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Fluid Boundaries: Christian Sacred Space and Islamic Relics in an Early *Ḥadīth*

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Abstract

This article examines a *ḥadīth* text that illustrates the complicated interactions between Christian and Islamic sacred spaces in the early period of Islamic rule in the Near East. In this narrative, the Prophet Muḥammad gives a group of Arabs instructions for how to convert a church into a mosque, telling them to use his ablution water for cleansing and repurposing the Christian space for Muslim worship. Contextualizing this narrative in terms of early Muslim-Christian relations, as well as late antique Christian religious texts and practices, my analysis compares this story with Christian traditions regarding the collection and usage of contact relics from holy persons and places. I argue that this story offers an example of early Islamic texts' engagement with, and adaptation of, Christian literary themes and ritual practices in order to validate early Islamic religious claims.

Keywords

Early Islam – Christian-Muslim relations – churches – mosques – relics – ḥadīth

In his geographical text *Aḥsān al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, Shams al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī (d. *ca.* 380/990) mentions a conversation he had with his uncle about the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Bemoaning the building's opulence, al-Muqaddasī complains that its constructor, the caliph al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 86–96/705–715), had spent "so much of the Muslims' wealth on the mosque in Damascus," when that money might have been more responsibly

spent on "roads, or water troughs, or the restoration of fortresses." Disagreeing, his uncle responds:

> O my little boy, you do not understand! Al-Walīd was right and he under-
> took a worthy project. He saw that Syria was a country of the Christians,
> and he saw the beautiful churches with their enchanting decorations,
> renowned far and wide … So, he built a mosque for the Muslims that
> would divert their attention from [the churches] and made it one of the
> wonders of the world.

Al-Muqaddasī's uncle adds that al-Walīd's father and caliphal predecessor, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705), similarly had feared that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem would "beguile the hearts of the Muslims," and was thus spurred to build the Dome of the Rock there. Elsewhere, al-Muqaddasī claims that ʿAbd al-Malik also had been motivated to beautify the Aqṣā Mosque, "because it was compared with the great Christian church in Jerusalem [i.e., the Church of the Holy Sepulcher], so they made it greater than that."[1]

The comments of this tenth-century author and his opinionated uncle highlight a reality of the spatial environment within which these Islamic monuments of the Umayyad period were constructed: a Near Eastern landscape dominated by Christian churches and shrines. As this text suggests, authorities in the first centuries of Islamic rule contested this Christian architectural dominance, imposing their presence upon the physical environment in a variety of ways.[2]

However, while praising the Umayyads' architectural efforts to signal Islamic superiority, al-Muqaddasī betrays the appreciation of – and interactions with – Christian buildings that Muslims exhibited for centuries. Indeed,

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1   Shams al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī (or al-Maqdisī), *Kitāb Aḥsān al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 159, 168; *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*, trans. Basil Anthony Collins, rev. Muhammad Hamid al-Tai (Reading: Garnet, 1994), 146, 153 (adapted here).

2   This included not only the construction of visual symbols of Islamic imperial control – such as the buildings described above – but also the control of the "acoustic environment" in which places of worship participated, exemplified in the forbidding of Christians from sounding the *nāqūs* and Jews from blowing the shofar, and from raising their voices during services. Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 83, 91, 101–109, 157–161; Mattia Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church: The Building of Mosques in Early Medieval Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 72; Nancy Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in Early Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–4.

early Muslims not only gazed upon churches and monasteries, but also visited and worshipped within them, engaging tactilely with the sacred materials that these buildings contained. Archaeological evidence points to Muslim visitation of the Kathisma Church – located south of Jerusalem and centered upon a stone where the Virgin Mary was believed to have sat – where a *miḥrāb* has been uncovered, as well as a glass pilgrimage vessel likely used for collecting water hallowed by its contact with the sacred stone.[3] In his *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, al-Shābushtī (d. *ca.* 388/998) describes a similar practice at a monastery near the Sea of Galilee visited by both Christians and Muslims: the monastery contained a stone upon which Jesus sat, and from which "everyone who enters the place breaks off a piece, in order to seek blessing from it."[4] This and other evidence suggests that early Muslims visited and venerated several such Christian spaces, in many cases collecting material manifestations of these locations' sacredness.

In this article, I suggest that the kinds of complex interreligious dynamics on view in these early Islamic texts and contexts are reflected also in an unusual *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet Muḥammad instructs a group of Arabs on how to convert a church into a mosque. This text has most often been read as providing evidence for the presence of Christianity in the Arabian Peninsula in the pre-Islamic period, with its mention of a church (*bīʿa*)[5] and a monk

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3 Rina Avner, "The Kathisma: A Christian and Muslim Pilgrimage Site," *ARAM* 18–19 (2006–2007): 541–57 at 546–547, 550.

4 ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Shābushtī, *al-Diyārāt*, ed. Kūrkīs ʿAwwād (Beirut: Dār Rāʾid al-ʿArabī, 1986), 204; Hilary Kilpatrick, "Monasteries Through Muslim Eyes: The *Diyārāt* Books," in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in ʿAbbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 26; Elizabeth Campbell, "A Heaven of Wine: Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2009), 48; Moshe Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae, Volume Three: D–F* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 213–219.

