to visit these holy shrines in Jerusalem were advised to send olive oil to be lit there”²². Canaan also states: “*Olive oil is vowed and offered more than anything else. Peasants and townsmen, Christians and Mohammedans, rich and poor vow oil, and it may be offered to any sort of sanctuary. The olive tree, ‘shadjaret en-nur’, ‘the tree of light,’ as it is called in the Qoran - is regarded as holy*” (Canaan, 1927: 142). The importance of olive oil for lightning is expressed by the metaphor of the “Verse of Light” in the Qur’an (24:35) where the light of olive-oil lamps is used to express the might of God:

*“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His Light (in the Universe) may be likened to a niche wherein is a lamp, and the lamp is in the crystal which shines in star-like brilliance. It is lit from (the oil) of a blessed olive tree that is neither eastern nor western. (...)”*²³

In Halhul, the use of candles at the Spring of Job was intriguing. Every time I visited this place, I noticed dozens of burnt candles on the walls and steps, with traces of smoke and wax all over the place (figure 48). Since the wax candles are not part of the Islamic rituals (but could also represent a modern, practical alternative), I wondered if there were specific local practices around that place with that adapt to new norms and modern means, or if it was also a place visited by

²² Maissoun Sharkawi, « Les pressoirs à olives à vis en fer à activation manuelle du 19^e siècle comme objet de patrimonialisation, dans le contexte du patrimoine culturel palestinien », Doctoral thesis, University of Nancy, 2018.

²³ See for example <http://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php?sura=24&verse=35&to=36>.

Jewish worshippers - which was unlikely considering that the place is quite secluded. It appears that some youth from the neighboring houses light those candles “for the view”, because it is beautiful at night and they can post the pictures on the social media, notably Facebook (figure 49, see also the subsection about “magical powers” below). This also shows the importance phones have taken on: if they are not part of the religious practices proper, they are very present within the holy sites, for taking pictures and sharing one’s presence in a holy place.

The use of candles is widespread in Judaism and is also highly symbolic. Just like in Islam, it is the use of candles in Christianity has had an effect on the rituals and increased the use of candles. Without going into the story of lightning in Judaism²⁴ it can be noted that candles are lit at the Haram al-Ibrahimi as well as at the 7th step, where a spot under the opening to the cave, nestled against the sacred enclose, is usually used to put candles (figure 47).

Other marks of respect similar to the candles can be found: for example, a chest of incense, offered by the Sultan Qaboos of Oman in 2017, is presented openly in front of the cenotaph of Isaac within the structure of the maqām. Canaan points out that incense and olive oil are the two most important elements to beautify a shrine (1927: 142). Another element linked to prayer can be observed in the pictures taken in 1984 for the Awqaf survey: the presence of open (and covered) Qur’an around the maqām of Joseph (indicated as such by the embroidery on the cenotaph), highlighting its holiness (figure 37). This practice does not seem to persist today.

Pieces of cloth

One very interesting practice observed in the Fatima shrine is the pieces of clothes tied on the window metal (figure 51). It is clear that they are quite old. Abu Khaled el-Manasra remembers that *“when we visited the maqām we used to cut a piece of our clothing, our shirts or trousers and tie it saying the Fatiha to ask for the baraka. You couldn’t see the window anymore. Only in Fatima, not in Yaqin, because it is a mosque”*. These rags can be a sign to signal the visit, remind a wish or a vow (Canaan, 1927: 104), but they also rely on what Canaan calls “contact magic”: “everything which has been in contact with somebody or has belonged to him will never

²⁴ A developed analysis on the importance of candles in Judaism can be found the Jewish Virtual Library : <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/candles>.

completely lose its relation to this person. Thus, these pieces of cloth always keep their connection with the person from whom they came” (ibid.: 104).

Evoked as a common practice in Islam in the literature, the fact of tying rags is reported a few times in relation to Bani Na'im. Conder and Kitchener, speaking about Maqām Yaqin, state, for example, in 1883:

“This is supposed to be the site of Cain's grave. Its length is directed north and south, unlike a Moslem tomb. Over it is a wooden frame or cage hung with rags”

(Conder & Kitchener, 1883: 371).

Canaan also observes this practice at the beginning of the 20th century:

“In the case of en-nabi Yaqin near Beni N'em the door-handle, as well as the railing surrounding the holy rock, showing the footprints of Abraham, are full of these rags. Bracelets, beads and small necklaces were also to be found among the rags”

(Canaan, 1927: 105).

On the next page, he mentions the same practice at the Shrine of Lut: “on the doors of (...) en-nabi Lût and en-nabi Yaqîn (both in Bani N'êm) (...) rags may be found” (ibid.: 106). The picture of the railing in Maqām Yaqin found in the Awqaf 1984 survey is not of a very good quality, but it seems that one or two of these rags can be seen on the metallic fence (picture 50). Those testimonies seem to indicate that this practice disappeared over the last 40 years. It is however difficult at this point to say if it is due to changing beliefs or rituals in general or in the precise case of Maqām Yaqin due to its being off-limits because of military controls since the second Intifada (see section 3.3). Considering the general trend to abandon this kind of rituals, and the fact that Shi'a pilgrimage also disappeared due to the general political situation in the region, it is probable that the occupation made the ritual come to an end after a period during which they were already fading away. A more thorough study on the ground would however be necessary to answer this.

Djinn, ghosts and magical powers

In al-Tabaqa, every resident interviewed, from all generations, had a story of apparition or djinn to tell in relation to the maqām. They for example made references to the treasure that the children

were looking for and for which they destroyed the place (see 2.6.): “it exists! But they cannot find it because it is guarded by a djinn [a guard-djinn] who hides it!”. Sheikh Al-Abed himself is a figure that appears to the residents of the village: the uncle of a woman I interviewed thus saw an old man dressed in white on the street, “*the weli*”; he then went back home all shaking “as if he had seen an angel”. A man who was encountered in the main street said that his paternal aunt reported that “every year the daughters of al-’Abed were visiting at night. They could not see them but could hear them”. The daughters, they said, do not have a maqām for themselves but a tree, and for that they are called “*banat al-Balluta*”, the daughters of the oak. Another woman saw al-’Abed and one of his daughters; she was so scared she slept for four days after that.

Villagers also explained that the Israelis wanted to build a settlement on top of the hill, where the maqām stands, but their attempts were thwarted by the intrinsic powers of the place. First, according to them, because the Israelis are afraid of magic and djinns, “more than us”, but also because the djinns guard the place and prevented the bulldozers from destroying it. Other people mentioned a similar feat at the maqām of Tamim al-Dari in Bet Jibril. They explained that the Israeli army tried to blow up the enclosure, putting explosive under the walls, but never succeeded in setting them up, even though they tried several times. The very power of the *awliya* and of the djinns thus protects the sacred places against any blasphemous intervention, but also have a political role in preventing the heritage from getting destroyed and replaced by Israeli settlements.

At the Ayyub spring (Halhul), the candles were said to be put only for aesthetic reasons and for the pictures that were published on social networks (see above, subsection on candles p. 55). Other practices directed towards the spring were clearly labeled as potentially “*haram*”. The young man who put the candles however also explained that the spring has magical powers and heals skin diseases. He planted some aromatic herbs on the stairs leading to the water, so that people would have mint and sage for their tea when they come to spend time there, but also so that “the place is beautiful and smells good”. If this is not strictly speaking religious practices, the belief in the water’s virtue and the deep respect for the place that this attention shows could mean that perhaps, even if not recognized openly in front of the researcher, the candles meant a bit more than the profane goal that was claimed.

Another type of “magical practice” or belief can be found at the Milk Grotto and Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem. If many prayers performed in the maqāmāt are said to be made by women and related

to diseases or fertility problems, those two places are explicitly tied to women's requests and problems. At Rachel's Tomb, Bowman, for example, explains how until the 1980's he saw women – Jewish, Muslim and Christian - who came to pray for a successful pregnancy, coming with a red thread that was put on the cenotaph and later attached on their belly (Bowman, 2015: 72). In the Milk Grotto, the Franciscan friars who guard the site sell at their tourist shop some stone powder with instructions on how to drink it (figure 52), including indications for prayers to be said by the couple or the woman alone, and they also suggest a variation in case the pilgrims are not Christians. If the audience is mainly Christian, some Muslims also attend the premises. Mary (Maryam in Arabic), mother of Jesus ('Issa in Arabic) indeed occupies a particular place in Islam; her name appears in the Qur'an several time and one chapter is even named after her. The walls of the shop are covered with letters testifying to the miracles of the rock powder or the prayers to the Virgin Mary (figure 53). Already in 1927 Canaan was underlining similar practices:

"The white stones of the Milk Grotto are used by Christians and Moslems of Bethlehem and the surrounding district as amulets to increase the flow of mother's milk. It is supposed that a few drops of the Virgin's milk dropped on the floor"

(Canaan, 1927: 80)

These practices underscore once again the importance of women's practices in the maqāmāt. As noted in an article about the Milk Grotto and Rachel's Tomb together: *"women's religion frequently supports and validates women's everyday concerns. (...) a successful women's shrine should (a) offer concrete help for the real and serious problems faced by many women"* (Sered, 1986). Stadler and Luz refer to this type of shrines as "womb-tomb" and similarly underline that they are *"closely linked to well-being and fertility rituals"* (Stadler & Luz, 2014: 193).