5 On this ambiguous term, used in reference to Christian churches and monasteries, and to Jewish synagogues, see: Irfan Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Volume II, Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 172; Elizabeth Key Fowden, "The Lamp and the Wine Flask: Early Muslim Interest in Christian Monasticism," in *Islamic Crosspollinations: Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*, ed. Anna Akasoy, James E. Montgomery, and Peter E. Pormann (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), 5, 22 n.23, 26 n.80; Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church*, 47, 68; EI², s.v. "Kanīsa" (G. Troupeau); Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 201 n.59; Campbell, "A Heaven of Wine," 17. The plural form *biyaʿ* occurs at Qurʾān 22:40, and has been variously interpreted as referring there to Christian or Jewish worship spaces. The term *bīʿa* appears to have been adopted into Arabic from Syriac *bīʿtā* (ܒܝܥܬܐ): Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 86–87. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for bringing this to my attention. The word appears in a Sabaic inscription dated to 548 CE, where it clearly references a Christian building: Christian Julien Robin, "Ḥimyar, Aksūm, and *Arabia Deserta* in

(*rāhib*) residing among the Banū Ḥanīfa tribe in the eastern Arabian region of al-Yamāma.[6] Yet historians of early Islam have remained tight-lipped about (or puzzled by) the largely unprecedented prescription that the Prophet metes out when he tells the Banū Ḥanīfa to destroy their church, to wash it with some water that the Prophet had used to perform ablutions, and then to claim the space as a mosque. The nineteenth-century Orientalist William Muir wrote: "The story appears improbable, because nowhere else is Mahomet represented as exhibiting such antagonism to Christians and their Churches, when they submitted themselves to him."[7] Hesitant to make such a judgement based only on the "sporadic and meagre information" regarding the Prophet's position on Christian churches, Suliman Bashear wrote that this "isolated" tradition offers "the only 'historical' policy the Prophet is reported to have taken towards churches."[8] Recently, Mattia Guidetti has laconically commented that the Prophet "reportedly advised the Banu Hanifa to convert (perhaps temporarily) the church of a monk into a mosque" before noting that "practices of conversion in Arabia before and after Muhammad are difficult to ascertain."[9]

How should we interpret this *ḥadīth* and its prescription for making a mosque out of a Christian sacred space? As we will see, reconstructing the history of the Prophet Muḥammad's – and subsequent Muslim generations' – encounters with churches and monasteries is difficult, due to the limited and sometimes contradictory literary and material evidence available to us. Yet it

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Late Antiquity: The Epigraphic Evidence," in *Arabs and Empires Before Islam*, ed. Greg Fisher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 154, 164–167.

6   Leoni Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, 12 vols. (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905–1926), 2.1:336; Henri Lammens, *L'Arabie occidentale avant l'Hégire* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1928), 22; Charles J. Lyall, "The Words 'Ḥanīf' and 'Muslim,'" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 35.4 (1903): 771–84 at 777; Dale F. Eickelman, "Musaylima: An Approach to the Social Anthropology of Seventh Century Arabia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 10.1 (1967): 17–52 at 31–32; Fred M. Donner, "The Bakr b. Wā'il Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam," *Studia Islamica* 51 (1980): 5–38 at 26; Khalil Saleh Saleem Abu-Rahmeh, "The Poetry of the Bakr Tribe in their Politico-Tribal Role from 1–132 A.H., with a Detailed Study of Four Bakrī Poets" (PhD diss., University of London, 1981), 56; Abdullah Al-Askar, *Al-Yamama in the Early Islamic Era* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2002), 78; Michael Lecker, "Idol Worship in Pre-Islamic Yamāma," *Festschrift for Christian Robin* (forthcoming).

7   William Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, 4 vols. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1858–1861), 2:303–304. A similar sentiment appears in Johannes Pedersen's dismissal of the episode as "No[t] … at all probable." *EI*², s.v. "Masādjid" (J. Pedersen).

8   Suliman Bashear, "Qibla Musharriqa and Early Muslim Prayer in Churches," *Muslim World* 81.3–4 (1991): 267–82 at 274.

9   Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church*, 76. See also the comments on this *ḥadīth* in: Essam Abdelrahman, "The Influence of the *Ḥadīth* on the Architecture of Early Congregational Mosques" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2010), 193–195.

appears that the conversion of a church into a mosque would have been a quite unusual event with few parallels in either the lifetime of the Prophet or in the following years of conquest outside of the Arabian Peninsula. More common was the continued existence of Christian buildings, sometimes directly next to new Muslim ones: a pattern to which al-Muqaddasī attests.

Rather than violent interaction between early Muslims and Christian space, I suggest that the *ḥadīth* instead testifies to early Islamic narrative engagement with a central conceptual component of late antique Christian sacred space: the presence therein of holy relics. While this *ḥadīth* stands oddly against the historical and legal landscape of early Muslims' treatment of Christian churches, it fits perfectly within the literary and material environment of late antique Christians' usage of the relics of holy persons and places. Christians frequently deployed relics in their creation and control of sacred spaces, as these objects "turned the churches into 'holy places' housing the saint."[10] This *ḥadīth* depicts a similar usage of a relic: but here, instead of a Christian martyr's relic sacralizing a Christian church or monastery, an Islamic mosque is created with a relic of the Prophet Muḥammad, his used ablution water.

I suggest we interpret this *ḥadīth* as a late antique hagiographic text that draws upon Christian signifiers in order to attest to the superiority of Islam over Christianity.[11] Viewed from the perspective of the late antique Near East, this story about the Banū Ḥanīfa and the Prophet's ablution water offers an Islamic spin on (if not parody of) Christian stories and practices involving relics, sacred spaces, and holy men. Adapting Christian topoi for an Islamic audience, this *ḥadīth* exemplifies early Muslims' engagement with the late antique "*koinê* of signs, symbols, and narrative forms."[12] While scholars have taken note of many of these late antique patterns and archetypes present throughout early Islamic texts, comparatively little note has been made of the presence of the specific late antique discourse of relics in stories of the Prophet Muḥammad and the early Muslim community.[13] This article draws attention to an example

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10   Robert A. Markus, "How on Earth Could Places Become Holy?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2.3 (1994): 257–71 at 270.

11   For discussions of attestation narratives in the Prophet's biography, see: Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 21–43; Chase Robinson, "Prophecy and Holy Men in Early Islam," in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*, ed. James Howard-Johnston and Paul Anthony Hayward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 243–247.

12   Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 13, 149.

13   For some notable exceptions, see: Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 85–134; Brannon M. Wheeler, "Gift of the Body in Islam: The Prophet Muhammad's Camel Sacrifice and Distribution of Hair and Nails at his Farewell Pilgrimage," *Numen* 57.3 (2010): 341–388;

of the usage of relics in the *ḥadīth* literature, and its likely background in the wider late antique hagiographic milieu.

1 "Destroy Your Church": Situating an Unusual Early Islamic Report

During the ninth year of the Hijra (630–631 CE) – the so-called "Year of Delegations" (*ʿām al-wufūd*) – groups from throughout the Arabian Peninsula responded to the call to Islam sounded by the Prophet Muḥammad and dispatched representatives to Medina in order to pledge their loyalties to his new Muslim community.[14] One such group was the Banū Ḥanīfa, a tribal group residing in the central-eastern region of al-Yamāma.[15] Narrated by a member of the delegation named Ṭalq b. ʿAlī,[16] the story of the Banū Ḥanīfa runs as follows, with some slight variations between the different textual attestations:

> We went as a delegation to the Messenger of God, pledged allegiance to him, and prayed with him. We told him that we had a church in our land, and requested that he give us the leftovers of his ablution water. He called for water, performed ablutions, rinsed out his mouth, and placed [the used water] in a vessel. He said, "Take this with you. When you have reached your country, destroy your church, sprinkle its location with the water, and take [the place] as a mosque" … When we arrived in our land, we destroyed our church, sprinkled its location [with the water], and took [the place] as a mosque. We then called the *adhān* in it. The

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Josef Meri, "Relics of Piety and Power in Medieval Islam," in *Relics and Remains, Past and Present* Supplement 5, ed. Alexandra Walsham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 97–120; Adam Bursi, "A Hair's Breadth: The Prophet Muhammad's Hair as Relic in Early Islamic Texts," in *Religious Competition in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Nathaniel P. DesRosiers and Lily C. Vuong (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 219–231.

14 *EI*², s.v. "Wufūd" (M. Lecker); Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 62–65.

15 On the debated definitions of the boundaries of al-Yamāma in Arabic sources, see: Al-Askar, *Al-Yamama*, 7–13.

16 For the minimal biographical details available on Ṭalq, including reports that he aided in the construction of the Prophet's mosque in Medina, see: Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, ed. Akram Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿUmarī (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿĀnī, 1967), 65, 289; Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, 4 vols. in 8 (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1941–1964), 2/ii:358; Muḥammad b. Saʿd b. Manīʿ al-Zuhrī, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar, 11 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), 8:112–113; Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥamdī ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Salafī, 25 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, n.d.), 8:396–406 (nos. 8233–8263); ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā bi-akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafā*, ed. Qāsim al-Sāmarrāʾī, 5 vols. (London: Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī, 2001), 2:41–42.

monk in those days was a man from [the tribe of] Ṭayyi'. When the monk heard the *adhān*, he said, "A call to truth!" Then he left and was never seen again.[17]

Like other Arab delegations that made their way to the Prophet in Medina, the Banū Ḥanīfa "pledged allegiance to him and prayed with him" (*bāyaʿnā-hu wa ṣallaynā maʿa-hu*), suggesting their tribe's ritual acceptance of Islam. In the extended narrative of the Banu Ḥanīfa's visit found in Muḥammad b. Saʿd's (d. 230/845) *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, the delegation reportedly "came to the Messenger of God in the mosque, wished peace upon him, and bore witness to the true creed (*shahidū shahādat al-ḥaqq*)": an ambiguous phrasing, seemingly suggesting some form of ideological commitment to Islamic belief.[18]

However, unlike most of the other Arab delegations, who are generally depicted as polytheistic idolaters, the Banū Ḥanīfa appear to have some connection to Christian practice, suggested here by their mention of a church (*bīʿa*) located in their land.[19] Seemingly as part of their conversion to Islam,

17   Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, 1:273–274, 8:112–113; ʿUmar b. Shabba, *Taʾrīkh al-Madīna al-munawwara*, ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1990), 2:599–601; Aḥmad b. Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan al-Nasāʾī bi-sharḥ al-imāmayn al-Suyūṭī wa-l-Sindī*, ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Sayyid, ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿAlī, and Sayyid ʿUmrān, 5 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1999), 1:476 (no. 700); al-Nasāʾī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, ed. Abū Anas Jād Allāh b. Ḥasan al-Khaddāsh, 3 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2006), 1:128 (no. 782); al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 8:398–399 (no. 8241); Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*, ed. Muḥammad Rawwās Qalʿajī and ʿAbd al-Barr ʿAbbās, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1986), 1:90–91 (no. 47); Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān al-Tamīmī al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān: al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ ʿalā al-Taqāsīm wa-l-anwāʿ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī Sūnmaz and Khāliṣ Āy Damīr, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012), 5:305 (no. 4443); Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa wa maʿrifat aḥwāl ṣāḥib al-sharīʿa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Qalʿajī, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985–1988), 2:542–543; Abū ʿUmar Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Istīʿab fī maʿrifat al-aṣḥāb*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajjāwī, 4 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat Miṣr, 1960), 2:776–777 (no. 1300); ʿAlī al-Jazarī Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012), 598 (no. 2637); Ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 14 vols. (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1988), 5:52.