3.2. Collective practice and moments

Beyond those practices, largely private and intimate, important moments of collective rituals, celebrations and pilgrimage also take place around some maqāmāt.

Holidays and celebrations

When considering the holidays and celebrations, two categories can be distinguished: the general ones, performed by the believers in different places, and those exclusively linked to one place. Muslim and Jewish holidays as Ramadan, the Eid, Sukkot, etc. are celebrated in Hebron as in other places. They have a particular importance for two reasons: first, for ten days corresponding to high holidays, the Haram is fully open and exclusive for each faith. Second, holidays and attendance are also used as occasions for making political claims or organizing demonstrations in the Haram and in the old city: Ramadan, for example, is the occasion to revive the otherwise empty old city, and the number of people going to the Haram increases sharply (see section 3.3.).

On the Jewish side of the Haram, many celebrations take place, including bar mitzvas and weddings that involve wine, dancing and singing. One holiday has a special relevance in Hebron: “Chayei Sara”, the “life of Sara” (Genesis, 23-25), the Saturday, usually in November, when the episode of the purchase of the Cave of the Patriarchs by Abraham is read in synagogue. Thousands of Jews come to Hebron, and the holiday is even referred to as “Shabbat Hebron”. Considering the situation in Hebron over the years, this gathering is probably a recent tradition although it is probable that when a Jewish community was installed in the city (before 1929) and even though they could not access the sanctuary, being in Hebron for that particular reading was important. This precise point would however require further research.

The Jewish presence in Hebron being intrinsically enmeshed with nationalistic objectives, this holiday as all the others (Lag ba’Omer, Yom Kippour...) - the acme being the festival organized by the Jewish community in Hebron for Pesach that attracts hundreds of settlers and right-wing Jewish nationalists - are clearly meant as political statements as well as religious celebrations. In fact, in its account of the preparations for Chayei Sara, the right-wing, nationalist religious website Breaking Israel News concludes by saying that by coming to Hebron to celebrate that day, people were “proclaiming the eternal connection between Hebron, the Bible, and the Jewish people”²⁵.

²⁵ “Despite danger, thousands gather in Hebron this sabbath to honor Abraham’s purchase of Sarah’s burial place”, *Breaking Israel News*, 6 November 2015, <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/53213/defying-terror-thousands-camp-in-hebron-to-celebrate-life-of-biblical-matriarch-sarah-this-sabbath-jewish-world/#zIm7Pr2hMbhl5Td0.97>. In the same vein, see also “Shabbat Chayei Sarah: V'Shavu Banim L'Gvulam”, David Wilder, *The Jerusalem Post*, 30 October 2013, <https://www.jpost.com/page.aspx?pageid=13&articleid=364266>, “30,000 Jews Expected For Sabbath Prayer In Hebron”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 25 November 2005, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel/30000-Jews-expected-for-Sabbath-prayer-in-Hebron> and “Police, security forces prepare for 'Chayei Sarah' in Hebron”, *Arutz Sheva*, 8 November 2017, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/237826>.

Another holiday mentioned in Hebron by Father Ibrahim (formerly Iskandar) at the Russian Orthodox Church, was “Eid al-Balluta”, the Day of the Oak, that he also called “Eid ‘Ain Sara”, or “Sara’s day”, which takes place on May 27th each year. The unwillingness of the monks to be interviewed made it difficult to have further information. Qassem, a Palestinian employee of the compound confirmed it, saying it was a celebration open to Russian nationals. The website of the Department for external relations of the Russian Orthodox Church also indicates that on October 22th, 2014, the Church of the Holy Forefathers celebrated its patronal feast. It was “the commemoration day of the Holy Forefather Abraham and his nephew Lot” at the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Hebron with a mass and a procession to the oak of Mamre²⁶. It can be hypothesized that this day must be celebrated every year, but an article was published on that particular occasion due to the presence of the Abbot of Kiev to chair the celebrations.

If other types of collective rituals such as local processions are mentioned by Canaan, none were mentioned on the field, with the exception of Bani Na’im. Sheikh Tareq indeed mentioned that Shi’a pilgrims used to slaughter animals as a sacrifice, and that people from the village didn’t like it as it represents “a pagan, pre-Islamic and nonsensical tradition.” He also mentioned another type of collective ritual, addressed directly to Fatima: according to him, during some dry seasons, people were performing sacrifices, “even Sunnis were slaughtering chickens and roosters, and rich people were sacrificing sheep or goat, at the center of the town, facing towards maqām Yaqin. They made a *du’a* [supplication, personal prayer] addressing the prayer to Fatima, ‘mother of rain’, calling ‘*Umm al gheth, ghethina*’, meaning “mother of rain, give us rain”. He criticizes this ritual in hindsight: “there is a special prayer for rain in Islam, *Salat al-Istisqa’*, in which you ask Allah to bless you with rain. But in the old times, because of a lack of religious awareness people directed their supplication to ‘*Umm al-gheth*’, slaughtering animals”. In so doing, he considers they were guilty of “*ta’til*”, that is stripping God of his attributes.

²⁶ “Church of Holy Forefathers in Hebron celebrates its patronal feast”, The Russian Orthodox Church, Department for external Church Relations, October 23, 2014, <https://mospat.ru/en/2014/10/23/news110101/>.

Those practices are performed mostly by local residents and visitors, but also include the participation of many pilgrims. Pilgrimage represents a religious practice in itself, as it implies a particular action and intention performed in connection to a sacred space.

Ziyarat, Mawasim and Pilgrimage

The traditional type of collective celebrations in Muslim maqāmāt were “*mawāsim*” (plural of *mawsim*), festivals or pilgrimages. Canaan notes that “*Many sanctuaries have regular mawāsim*”, some very simple, that last for a day, others that last few days, with people coming from different places to celebrate (Canaan, 1927: 193). The most famous of these mawāsim is that of Nabi Mousa. The writings of Emma Aubin Boltanski are essential readings on the topic (Aubin-Boltanski, 2003, 2005a, 2006, 2007, 2013): she studied the practices and narratives connected to the contemporary forms of the Nabi Mousa (and Nabi Saleh) mawsim, how it continues and is re-invented by the Palestinian Authority as a show of nationalist pride. The mawsim of Nabi Mousa has existed since the Middle Ages. Studying the practices performed there, Aubin-Boltanski shows how the processions are “territorial actions”, rituals allowing a symbolic re-appropriation of the lost territory (Aubin-Boltanski, 2005: 60). Other mawāsim used to exist as well: Mahmoud Yazbak for example studied the mawsim of Nabi Rubin, next to Jaffa, from medieval times to 1948, showing a “gradual process of desanctification” of the place (Yazbak, 2011).

The type and importance of pilgrimage is generally a function of the religious importance of the place. In the maqāmāt studied in the region of Hebron, for example, there is a clear gradient from Hebron, a major sacred place and place of pilgrimage, to al-Tabaqa, a local shrine that receives no visitors except from the nearby village.

There are very ancient proofs of the sanctity of Cave of the Patriarchs for the three monotheisms. Jewish, Muslim and Christian pilgrims have left accounts of their trips to this holy site since the early Middle-Age (Barbé, 2017: 41-51; Reiter, 2009: 166-167). For example, in pilgrimage scrolls: one scroll dating back to 1433 describes the places visited by a Muslim pilgrim, Sayyid Yusuf, who visited Jerusalem and Hebron, among other places, that are represented in miniatures (Chekhab-Abudaya, Couvrat Desvergnès and Roxburgh, 2016). Similar scrolls of Jewish

pilgrimage can be found, including the Garrett Hebrew scroll from the sixteenth century kept in the Princeton collections²⁷ or the Genealogy of the Patriarchs manuscript held at the Met museum²⁸, which shows the four holy Jewish cities, namely Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safed (Jacobs and Eisenstein, 1906, p.503).²⁹

The pilgrims in Hebron are many, and they hail from all monotheist religions. Jewish pilgrims come from the United-States, France, etc., but also from within Israel. The Muslim pilgrims sometimes visit Hebron as an “extension” to the packages of the "umrah" pilgrimage (Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca made during the year, in contradistinction from *Hajj*, which is performed at a specific time of the year); several Indonesian tour operators, for example, offer this possibility. It can also be a simple “*ziyara*” (“visit”). The question of *ziyara*, especially to tombs, is linked to the controversial question of the cult of saints within Sunny Islam (Beranek & Tupek, 2009; see 3.3).

The director of the Haram explained they receive pilgrims from Indonesia, Turkey, Singapore, South Africa, Malaysia, England, etc. Sometimes they receive big groups, for example in July 2018 I met there a group of around 300 Turkish Muslims. Many of those groups arrive by a bus, visit the Haram and leave, with very little economic revenue for the city. An Indian couple who visited Hebron for the first time – before Jerusalem because of time constraints - explained: “of course it is important to come to Hebron, it is all our prophets”.

In Halhul and Dura, the imams claim to have many visitors, attracted first by Hebron, but stop on their way or while visiting the region. In Halhul, the writings on the donation box in the mosque are in Urdu, Turkish and Hindi. Sheikh Issam underlined the different traditions existing within Islam. He explained that sometimes he has problems with the visitors “Muslim, Jewish or Christian”, stating: “The majority, they are polite, they behave. Sometimes there are problems, the Muslims from Indonesia they believe in tombs, a little... Sometimes Christians from India they do the same thing [pray to the Prophet or grab the iron fence]”.