18   Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, 1:273–274.

19   On the presence of Christianity among the pre-Islamic Banū Ḥanīfa and in al-Yamāma, see: *EI*², s.v. "Ḥanīfa b. Ludjaym" (W. M. Watt), s.v. "Naṣārā" (J. M. Fiey), and s.v. "Bakr b. Wāʾil" (W. Caskel); J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (London: Longman, 1979), 279–286; Hamad M. Bin Seray, "Christianity in East Arabia," *ARAM* 8 (1996): 315–32 at 325; Barbara Finster, "Arabia in Late Antiquity: An Outline of the Cultural Situation in the Peninsula at the Time of Muhammad," trans. Laurent Faasch-Ibrahim, in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 70–72;

the Prophet gives the Banū Ḥanīfa instructions for repurposing this church as a mosque (*masjid*), which they dutifully follow: they "destroyed" (*kasarnā*) the church, sprinkled the space with the water provided by the Prophet, and repurposed it as a new mosque.[20] The description here is sparse, without specification of which parts of the building were "destroyed" or what exactly the Prophet's water was sprinkled upon.[21] The clearest expression of the building's new sectarian orientation comes in auditory form, with the performance in the Banū Ḥanīfa's new mosque of the Islamic call to prayer, the *adhān*. This sound dislodges a significant avatar of Christianity from the former church: a monk. Identified in different versions of the report as "the monk of the church," "our [i.e., the Banū Ḥanīfa's?] monk," or simply "the monk," this unnamed figure

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Isabel Toral-Niehoff, "The ʿIbād of al-Ḥīra: An Arab Christian Community in Late Antique Iraq," in Neuwirth et al., *The Qurʾān in Context*, 329–331.

20   The verb used for "destroy," *kasara*, appears in both Islamic and Christian Arabic texts in the context of the destruction of idols: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥamad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Jumʿa and Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Laḥīdān, 16 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2004), 11:346 (no. 33532); Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Aṣnām*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Bāshā (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1924), 27, 30, 31, 55; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka wa-mā jāʾa fīhā min al-āthār*, ed. ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Duhaysh (Mecca: Maktabat al-Asadī, 2003), 189–195 (nos. 143, 147–151); *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd Shiḥāta, 5 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2002), 1:138; Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, ed. Marsden Jones, 3 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 2:870–871; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, 2:128, 136; Addaï Scher, ed. and trans., *Histoire nestorienne inédite (Chronique de Séert)*, Patrologia Orientalis 4.3, 5.2, 7.2, 13.4 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1908–1919), 2/2:508 [188] (no. 74), 2/2:588 [268] (no. 97). The word also appears in Islamic texts in the context of the destruction of Christian crosses: Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1979), 127; ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aʿẓamī, 11 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), 11:399–401 (nos. 20840, 20843–20845); G.H.A. Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 608. Ibn Kathīr's story of the Banū Ḥanīfa delegation substitutes the verb *hadama*, itself frequently found in passages on the destruction of idols: Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 5:52.

21   Finbarr Barry Flood notes that "'destruction' in medieval Islamic texts could meaningfully refer to transformation of buildings and objects that fell far short of physical obliteration … In some cases, desecration and ritual defilement were considered sufficient to 'destroy' religious icons by demonstrating their impotence in the face of such an affront." Such a conception of "destruction" may also be operative here, as Guidetti argues in regard to a later story of a church's modification by Muslim authorities. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *Art Bulletin* 84.4 (2002): 641–59 at 657; Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church*, 46 n.38.

hears the Islamic call to prayer, declares its veracity, and leaves the space, never to be seen again.[22]

As noted above, scholars have not made much of this story, aside from noting its apparent indication – with mentions of a church and a monk – that the Banū Ḥanīfa practiced some form of Christianity. Yet it is difficult to fit this narrative into a wider pattern of early Islamic interactions with Christian churches and sacred spaces in the seventh and eighth centuries, the study of which is complicated by the heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory information offered by different historical sources. Based upon the available literary and material evidence, it appears that early Muslim interactions with Christian holy spaces did not follow a single pattern, but that the formative seventh and eighth centuries were characterized by different practices and ideas at different times and places.

Even within this complicated tapestry, however, the story of the destruction of the Banū Ḥanīfa's church in al-Yamāma stands outs as an unusual example of early interactions between Muslims and Christian sacred spaces. To begin with, the story has no clear parallel in Islamic traditions about the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, which more often depict the Prophet pursuing a non-interventionist approach to the Christians encountered by the Muslim community as they gained control over the Arabian Peninsula. The most salient example is the set of favorable terms reportedly offered by the Prophet to the Christians of Najrān. Unlike pagan Arabian communities who entered the Islamic *umma*, the Christians of Najrān were not required to adopt Islamic ritual practices or to fight alongside the Prophet's forces.[23] Instead, they were promised that "no bishop will be removed from his office, no priest from his priesthood, no monk from his asceticism," and that the Najrānī Christians "shall be called to armed combat."[24] Among the stipulations offered by

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22   He is identified as "the monk of the church" in: Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, 1:274. He is called "our monk" in: Ibn Shabba, *Taʾrīkh al-Madīna*, 1:601; Abū Nuʿaym, *Dalāʾil al-nubu-wwa*, 1:91. Otherwise, "the monk" appears in the versions cited in note 17 above.

23   Regarding the requirements for joining the emergent *umma* in this period, see: Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and His People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 388–398; Harry Munt, "What Did Conversion to Islam Mean in Seventh-Century Arabia?" in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 83–101; W. Montgomery Watt, "Conversion in Islam at the Time of the Prophet," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47, Thematic Issue S (1980): 721–731; Sarah Mirza, "*Dhimma* Agreements and Sanctuary Systems at Islamic Origins," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 77 (2018): 99–117.

24   Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, 1:229, 249, 308; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Anīs al-Ṭabbāʿ and ʿUmar Anīs al-Ṭabbāʿ (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Maʿārif, 1987), 85–88; Ibn Shabba, *Taʾrīkh al-Madīna*, 2:584–586; al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil*

the Prophet, the Najrānīs were guaranteed that their possessions – including their churches (*biyaʿ*) – would remain within their own ownership and control, under "the protection of God and the security of the Prophet Muḥammad, the Messenger of God" (*jiwār Allāh wa-dhimmat Muḥammad al-nabī rasūl Allāh*).[25] Shortly after the Prophet's death, the first caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (r. 11–13/632–634) reportedly dispatched a document reiterating these terms for the Najrānī Christians, including protections for "their priests, their monks, and their churches."[26]

Notices of such interactions between early Muslims and Christians are recorded not only in Islamic historical and juristic texts, but also in Christian histories and hagiographies depicting this early period. The *Chronicle of Seert* – a tenth- or eleventh-century Arabic compilation offering a history of the (Nestorian) Church of the East – includes a version of the agreement with the Christians of Najrān in which the Prophet guarantees that "I will defend them, their cathedrals, their churches, their houses of prayer, the places of monks, and the residences of anchorites," that "no priest will be removed from his priesthood, no monk from his asceticism, no anchorite from his hermitage," and that "no church building will be destroyed, and none of them shall be entered for the purposes of constructing mosques or houses for the Muslims."[27] In the same

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al-nubuwwa, 5:389–391; *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, 1:324–325; Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 72–73; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, *al-Aṣl*, ed. Mehmet Boynukalın, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012), 7:550–552; Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImāra (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1989), 280–281 (no. 504); Ḥumayd b. Zanjawayh, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, ed. Shākir Dhīb Fayyāḍ (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal li-l-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 1986), 449–450 (no. 732).

25   On this terminology within early documents, and the fact that both Muslims and non-Muslims could be accorded the "*dhimma* of God and his Messenger," see: Mirza, "*Dhimma* Agreements," 100–105; Robert Hoyland, with an appendix by Hannah Cotton, "The Earliest Attestation of the *Dhimma* of God and His Messenger and the Rediscovery of P. Nessana 77 (60s AH/680 CE)," in *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, ed. Behnam Sadeghi, Asad Q. Ahmed, Adam Silverstein, and Robert G. Hoyland (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 51–71. Levy-Rubin suggests that the non-standard vocabulary found in the Najrān treaty "supports its early date and therefore its authenticity" and that "the original wording of this long and detailed document has been preserved to a large degree in al-Balādhurī's text." Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 54. Sarah Mirza argues that "the distinctive usage of the *dhimmat Allāh* formula in the Prophet's documents suggests that it is archaic." Mirza, "*Dhimma* Agreements," 116.

26   Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 73; al-Shaybānī, *al-Aṣl*, 7:553; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, 1:308; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 88; *Tafsīr Muqātil*, 325; Abū ʿUbayd, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, 281 (no. 505); Ibn Zanjawayh, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, 450 (no. 732); *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Volume X: The Conquest of Arabia*, trans. Fred M. Donner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 163; Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, 66.

27   Scher, *Chronique de Séert*, 2/2:611–612 [291–292] (no. 103).

text, a similar agreement is recorded between the Catholicos of the Church of the East Ishoʿyahb II and the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–644), in which the rights enumerated for the Christians of Iraq echo those that the Prophet had promised to the Najrānīs.[28] While certainly transmitted (and, in some cases, likely produced) with ulterior motives by later Christian chroniclers, these texts suggest that the period of the Prophet Muḥammad and the first caliphs was imagined (whether accurately or not) as a period when Christian buildings were protected by Muslim authorities.[29]

The subsequent two centuries of conquest and occupation outside of the Arabian Peninsula offer a more negative image than that recorded for the period of the Prophet's life, with both Islamic and Christian literary sources depicting a stunting and control of Christian space and practice. While the treaties between Muslim authorities and conquered Near Eastern cities often established protections for churches and monasteries, legal prohibitions (as components of the so-called "Pact of ʿUmar") developed over the seventh, eighth, and following centuries against Christians repairing their religious structures or constructing new ones.[30] *Fiqh* texts indicate that, by the early

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28   Scher, *Chronique de Séert*, 2/2:620–624 [300–304] (no. 104); Philip Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 248–249. Stories of privileges guaranteed to Christians by ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb thanks to the intervention of Christian saints appear in: Scher, *Chronique de Séert*, 2/2:598–599 [278–279] (no. 100); *Life of Gabriel of Qartmin*, 12, ed. and trans. in Andrew N. Palmer, "A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Qartmin Trilogy," microfiche supplement to *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Ṭur ʿAbdin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), LXXII. For an alternative identification of the ʿUmar in the *Life of Gabriel*, see: Chase F. Robinson, "Ibn al-Azraq, his *Taʾrikh Mayyāfāriqīn*, and Early Islam," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (3rd series) 6.1 (1996): 7–27 at 21.