²⁷ “A Pilgrimage of Memory”, Don Skemer, *RBSC Manuscripts Division News*, 21 November 2017, <https://blogs.princeton.edu/manuscripts/2017/11/21/a-pilgrimage-of-memory/>.

²⁸ “Genealogy of the Patriarchs (Yichus ha-Avot)”, Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/688582?exhibitionId=%7B3e2bd038-7aea-4779-9951-2974efca566d%7D&oid=688582&pkgids=372&pg=0&rpp=20&pos=16&ft=*%&offset=20

²⁹ See also “Holy cities plaque”, in the article “The Holy Land”, Hebraic Collection, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/amed/guide/hs-holyland.html>.

According to old residents of the village, Bani Na'im also used to receive pilgrims due to its proximity to Hebron and to its religious history, including Shi'a pilgrims attracted to the maqām of Fatima. The shrines, however, have lost a big part of their visitors. Shi'a visitors are a fading memory, since Palestine is nearly exclusively Sunni and the border control authority in Israel restricts their entry as a result of their hostile relations with important Shi'a majority countries such as Iran and Iraq. The occupation and the installation of a military outpost next to maqām Yaqin also slowly pushed people out, as evident by the fact that it was inaccessible during some years (see 3.3 below).

4. Analyzing permanence and change: education, orthodoxy and occupation

This overview of the past and present practices in and around the maqāmāt shows that many changes have taken place in terms of rituals and narratives over the last decades. The rapidity of those changes was very striking through the testimonies, and even clearer when different generations were present at the same interview. A general pattern was observed: old people invoked the memory of various practices, that they themselves used to perform, while the “middle” generation - people around forty years old - usually represented a counterpoint, insisting that those practices were “haram” and largely connected to their parents’ ignorance. The young generation was generally aware of some traditions but mostly considered them as something of the past, as superstitions (*khararif*) and myths. The importance of and respect for the sites, however, remain a cross-generation feature - often with more distance than in the past as some maqāmāt are less included in the daily life of the inhabitants. The fact that the maqāmāt are often located within mosques or are considered as mosques themselves ensures that many remain known and frequented, but the practices directly linked to their sacredness presented above (see part 2) tend to decrease.

Many reasons can be considered to explain these changes which are linked to the general transformation of Palestinian society, including a generalized urbanization, the failure of the Arab nationalist project, the Israeli occupation, an increasingly neoliberal economy, etc. This report will focus on three reasons found to be particularly important on the ground or directly mentioned as

such by the actors interviewed. In the various places visited, the generational gap mentioned above was largely attributed to the sharp increase, quantitatively and qualitatively, of access to education in Palestine, which gave way to more educated people. However, a religious shift in terms of the accepted Islamic norm and doctrine also has to be underlined: the widespread adoption of a more rigorist form of Islam also seems essential to understanding this change. The current practices tend towards what is seen as a “purer” or more refined form of Islam, more in keeping with its original spirit and commandments and as such the religious practices are stripped down of everything that is seen as excessive, superfluous and “innovative”. Consequently, it comes down to the socially accepted practices such as prayers and *nidhr*.

A third dimension to take into account is of course the impact of the occupation. The Israeli military control over the West Bank, the checkpoints, the settlements, make movement more difficult for Palestinians. If this clearly impacts their daily life, it also plays a role in their relationships to their environment and thus with the maqāmāt. Determining the extent to which the changes are due to the occupation or to the transformation of the society itself is beyond the scope of this report; however, elements of analysis and answer can be proposed here.

4.1. Education and generational gap

A general trend observed around all Muslim maqāmāt visited was the omnipresence of discourses seeking to establish a critical distance from past practices considering the Prophets or Awliya celebrated by the maqāmāt as objects of worship, while affirming their symbolic meaning. What these maqāmāt are and especially who they represent remains important, but there is a widespread condemnation of the religious practices directed to the figures celebrated through the maqām. Many practices are now considered as folkloristic, linked to a different time and type of society, marked by widespread ignorance when it came to Islamic laws and traditions.

The explanation favored by many people met on the ground to account for the disappearance of many traditional practices is the impact of a better access to education. The old generations, largely illiterate and rural, are seen as ignorant. The universalization of schooling has indeed deeply transformed Palestinian society over the 20th century to the extent that the occupied Palestinian Territories have nowadays a very high literacy rate. According to the UNICEF, 95,3% of the adults between 2008 and 2012 knew how to read and write, and 89,8% of children were

enrolled in primary schools (2008-2011)³⁰. The role of education on religious practices can be tackled from two perspectives. On the one hand, it can be seen as a way to increase scientific and rational reflection, and thus to weaken superstitious or even religious beliefs. This rationalization must, however, be put into perspective. The older generation is seen as ignorant both in terms of basic education and with regards to its knowledge of Islamic rules. The inclusion of Islamic education in the Palestinian school curricula means that a general education also means a better knowledge of Islamic texts, rules, etc. This is the explanation advanced by many interviewees who consider schooling as a means not necessarily of critical reflection and distance but as a means of learning about the basics of Islam. This type of classes indeed allows the spread of official positions and discourses, thus homogenizing the people's approach to religion.

4.2. Norms and doctrine: the evolution of Islamic practice in Palestine

If the role of education is certainly part of the explanation, I contend that the type of Islam practiced and taught, the internal evolution of the religion itself - due to historical events, trends, new actors, foreign intervention, etc. - also plays a role in the disappearance of some religious practices described above (part 2). Indeed, many people met or interviewed insisted that those practices were “haram”, illegal or forbidden. I often had to insist and mention some practices I knew about to have people acknowledge their existence and integration in local traditions. In many cases, when speaking to groups, one of the persons present took on the role of the censor, punctuating the conversation and each practice mentioned with a severe “but this is haram!”.

There is a centuries-old debate around the questions of saints, visits to tombs and intercession between the faithful and God in Islam. Even the status of Mohammad in this respect has been the subject of debate. Visits to tombs and the importance of the *maqāmāt* were widely accepted for centuries, notably in the heyday of Sufi influence. Even though the influence of this spiritual branch of Islam has considerably decreased, it can be noted that Sufis are still among those participating in the surviving tradition of the *mawsim* of Nabi Mousa.

³⁰ Statistics, State of Palestine, Unicef, https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/oPt_statistics.html.

The writings of Ibn Taymiyyah, a Muslim theologian from the end of the 13th – beginning of the 14th century, had a profound impact on the way the tombs and maqāmāt are considered today. A very controversial figure, who has been largely criticized within Sunni Islam, his views became influential over the last centuries, inspiring various modern and contemporary Muslim movements, such as Wahabbism in the Gulf, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Salafi movements in general (Beranek & Tupek, 2009: 2)³¹. Under his influence, a literal reading of the Qu’ran and other sacred texts advocated by some scholars thus spread throughout the Muslim world, normalizing a dogmatic, normative and more orthodox vision of the religion as well as a strict adherence to a specific tradition. It became widely accepted that there should not be any “cult of saints” in Sunni Islam, no intermediaries to pray to Allah on behalf of the believers. Ibn Taymiyyah’s recommendation to destroy the tombs and cemeteries was, for example, followed by Saudi Arabia and Yemen (Beranek & Tupek, 2009).

Palestinian Islam has been marked by a liberal tradition and still encompasses many forms of practices and beliefs – including atheism as well as fundamentalism or Salafism (Hroub, 2014). It is however unquestionable that Palestinian society became more strictly observant, with a shift in the generally accepted Islamic doctrine, which can be considered a reason for those changing practices in the maqāmāt.

In Palestine, one can hypothesize that this shift is due to the influence of the Gulf States, among which Saudi Arabia and Qatar which fund projects in the occupied territories and have a very active proselytizing campaign. The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas also reinforced the influence of rigorist Islamist doctrine in Palestine. During her research in Nabi Mousa, Emma Aubin-Boltanski noted the same type of discourse. For example, she points out in the *“the criticisms formulated by the Wahhabism towards the cult of the saints”* in the discourse of Abû Ismâ’il, the employee of the Palestinian waqf looking after the sanctuary (Aubin-Boltanski, 2013: 3)

Some Islamic terms were often called on to justify this doctrinal approach, like *“shirk”* (usually translated as “associationism”), which means to associate other figures with the only God. Often presented as “the worst type of sin” in Muslim literature, it is equivalent to idolatry or polytheism.

³¹ “Ibn Taymiyyah”, H. Laoust, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ibn-Taymiyyah>.

Asking dead persons for intercession and praying to Prophets or Awlyia is seen as “*shirk*” and must be avoided. Imams seem to have a clear role as “moderators” in the mosques, indicating or imposing what they consider as “proper” practices, and avoiding specifically this type of “association” with God. Sheikh Issam, in Halhul, was particularly virulent about it: “I tell them ‘why do you ask him [Prophet Yunis], he died, he cannot do anything for you’. They say: ‘what do you say?’ It makes me angry. He died! (...) Allah asked to ask him directly. Ask Allah, why Mohammad, Mousa or Issa, they cannot do anything for you, they died. Allah can answer you, not the prophets. When I say that they tell me you are a bad man. I make a new culture here with visitors, especially with the local people. (...) I ask them to ask Allah directly, he is not far away, he is with you all the time”.