29   On the motivations and backgrounds for Christian stories of agreements made with Muslim authorities, see: Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 244–253; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 129, 159; Chase F. Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 8–32; Elif Keser-Kayaalp, "Church Building in the Ṭur ʿAbdin in the First Centuries of the Islamic Rule," in *Authority and Control in the Countryside: From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (Sixth–Tenth Century)*, ed. Alain Delattre, Marie Legendre, and Petra Sijpesteijn (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 178–183; Michael Philip Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 115–124; Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 113–121.

30   Wadād al-Qāḍī, "Madkhal ilā dirāsat ʿuhūd al-ṣulḥ al-islāmiyya zaman al-futūḥ," in *The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām during the Umayyad Period: Proceedings of the Third Symposium*, vol. 2, ed. Muḥammad ʿAdnān al-Bakhīt and Robert Schick (Amman: al-Jāmiʿa al-Urduniyya, 1989), 193–259; Arthur S. Tritton, *The*

eighth century, some Muslim jurists questioned the legality of the continued existence of churches within Muslim-occupied cities.[31] Indeed, Christian and Muslim sources describe occasional (sometimes successful) attempts at the physical destruction of churches and monasteries by Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid authorities.[32] Muslim worship within such Christian spaces was also a point of contention, with several early traditions discouraging the visitation of prominent Christian holy spaces (including the Church of Mary and the Church of the Ascension, both in Jerusalem), while worship within churches is condemned in some Prophetic *aḥādīth* and early jurists' opinions.[33]

In contrast to these indications of Muslim separation from – if not hostility towards – Christian sacred spaces, it is striking how frequently Muslim respect for (and even worship within) Christian sacred spaces appears in literary and material evidence from the seventh and eighth centuries. Based on both the archaeological record and literary texts, not only was the continued Christian usage of churches allowed by Muslim authorities, but (contrary to Islamic legal prohibitions) major renovations and even the construction of new churches occurred throughout Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq long into the eighth century.[34] The acknowledgement of a sacrality residing within these

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Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of ʿUmar (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 5–17, 37–60; Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 58–87; Albrecht Noth, "Abgrenzungsprobleme zwischen Muslimen und Nicht-Muslimen. Die ʿBedingungen ʿUmars (*aš-Šurūṭ al-ʿumariyya*)' unter einem anderen Aspekt gelesen," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987): 290–315; Mark R. Cohen, "What Was the Pact of ʿUmar? A Literary-Historical Study," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999): 100–157.

31   Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 64–67, 75–77; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 13.

32   Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 75–77; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 11–13, 54, 76; Mattia Guidetti, "The Byzantine Heritage in the *Dār al-Islām*: Churches and Mosques in al-Ruha between the Sixth and Twelfth Centuries," *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 1–36 at 4–5; Andrew Palmer, "Messiah and the Mahdi: History Presented as Writing on the Wall," in *Polyphonia Byzantina: Studies in Honour of Willem J. Aerts*, ed. Hero Hokwerda, Edmé R. Smits, and Marinus M. Woesthuis (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1993), 45–84; Alison Vacca, "The Fires of Naxčawan: In Search of Intercultural Transmission in Arabic, Armenian, Greek, and Syriac," *Le Muséon* 129 (2016): 323–362.

33   ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, 1:411–412; Bashear, "Qibla Musharriqa," 273–276; Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 63, 138–141; Heribert Busse, "The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Church of the Agony, and the Temple: The Reflection of a Christian Belief in Islamic Tradition," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987): 279–89 at 287–89.

34   Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995); Marcus Milwright, *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University

buildings by early Muslims is suggested by archaeological remains and literary histories that record the construction in several cities of major mosques "often erected near the extant Christian great churches, establishing contiguity between the two houses of worship."[35] Indeed, *fiqh* texts indicate that many jurists permitted Muslims to pray within Christian churches and that this "was not an uncommon practice all over the area [of the Near East] and throughout the first and early second centuries."[36] Rather than enacting a violent break with the Christian Near East, early Muslims mapped their own sacred geography on top of – and often in direct relation to – the still-existing Christian one.

We might ask if Muslim reverence for churches led to the buildings' seizure from Christians, similar to what we find in the story of the Banū Ḥanīfa. The answer seems to be largely negative: while a few examples occurred – most prominently the conversion of the Church of St. John into the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus – literary and archaeological evidence suggests that the purposeful conversion of Christian churches into mosques for Muslim usage was a rare phenomenon during the first several centuries of Islamic rule.[37] A few archaeological sites in the north of modern Jordan have been identified as possible examples of churches being converted into mosques, on the basis

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Press, 2010), 137–140; Alan Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment* (London: Bloomsbury 2012), 47; Karen C. Britt, "Through a Glass Brightly: Christian Communities in Palestine and Arabia During the Early Islamic Period," in *Sacred Precincts: The Religious Architecture of Non-Muslim Communities across the Islamic World*, ed. Mohammad Gharipour (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 259–276; Robert A. Carter, "Christianity in the Gulf during the First Centuries of Islam," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*," 19 (2008): 71–108; Władysław Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ: Its Foundation and Early Urban Development* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1982), 61, 123–125, 179n.51; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 13–15; Keser-Kayaalp, "Church Building in the Ṭur ʿAbdin," 176–209; Joshua Mugler, "Recent Constructions: How the Churches of Classical Baghdad Were Built," *Muslim World* 107.3 (2017): 496–510; Jack Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 380–384, 432–435.

35   Mattia Guidetti, "The Contiguity between Churches and Mosques in Early Islamic Bilād al-Shām," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 76.2 (2013): 229–58 at 255; Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church*, 36–63, 73–74; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 74.

36   Bashear, "Qibla Musharriqa," 281; Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church*, 67–70; Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 138; Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 382–386. For relevant examples, see: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 2:500–501 (nos. 4894–4904).

37   Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church*, 20–30, 36–41; Milwright, *Introduction to Islamic Archaeology*, 138; Schick, *Christian Communities of Palestine*, 130; Gideon Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine: An Archaeological Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 336; Jeremy Johns, "The 'House of the Prophet' and the Concept of the Mosque," in *Bayt al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam*, ed. Jeremy Johns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 96.

of architectural changes to the buildings.[38] However, there is little direct evidence to suggest that these developments were tied to early Muslims' adoption of these churches as mosques, or indicative of wider patterns of Islamic conversion of Christian worship space, in this period.[39]

The story of the Banū Ḥanīfa's church is thus an outlier with respect to Muslims' interactions with Christian buildings in the formative seventh and eighth centuries, and especially during the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad. The narrative is not consistent with either the literary or historical evidence for Muslims' treatment of Christian sacred spaces in this early period. What, then, are we to make of this unusual report? As I will argue below, the key to interpreting this story may lie less in the church building itself than in what that the Banū Ḥanīfa carry to it all the way from Medina: the Prophet Muḥammad's ablution water (ṭahūr). More than just a story about the repurposing of a church, this narrative is about the creation of a mosque through the Prophet Muḥammad's presence there, in the form of fluids from his body.

2 "Sprinkle Its Place with the Water": Relics and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity

When the Banū Ḥanīfa delegation arrives in Medina, they make an announcement and a request: "We told [the Prophet] that we had a church in our land and requested that he give us the leftovers of his ablution water." While the delegation's intentions in seeking the Prophet's ablution water are nowhere specified, the Banū Ḥanīfa's pursuit of such water is recognizable within the context of late antique veneration of holy persons and places and the collection from

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38   Geoffrey King, "Byzantine and Islamic Sites in Northern and Eastern Jordan," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 13 (1983): 79–91; King, "Two Byzantine Churches and their Re-Use in the Islamic Period," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 1 (1983): 111–136; King, "Some Churches of the Byzantine Period in the Jordanian Ḥawrān," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 3 (1988): 35–75; Bert de Vries, "Continuity and Change in the Urban Character of the Southern Hauran from the 5th to the 9th Century: The Archaeological Evidence at Umm al-Jimal," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 13 (2000): 39–45 at 44; Christian C. Sahner, "The First Iconoclasm in Islam: A New History of the Edict of Yazīd II (AH 104/AD 723)," *Der Islam* 94.1 (2017): 5–56 at 53–54.

39   Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church*, 24–30, 90–91; Guidetti, "Churches Attracting Mosques: Religious Architecture in Early Islamic Syria," in Gharipour, *Sacred Precincts*, 18. For possible early examples of shared worship spaces between Muslims and Christians, see: Sahner, "The First Iconoclasm," 53–54; Bilha Moor, "Mosque and Church: Arabic Inscriptions at Shivta in the Early Islamic Period," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 40 (2013): 73–141 at 107–108. For debated examples of the conversion of Jewish synagogues into mosques, see: Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of the Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 100–105.

them of material blessings. Both literary and material evidence provide a wealth of parallels to such activities among late antique communities, who used these materials for a variety of beneficial purposes, including the sanctification of space. Late antique practitioners harnessed these materials' power, contaminating new places with the blessing of the saintly persons and places from whence they came.

The collection of materials blessed through their contact with holy persons, places, or things is a recurrent trope in saints' *vitae*, pilgrimage itineraries, and other late antique texts. In these texts, an agent's (or object's) touch transmits holy power to materials like water, oil, or dirt, thereby creating sacred matter out of what had been profane material.[40] Hagiographies record crowds gathering dust from the footprints and doorposts of living saints, or from their tombs after death;[41] tearing off shreds of cloth and other materials that had come

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[40]   Gary Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, revised ed. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 24–26; Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 118–122; Ora Limor, "Earth, Stone, Water, and Oil: Objects of Veneration in Holy Land Travel Narratives," in *Natural Materials of the Holy Land and the Visual Translation of Place, 500–1500*, ed. Renana Bartel, Neta Bodner, and Biance Kühnel (London: Routledge, 2017), 3–18; Sabine MacCormack, "Loca Sancta: The Organization of Sacred Topography in Late Antiquity," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 21; David Frankurter, "On Sacrifices and Residues: Processing the Potent Body," *Religion in Cultural Discourse: Essays in Honor of Hans G. Kippenberg on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Brigitte Luchesi and Kocku von Stuckrad (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 511–533; David Frankfurter, "Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11.3 (2003): 339–85 at 375–378.