Another concept invoked to condemn those practices is “*bid’ah*” (innovation), that is adopting and adding practices that are not sanctioned by the sacred texts and the tradition such as lightning candles to make a prayer, which would be an imitation of a Christian practice. In Bani Na’im, Sheikh Tareq remembers seeing old men visiting the maqāmāt, touching the stones, remarking that Sunnis do not agree with those rituals because it is *bid’ah*.

It is revealing that when asked about the practices linked to the maqāmāt, a very common reaction on the ground was to attribute this kind of traditions to Egypt, where those practices are profoundly rooted in the popular culture. Many people mentioned the Fatimid dynasty as being responsible for both the presence of maqāmāt and for the practices performed there, explaining that the Fatimids were Shi’a, and those were typically Shi’a traditions. In Bani Na’im, too, the Shi’a were often mentioned as the source of the condemnable practices. The Fatimid or Shi’a legacy was thus presented as an external influence that could not be fully integrated into the region’s history or identity, which was considered as necessarily and often exclusively Sunni. Beyond its regulating the religious practices, the dogmatic form of Islam that often prevails today seems also to impose slowly a schematic – and impoverishing - vision of history. The affirmation of an “authentic” Palestinian identity, which sometimes manifests itself through an attachment to one specific understanding of Sunni Islam, is of course the result of numerous processes that include the Israeli occupation, a changing political scene, international pressures, etc. However, in so doing, it defines Jewish, Shi’a or Christian influences as being alien to the Palestinian culture and

thus evacuates the multilayered cultural and religious diversity that constitutes the heritage of the region.

4.3. The Israeli Occupation

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank has to be taken into account when analyzing evolving practices, as it has an extremely strong impact on the daily life of Palestinians with the ongoing fragmentation of the territory, military control, and the hindering or directly preventing access and movement.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the occupation of the West Bank and in the case of Hebron, the strong presence of Jewish settlers and militaries in the old city, cannot be taken out of the equation, as they are all elements materially inscribed in the landscape and contributed to formatting the practices. In the Cave of the Patriarchs, the access is controlled and the identity and religion of the visitors are screened. The Israeli presence in the old city of Hebron has a clear impact on the frequenting of the sanctuary. Because of the presence of the Israeli army and radical settlers, as well as the bad reputation of the neighborhood which is seen as a den of thieves and drug dealers by the population, many Hebronites do not go anymore to that part of the city. Many young people have only known the city with two divided areas and are not aware of the situation there, some not knowing the names of the two areas, H1 and H2. Many have never set foot in the old city or in the Haram. Beyond the practices, it is thus a part of the local heritage which is being slowly lost.

In Maqām Yaqin the access was also limited by the installation of a military observation point some 50 meters from the maqām (see figure 14). According to residents of the village access to the site was totally prevented between 2001 and 2015 since a new regulation forbidding access to the place was implemented to protect the nearby settlement of Ma'ale Hever. Now the access is possible, but only for short visits. However, taking care of the place, the land or the maqām itself, doing rehabilitation work, is impossible. An interviewee mentioned that his son gave 15,000 shekels for the rehabilitation of the maqām. Some works to refurbish the place were started but stopped because the army obstructed them. Traces for planned electrical work can indeed be seen within the maqām (see picture 13).

5. Intangible heritage

All the elements underlined above show how the maqāmāt are part of the “tangible” heritage of Palestine: they are not only material manifestations of ancient times, of the continuity of dwelling, of religious beliefs and of certain practices, but they also show the changes and developments that happened through architectures, names, etc. This study shows how they are also related to important elements of intangible heritage.

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage exists since 2006. The UNESCO maintains that intangible heritage encompasses *“traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.”*³² It is manifested in various ways, among which in “social practices, rituals and festive events.”³³

The importance of the maqāmāt in the Palestinian social environment and the oral traditions described above can be considered as intangible heritage, despite the modifications they have gone and are going through. Indeed, intangible heritage is “transmitted from generation to generation” and “constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history”, allowing for a “sense of identity and continuity” (ibid.).

Two points deserve to be further developed in terms of intangible heritage. Two types of narratives, or traditions, were mentioned many times in the field: first, the various ways in which Palestine is the “al-Ard al-Muqaddasa”, the Holy Land, and the land where “all Prophets have passed.” Second, there are very strong traditions related to Abraham that have to be acknowledged and further developed as many various cases studied here underline his importance. Particularly important in Hebron, these representations are shared also outside of the city.

³² “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?”, UNESCO, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>.

³³ “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage”, UNESCO, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

5.1. The Holy Land, land of the Prophets

Historical Palestine is considered the Holy Land by the three monotheistic religions: al-Ard al-Muqaddasa for the Muslims, it is called Eretz haKoddesh in Judaism and Terra Sancta by the old Christian texts.

This holiness is manifested in several ways in Islam. First, through the Isra' and the Miraj', the night journey of Mohammed from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascension to heaven from Jerusalem, but this holiness pre-existed the birth of Islam. Palestine is indeed considered as "the land of Prophets" (*Ard al-Anbiya*), an expression often used by the people interviewed: it is a territory "where all the Prophets passed." A woman in al-Tabaqa explained that "All the prophets lived in Palestine. *Sayidna* [our Lord] Issa, *Sayidna* Mousa, *Sayidna* Mohammad... Why do you think the Jews came to occupy Palestine? Because all the prophets were here, from *Sayidna* Adam!". Jerusalem is the central and common embodiment of this sacredness. Many *ahadith* (sayings of the Prophets) describe the importance of *Beit al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem) and "*aknaf Beit al-Maqdis*", the surroundings of Jerusalem. Those surroundings are interpreted in different ways, from the city and its suburbs, to historical Palestine, and sometimes to the whole region of Bilad ash-Sham, thus encompassing Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

Related to this important legacy is the continuity of pilgrimage, which also represents an intangible heritage. In the Site Nomination application documents presented by the city of Hebron to be recognized as a World Heritage site, pilgrimage is presented as a heritage of the city, which had a direct impact on its urban fabric and traditions. Hebron was indeed already visited by pilgrims as early as the 4th cent. BC.

5.2. Abraham: Lord, host, friend, father

The most interesting fact in terms of intangible heritage is the ensemble of traditions around the figure of Abraham. Since he is buried in Hebron, the city serves as a focal point for many of those traditions. The Site Nomination document presented to the UNESCO regarding Hebron as a World Heritage site presents the traditional "multi-culturalism" of the city as a cultural criterion, with the different communities drawing "*inspiration from the same traditions and values, especially*

those of the prophet Ibrahim/Abraham [...] considered the paradigm of hospitality and generosity”
 (Nomination Document, 2017: 66).

If Abraham is indeed a central figure in Palestine in general, his importance is central for the Hebronite identity and discourse. Abraham gave the city its Arabic name, al-Khaleel, which comes from *“Khaleel al-Rahman”*, “the friend of God”, Abraham being chosen by God as his friend (Surah 4,125). He represents a foundation of society in general, and of religions. Usually referred to as *“sayidna”* (our lord) or *“abuna”* (our father), Abraham is presented, depending on the interlocutor, as “the father of us all”, “the father of all religions”, “the father of Muslims” and “the father of the Prophets”.

What is even more important in terms of intangible heritage, as indicated by the UNESCO document, however, is his embodiment of hospitality and generosity. Abraham is indeed a figure presented as a model in the Qur’an, one that inspires and calls for the welcoming of the stranger, after the example he set by welcoming the three angels sent by God and who were disguised as men, receiving them, offering them food, etc. (see figure 55). Abraham is thus *“Abu Dh’ifan”*, the “father of guests”, the one who welcomes them. This episode marks the identity of the city. This tradition of hospitality, common all over Palestine, is upheld in Hebron as a duty, set by the example of Abraham. In Halhul people underlined the generosity of villagers “not like in big cities... Except Hebron. Hebron is different, it is *‘balad dh’ifan’*, the city that welcomes the guests”. A common saying in Hebron is that it is “the city where nobody is hungry,” or “where nobody falls asleep hungry.”

One institution that perpetuates this tradition is the *“Ibrahimi takiyyeh”*, or “soup-kitchen of Abraham”, an 800-year-old soup kitchen providing food for the poor – or anyone who shows up – perpetuates that tradition (figure 56). Muqaddasi already described it:

“In the Sanctuary at Hebron is a public guest-house, with a kitchener, a baker, and servants appointed thereto. These present a dish of lentils and olive oil to every poor person who arrives, and it is even set before the rich if perchance they desire to partake of it. Most men erroneously imagine that this dole is of the original Guest-house of Abraham, but in truth the funds come from the bequests of Tamim ad Dari and others”

(Muqaddasi, transl. Le Strange, 1886)

The takiyyeh gives chicken or meat on Monday and Friday, soup the other days. A staff member explained they have around 400-500 people a day, and around 3000 during Ramadan, when meat is served every day. The soup is especially renowned in the city: “nobody can make it as good as the takiyyeh, not even my mum, it has a special taste!”, explained a young man in the city. There are two ways of eating the soup, with sugar or without, and all people have their own preference. A source of pride, the takiyyeh is famous in the city and works thanks to donations of the locals, pilgrims and institutions. Some individuals pass and give 20 dinars, others make important anonymous donations, with bread or chicken delivered every day during Ramadan for example. On Thursdays, another takiyyeh handled by the Awqaf started in the neighboring town of Dura, next to Nabi Nuh. An extension of that in Hebron, based on a similar idea (figure 56), the takiyyeh feeds the poor.

CONCLUSION

This report associates the rich literature that exists about the maqāmāt in Palestine (old texts, travel accounts, contemporary academic studies, etc.) with concrete data and elements encountered through fieldwork. This seems not only to offer new or relevant information for the tourism sector, but also to increase the knowledge of maqāmāt in general, and of those in the region of Hebron in particular, as well as contributing to the necessary reflection about Palestinian heritage.

This study shows the importance of historical depth to understanding the current situation and the changes that took place over time. It puts narratives into perspective and sheds new light on the information gathered. As pointed out by Emma Aubin-Boltanski and Salim Tamari, there is a direct link between the topic of the maqāmāt in the Palestinian culture and landscape and the making of national identities. The making of a common heritage for a nation necessarily means a “rewriting of the past and invention of traditions” (Aubin-Boltanski, 2006: 115). Revisiting the importance of the maqāmāt can thus mean walking a fine line between folklorism, heritage and politics.

The maqāmāt, the narratives and traditions that exist around them do represent a rich Palestinian heritage. The places and the buildings themselves have a centuries-old history, as shown by the various texts used here. The “sense of identity”³⁴ they provide, making them a system of support for intangible as well as tangible heritage, seems to be chiefly linked to the figures celebrated through the maqāmāt, either prophets or *awliya*, to their presence in the landscape, rather than to the practices attached to them and to their integration into people’s daily life.

The variety of places and the variety of practices surrounding the maqāmāt make any generalization difficult. While central places like the Haram al-Ibrahimi retain their importance and power of polarization, attracting pilgrims and local believers, smaller places like the maqām of sheikh al-’Abed in al-Tabaqa seem to be losing their religious importance, and the practices related to them are slowly vanishing, being shunned, actively contested or even clearly condemned by a part of the Muslim population. The maqāmāt themselves, however, remain an “enduring reality,” to which the Palestinian collective memory is tightly attached (Aubin-Boltanski, 2003).

If Muslim’s direct devotion to the maqāmāt seems to be decreasing, Jewish religious activism seems on the contrary to be reinforced. Mahmoud Yazbak, for example, underlines that “while Muslim and Christian ziyarat and mawasim (...) to shrines in Palestine have almost totally disappeared, a strong Jewish cult of saints is flourishing in Israel” (Yazbak, 2010: 233). This tendency is strengthened in the West Bank by the political meaning those practices can have, as shown by the rekindled Jewish prayers in Halhul and the importance given to Jewish celebrations in Hebron.

Finally, an important point this research project tried to make is the importance of a local sensitization to the protection of heritage, as many of these places have been looted, with walls and tombs destroyed, sometimes smashed to pieces, and historical artefacts missing, like the slabs of Fatima’s grave.

³⁴ “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?”, UNESCO, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>.



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ANNEX

NOTE

This section presents photography taken in the field, in parallel with some older pictures, either in the public domain or whose reproduction was authorized by their authors or curators. This part is intended only as a complement to the main report and synthesis. Context and details about the places and practices represented through these pictures are developed in the text of the report. Similarly, please refer to the main report for the bibliography and references of texts quoted here. Please use these pictures only with the author's permission.

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1. THE MAQAMAT IN PALESTINE: HISTORY AND RELIGION AT STAKES

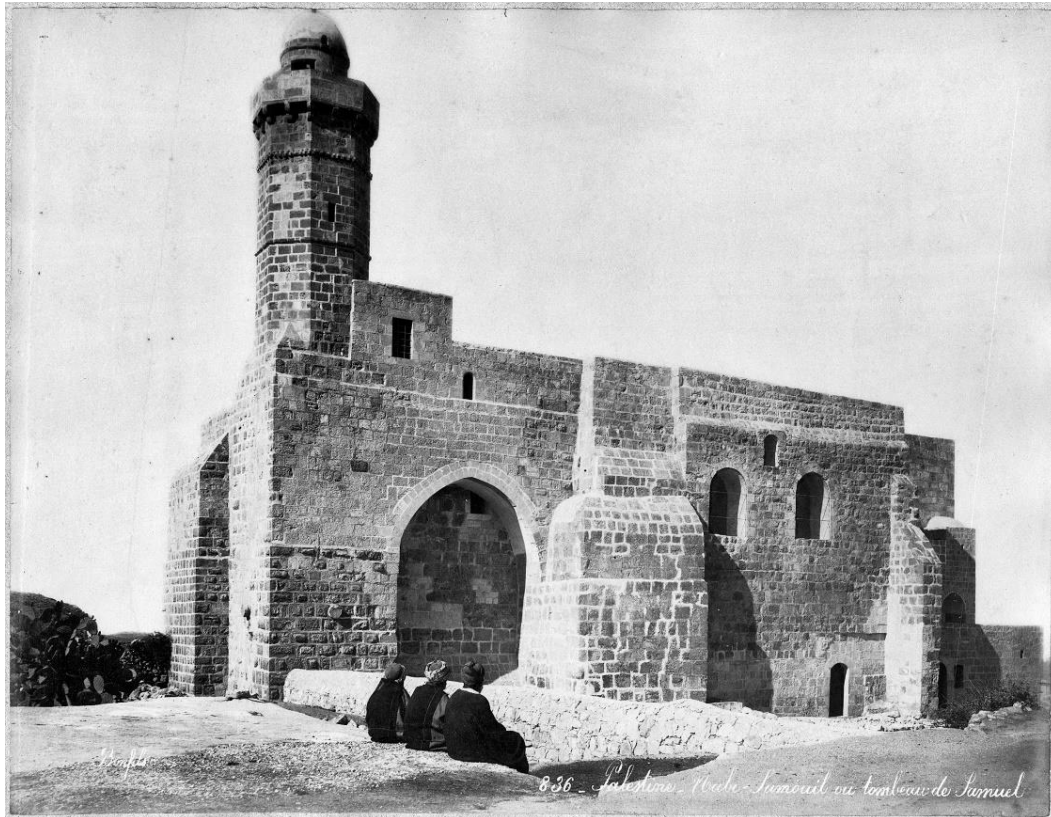


Figure 1. The maqām of Samuel (Nabi Samuel). Picture taken by F. Bonfils, c. 1880. Digitization French Biblical and Archaeological School.



*Figure 2. Nabi Mousa, one of the major shrines in Palestine.
Picture taken by the author, 2013.*



Figure 3. Left, a maqām in the old city of Hebron under Israeli military authority (H2). On the right, the inside of the maqām, with the tomb destroyed. Pictures taken by the author, 2018.



Figure 4. Maqām al-Sakawati in Tal Rumeida (Hebron). Picture from the survey of maqāmāt realized in 1984 by the Awqaf, Center for Revival of Heritage & Islamic Research (Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs).



Figure 5. The maqām of al-Sakawati today in Tal Rumeida (Hebron). Picture taken by the author, 2018.



*Figure 6. Courtyard of Nabi Yahya in Sebastia, in the ruins of the Crusaders' church.
 Picture taken by the author, 2013.*

2. THE MAQĀMĀT BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT: CONVERGING AND CONFLICTING NARRATIVES

a. Haram al-Ibrahimi - Hébron



Figure 7. The Maqām of Abraham in the Haram al-Ibrahimi, seen from the Muslim side of the mosque. On the other side of the bulletproof glass, the Jewish section. Picture by the author, 2013.



Figure 8. The Ishaqeyyah mosque (Isaac's hall) in the Haram al-Ibrahimi. On the right, the maqāmāt of Isaac and Rebecca. On the left, behind the open doors, the maqām of Abraham. Picture by the author, 2018.



M. Lecoquierre

Figure 9. The footprint next to the Maqām of Abraham: presented as that of Mohammed’s heel by many Muslims, but is believed to be that of Adam in Jewish tradition. Picture by the author, 2018.

“The Prophet's Footprint.

This sacred footprint, variously called that of Adam, or of the Prophet (Kadam en Neby), is preserved in one corner of the vaulted gallery leading to the upper tomb of Joseph, in the end wall of which a Mihrab, or prayer recess, has been constructed close to the footprint.

Conder and Kitchener, 1883: 341

b. Around the Haram: Abraham's oak and Takkiyeh

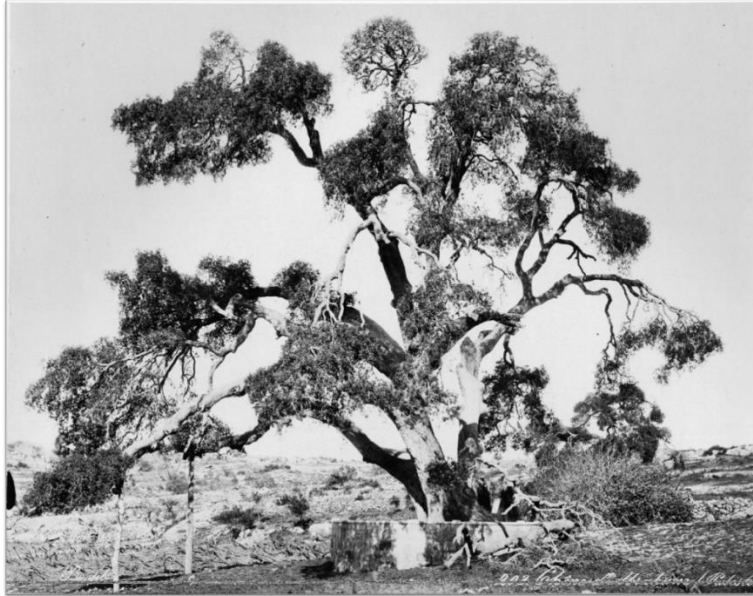


Figure 10. The Tree of Abraham, picture taken by F. Bonfils, c. 1880. Digitization French Biblical and Archaeological School.



Figure 11. Abraham's oak today. Picture taken by the author, 2016.

“The traditional oak of Abraham (...) This giant tree, which measures thirty-two feet in circumference, and whose leafy crown is supported by four main branches fifty feet in length, is revered as the direct surviving representative of the oaks (erroneously rendered " Plain ") of Mamre beneath which the patriarch was encamped when he entertained his angelic visitors and received the news of the future birth of Isaac, the son of promise. (...) It is known as Ballutet Sebta, or the "Oak of Rest," and it is supposed to be about two hundred years old”.

Wilson, 1880: 193

c. Maqām Yaqin/ Fatima/ Lut – Bani Na'im



Figure 12. Maqām Yaqin, in Bani Na'im. Picture by the author, 2018.

“In the vicinity of the turba of Lot is the Mosque of al-Yaqin, which is situated upon a high hill and has a brightness and a glow which no other mosque possesses.”

Ibn Battuta, 1325-1354 (2017): 76



Figure 13. The inside of Maqām Yaqin: in the foreground, the rock with the footprints. Traces of electricity work in the shrine can be seen on the walls. Picture taken by the author, 2018.

"In this mosque is seen the bedstead of Abraham, which is now sunk about an ell into the earth. It is related that when Abraham first saw from here, afar off, the Cities of Lot, he stood as one rooted, saying, 'Verily I now bear witness, for the word of the Lord is The Truth.' (Al Yakin)"

Al Muqaddasi, in Le Strange, 1886: 52

"In this mosque, closed by the door, there is a spot sunk in solid rock, in where there has been formed the figure of a mihrab, only large enough to accommodate a single worshipper. It is said that Abraham prostrated himself in this spot in gratitude to God Most High on the destruction of the men of Lot, and the place where he prostrated himself moved and sank down a little way in the ground."

Ibn Battuta, 2017 [1325-1354]: 76

"In a room in the Mosque is shown a rock encircled with an iron frame. On the rock are seen the impressions of two feet and of two hands. This is said to be the bedstead of Abraham, who left these impressions."

Vilnay, 1932: 198



Figure 14. On the left, the second set of footprints at Maqām Yaqin. On the right, the rocks that surround the footprints. The military observation point of the Israeli army can be seen in the distance. Pictures taken by the author, 2018.

“Outside this maqām there is another rock showing also the impressions of two feet. They are said to be those of Lot. This rock is surrounded by a huwetiye”

Canaan, 1927: 78.



Figure 15. Maqām Fatima. Picture from the survey of maqāmāt realized in 1984 by the Awqaf. Center for Revival of Heritage & Islamic Research (Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs).



Figure 16. Maqām Fatima today. The metal door leads to a staircase going in the cave underneath. Picture taken by the author, 2018.

MAQAM FATIMA

“In the neighbourhood of this mosque is a cave containing the tomb of Fatima, daughter of Husain b. Ali (...). At the head and foot of the grave are two slabs of marble, on one of which is written, engraved in a beautiful script: “in the name of God, the merciful, the Compassionate. To God is the Might and the Permanence, and to Him belongeth what He hath created and fashioned. Upon His creatures hath He decreed dissolution, and the Apostle of God is an example [for mankind]. This is the tomb of Umm Salama Fatima daughter of al-Hussein (...) On the other slab is engraved: “executed by Muhammad b. Abu Salh the engraver at Cairo”, and underneath are these verses:

*One whose dear dwelling was my breast,
Here, in the chill embrace of earth and stone,
Hast thou, my plaint unheeding, laid to rest.
O grave of Fatima, daughter of Fatima’s son,
Born of the shining stars of Ali’s race,
O grave, what godly faith is not thine own,
What virtue, purity, and modest grave!”*

Ibn Battuta, [1325-1354] 2017: 76-77



Figure 17. The tomb of Fatima, with the two inscribed slabs and a candle on the floor. Picture from the survey of maqāmāt realized in 1984 by the Awqaf. Center for Revival of Heritage & Islamic Research (Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs).

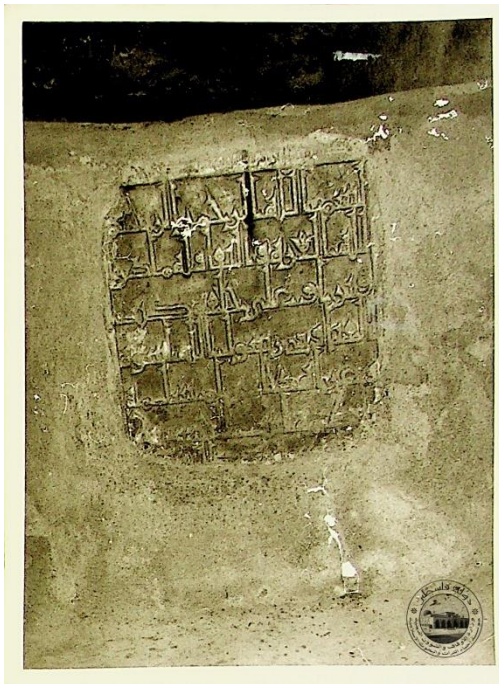


Figure 18. The qufic inscription on the tomb of Fatima. Picture from the survey of maqāmāt realized in 1984 by the Awqaf. Center for Revival of Heritage & Islamic Research (Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs).



Figure 19. The tomb of Fatima today. Picture taken by the author, 2018.



Figure 20. Maqām Lut inside the Mosque of Lut, in Bani Na'im. Picture taken by the author, 2018.

d. Nabi Yunis - Halhul



Figure 21. Two pictures of Nabi Yunis in Halhul. G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, c. 1920.



“We ascended the lofty hill to the little village and weli of Nebi Yunas (Prophet Jonas) which is so conspicuous an object far away in every direction, the minaret which rises from the building giving it very much the appearance of a rural church in Europe”

Finn, 1872: 290



Figure 22. Nabi Yunis shrine and mosque in Halhul. Picture taken by the author, 2018.

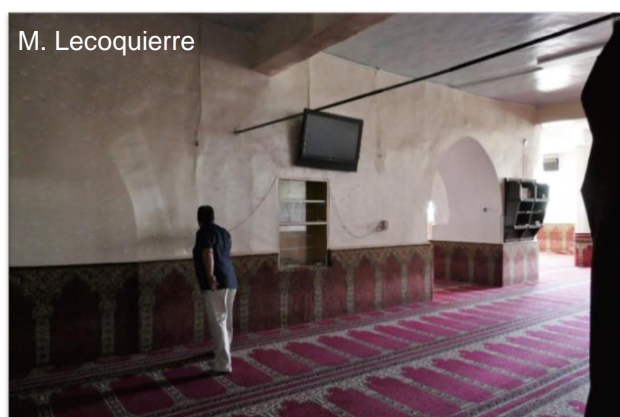


Figure 23. Inside Nabi Yunis: on the left, the arches corresponding to the original structure. On the right, the arches of the main entrance that can be seen, integrated to the wall. Pictures taken by the author, 2018.



Figure 24. The cenotaph of Prophet Jonas at the center of the mosque, within a closed room (metal fences and curtains). Picture taken by the author, 2018.

e. Nabi Nuh - Dura



Figure 25. The main entrance of Nabi Nuh (Dura). Picture by the author, 2018.



Figure 26. The cenotaph of Noah in Nabi Nuh in Dura. Picture by the author, 2018.

f. Maqām Sheikh Al-Abed – Al-Tabaqa



Figure 27. Maqām al-'Abed in al-Tabaqa. Picture from the survey of maqāmāt in 1984 by the Awqaf. Center for Revival of Heritage & Islamic Research (Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs).



Figure 28. Maqām al-'Abed today. Picture taken by the author, 2018.



Figure 29. Inside Maqām al-'Abed. On the left, the entrance door. On the right, the wall with the mihrab. Pictures taken by the author, 2018.



Figure 30. Maqām al-'Abed. On the left, the entrance to the cave under the maqām. Picture taken by the author, 2018.



Figure 31. The cave under Maqām al-'Abed. Picture taken by the author, 2018.

g. Rachel's Tomb/ Milk Grotto – Bethlehem



Figure 32. Rachel's tomb, picture by F. Bonfils, c. 1880. Digitization French Biblical and Archaeological School.

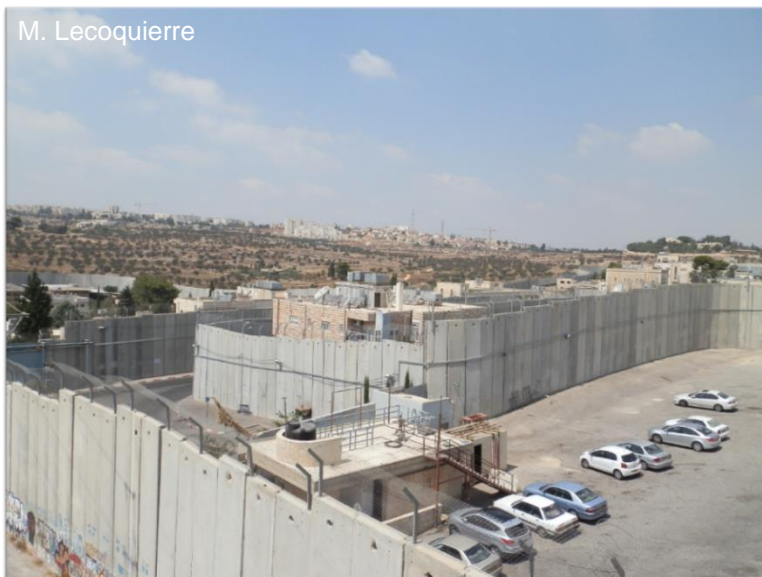


Figure 33. The intricate design of the separation wall allowing access to Rachel's Tomb. On the right, the parking lot. The Tomb is on the left. Picture taken by the author, 2011.



Figure 34. The access to Rachel's tomb. On the left, the separation wall, on the right, the new structure and entrance doors. Picture taken by the author, 2018.

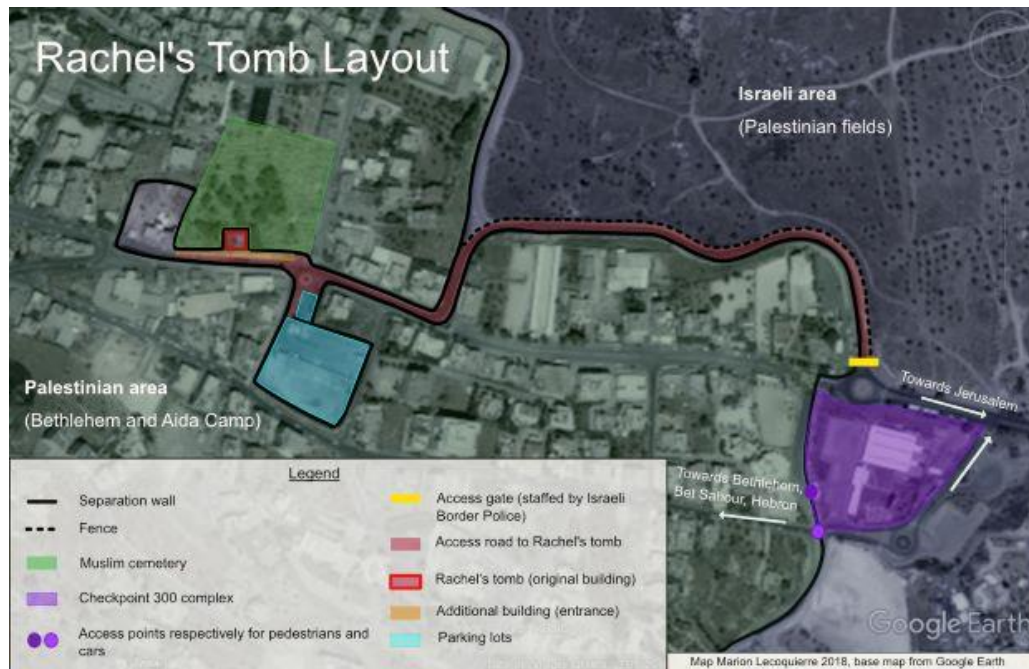


Figure 35. The complex layout of Rachel's Tomb. Map M. Lecoquierre.



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3. PERMANENCE AND CHANGE: PRACTICES IN AND AROUND THE MAQĀMĀT

3.1. Private practices

- Prayer/ Places of prayer

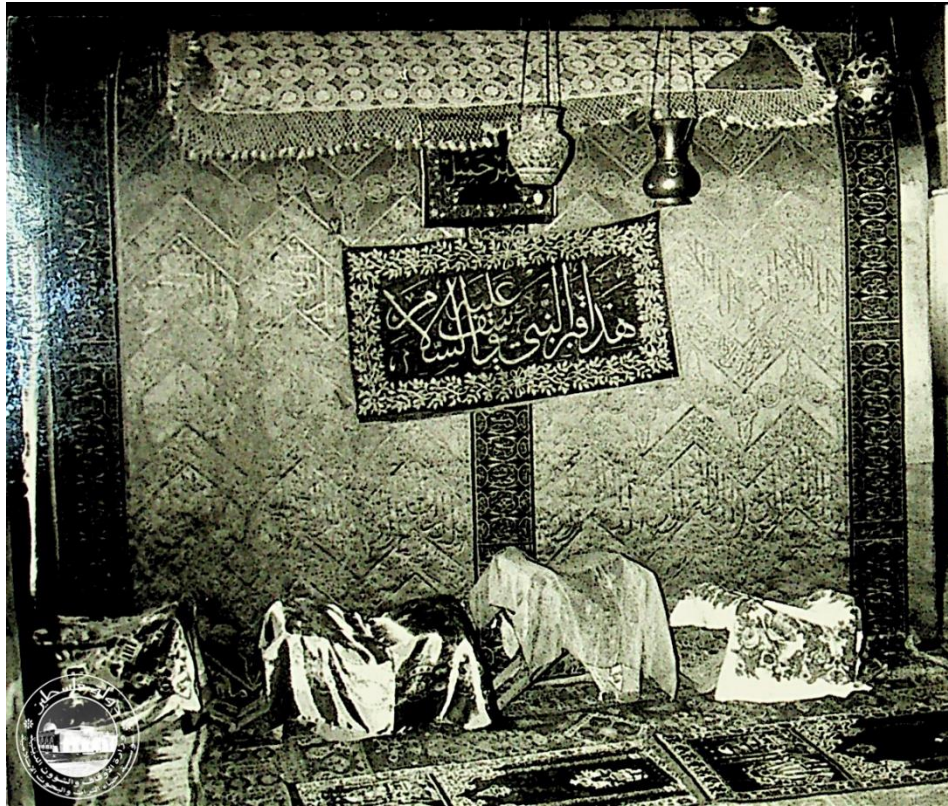


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Figure 38. A Muslim woman praying in front of the Maqām of Abraham, in the Cave of Patriarchs. In the background, on the left, the metallic dividers separating the building. Picture taken by the author, 2018.



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Figure 39. People praying in front of the maqāmāt on the Jewish side of the Cave of Patriarchs. On the left a woman praying in front of the cenotaph of Jacob, men praying in front of the maqām of Abraham. Pictures taken by the author, 2018.



Figure 40. The eastern entrance of the Haram al-Ibrahimi (now destroyed) leading to the "seventh step". G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, c. 1920.



Figure 41. The sign put at the location of the "seventh step". Picture taken by the author, 2018.



Figure 42. Prayer at the 7th step: on the left next to the opening to the cave, on the right to the wall of the Haram. Pictures taken by the author, 2018 and 2013.

- Notes



Figure 43. Detail of the notes and prayers inserted in the hole connecting the outside world to the cave. Picture taken by the author, 2018



Figure 44. Notes put in the cracks of the Haram al-Ibrahimi's wall, at the location of the "seventh step". Picture taken by the author, 2018.

- Candles

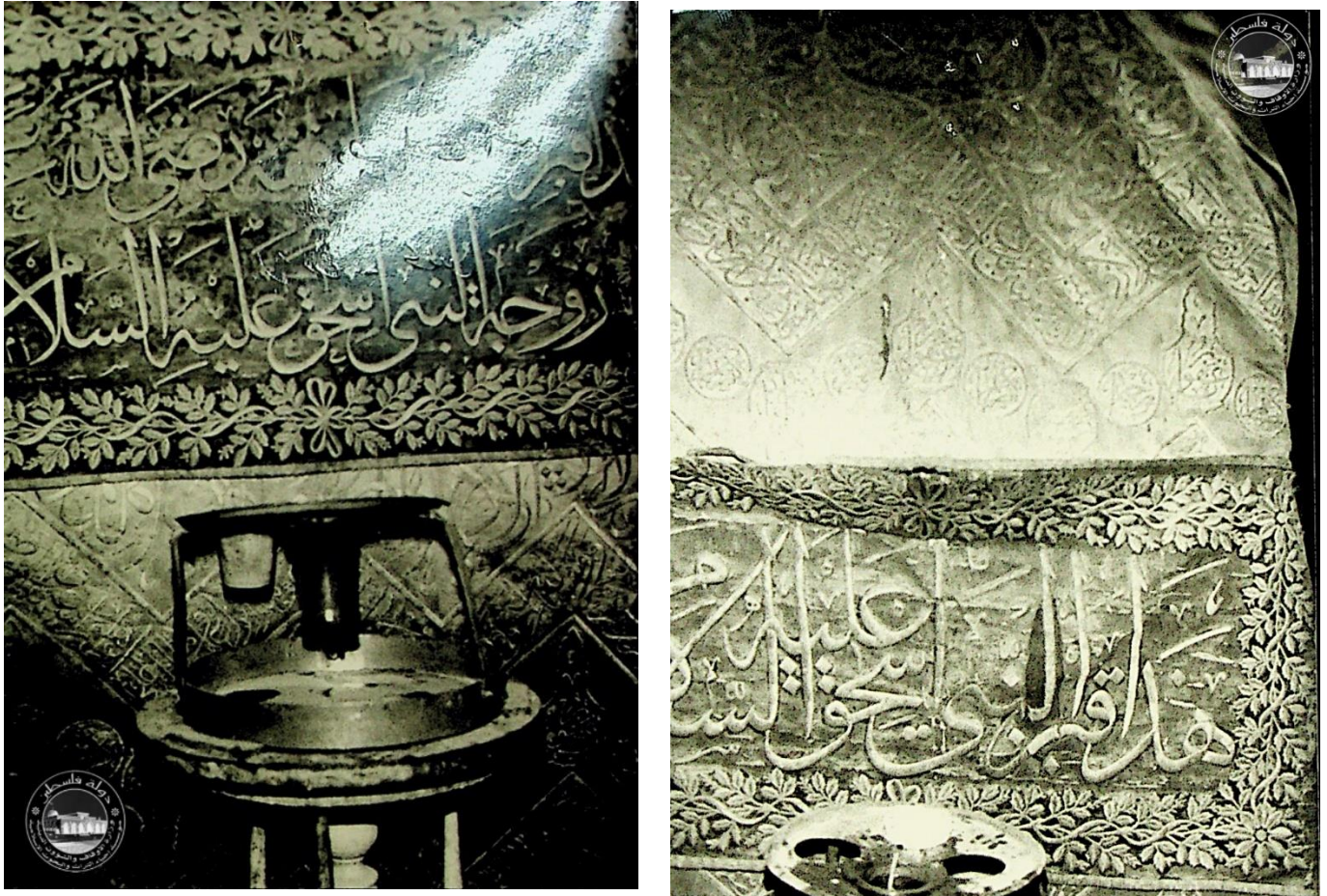


Figure 45. Olive-oil candles installed in front of the cenotaphs of Rebecca (left, indicated on the embroidery as “the wife of Isaac”) and Isaac (right) inside the Haram al-Ibrahimi. Pictures from the survey of maqāmāt in 1984 by the Awqaf. Center for Revival of Heritage & Islamic Research (Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs).

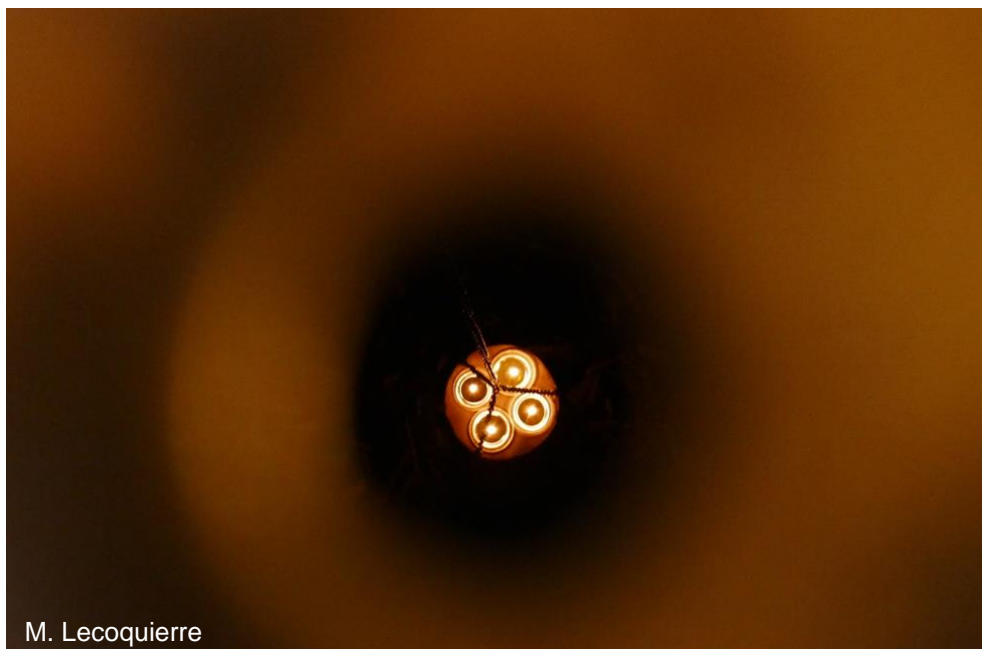


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Figure 49. The lit candles at 'Ain Ayyub, pictures taken by Abushaker, a young man living in the neighborhood of the spring, to share on social networks.

- Pieces of cloth

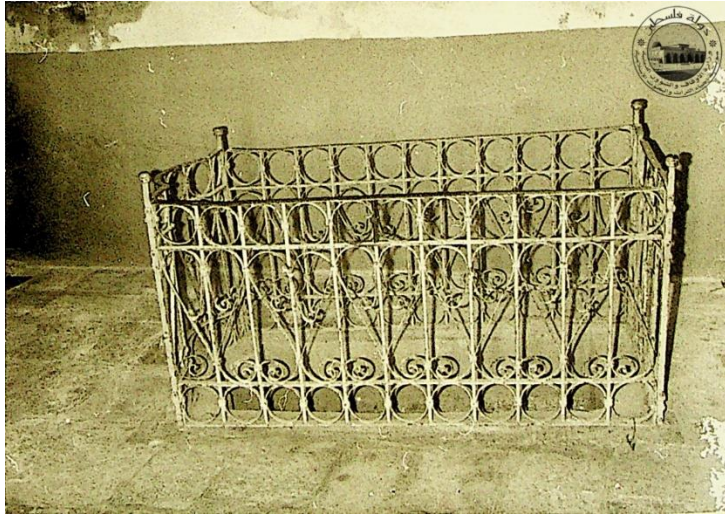


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Figure 51. The pieces of cloth still tied to the window of Maqām Fatima. Picture taken by the author, 2018.

- Magical practices

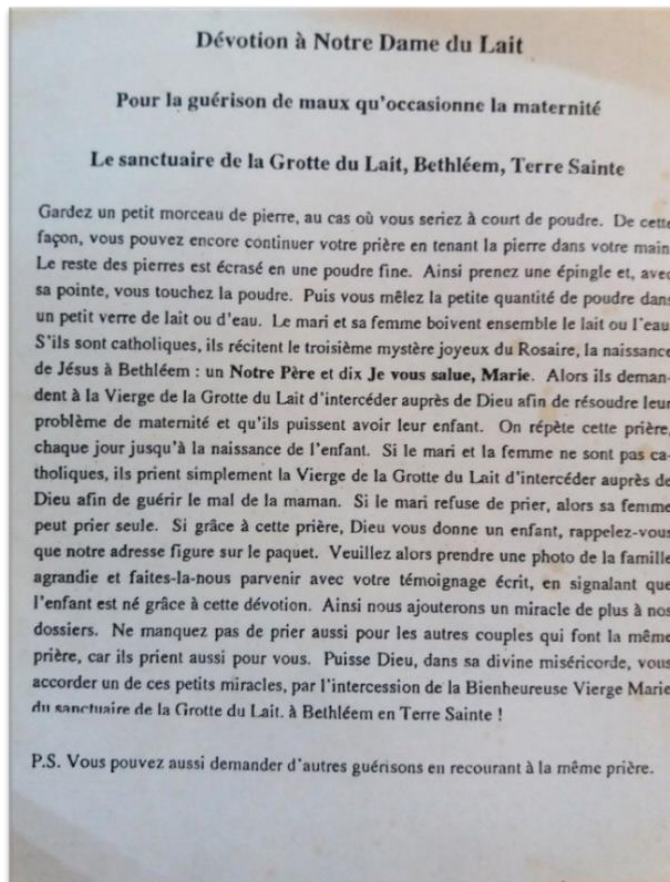


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Figure 53. A wall in the shop of the Milk Grotto: letters from believers around the world signaling a pregnancy or healing due to the rock powder or prayers to the Virgin Mary. Picture taken by the author, 2018.

3.2. *Collective practice and moments*



Figure 54. Women enter the Muslim section of the Cave of Patriarchs next to the maqām of Abraham during one of the ten days the building is accessible entirely to Jewish worshippers. Picture taken by the author, 2013.

5. INTANGIBLE HERITAGE



Figure 55. Representations of the three angels visiting Abraham and Abraham receiving them as his guests in the Russian orthodox church of Hebron. Pictures taken by the author, 2018.

“In the Sanctuary at Hebron is a public guest-house, with a kitchener, a baker, and servants appointed thereto. These present a dish of lentils and olive oil to every poor person who arrives, and it is even set before the rich if perchance they desire to partake of it. Most men erroneously imagine that this dole is of the original Guest-house of Abraham, but in truth the funds come from the bequests of Tamim ad Dari and others”.

Muqaddasi, transl. Le Strange, 1886



*Figure 56. Inside the kitchen of the Ibrahimi takiyyeh, the employees serve soup to those in needs.
Pictures taken by the author, 2018.*



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Figure 57. The takiyyeh of Nabi Nuh in Dura. Above the door, the graffiti says “Takiyyeh”, and on both sides of the door “Takiyyeh of Nabi Nuh”. Pictures taken by the author, 2018.



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