[41]   Examples of the collection of dust from saints include: Britt Dahlman, *Saint Daniel of Sketis: A Group of Hagiographic Texts Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2007), 142–143; Stephen of Heracleopolis Magna, *A Panegyric on Apollo, Archimandrite of the Monastery of Isaac*, ed. and trans. K.H. Kuhn (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO 1978), 29 (Coptic), 22 (Eng.); Bohairic *Life of Pachomius* 150, trans. in *Pachomian Koinonia. Volume One: The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples*, trans. Armand Veilleux (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1982), 214; Paphnutius, *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt* 108, 124, trans. in *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt and the Life of Onnophrius*, trans. Tim Vivian (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1993), 125, 133; Agnes Smith Lewis, ed., *Select Narratives of Holy Women from the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest as Written above the Old Syriac Gospels by John the Stylite of Beth-Mari-Qanūn in A. D. 778*, 2 vols. (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1900), 1:92, 2:69 [Onesima], 1:138, 2:106 [Irene]; F. C. Burkitt, *Euphemia and the Goth with the Acts of Martyrdom of the Confessors of Edessa* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913), 43, 128; E. A. Wallis Budge, ed. and trans., *The Histories of Rabban Hôrmîzd the Persian and Rabban Bar 'Idtâ*, 2 vols. (London: Luzac and Co., 1902), 1:55–56, 2/i: 82–83. For the collection of earth from a rabbi's grave, see: Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1965–1970),

into contact with their (living or dead) bodies;[42] and collecting a variety of other substances from these figures and their associated spaces, even blood and perfumes miraculously exuded by saintly corpses.[43] Pilgrimage itineraries and collections of miracles associated with pilgrimage sites are likewise full of descriptions of visitors collecting stones, soils, liquids, and oils connected with sacred objects and spaces, themselves hallowed by their associations with events and personalities of biblical and post-biblical history.[44]

In addition to such textual descriptions, archeological and material evidence attest to late antique pilgrimage activities that involved the collection of water, oil, or dust that had touched a holy place or relic. Many reliquaries uncovered at churches in northern Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Arabia contain drilled holes, through which water or oil could be poured or dust collected, thus creating a collectable contact relic as these materials touched the relics housed within.[45] Pilgrims to saints' shrines collected water, oil, and dust

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2:143–144; Jack N. Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred: Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Greco-Roman World*, new ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 54.

42   Life of Mār Ābā, in Paul Bedjan, *Histoire de Mar-Jabalaha, de trois autres patriarches, d'un prêtre et de deux laïques, nestoriens* (Paris: Otto Harrassowitz, 1895), 270–272; Héctor Ricardo Francisco, "Corpse Exposure in the Acts of the Persian Martyrs and Its Literary Models," *Hugoye* 19.1 (2016): 193–225 at 219.

43   Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia*, 8.14; Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby, trans., *The History of Theophylact Simocatta* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 233–234; *Miracles of Anastasios the Persian*, 1–2, 6, 10 bis; ed. and trans. in Bernard Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIᵉ siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1992), 120–123, 128–129, 138–139; Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Collections of Miracles (Fifth–Fifteenth Centuries)," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis, 2 vols. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011–2014), 2:116; Alexander Kazhdan, "Two Notes on the Vita of Anastasios the Persian," in *Φιλέλλην: Studies in Honour of Robert Browning*, ed. C. N. Constantinides, N. M. Panagiotakes, E. Jeffreys, and A. D. Angelou (Venice: Istituto Ellenico, 1996), 151–157.

44   Gary Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 66–74; Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 65; Limor, "Earth, Stone, Water, and Oil."

45   Yoram Tsafrir, "On the Location of Relics in the Churches of Palestine and Arabia in the Early Byzantine Period," in *Early Christian Martyrs and Relics and Their Veneration in East and West. International Conference, Varna, November 20th–23rd, 2003*, ed. A. Minchev and V. Jotov (Varna: Regionalen istoricheski muzei, 2006), 32–33; Ann Marie Yasin, "Sacred Installations: The Material Conditions of Relic Collections in Late Antique Churches," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015), 146; Wilhelm Gessel, "Das Öl der Märtyrer: Zur Funktion und Interpretation der Ölsarkophage von Apamea in Syrien," *Oriens Christianus* 72 (1988): 183–202; Maria-Teresa Canivet, "Le reliquaire à huile de la grande église de Ḥūarte (Syrie)," *Syria* 55.1–2 (1978): 153–162; Jean Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie, essai sur la genèse, la forme et l'usage liturgique des édifices du*

in special vessels distributed onsite, with the vessels themselves becoming venerated objects in their own right, thanks to their associations with these places and with the cherished materials they carried.[46]

These materials were widely venerated and used for a variety of purposes. While healing was a common application, such materials were also spread or sprinkled upon spaces in order to provide blessing to locations.[47] Pilgrims reportedly installed material blessings over their beds, on the thresholds of their homes, and on their flocks and fields, protecting such places through the sacred material's presence there.[48] The placement of sacred material in a new

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culte chrétien, en Syrie, du IIIᵉ siècle à la conquête musulmane (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1947), 163–167; Anne Michel, Les églises d'époque byzantine et umayyade de la Jordanie (provinces d'Arabie et de Palestine), Vᵉ–VIIIᵉ: typologie architecturale et aménagements liturgiques (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 73–74; Anne Michel, "Le culte des reliques dans les églises Byzantines de Jordanie," Hortus Artium Medievalium 5 (1999): 31–40 at 35; Marie Christine Comte, Les Reliquaires du Proche-Orient et de Chypre à la période protobyzantine (IVᵉ–VIIIᵉ siècles): formes, emplacements, fonctions et cultes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 41–52; Claudine Dauphin, "On the Pilgrim's Way to the Holy City of Jerusalem: The Basilica of Dor in Israel," in Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation, ed. John R. Bartlett (London: Routledge, 1997), 160–162; Michele Piccirillo, "La Chiesa del Reliquario a Umm al-Rasas," Liber Annuus 56 (2006): 375–388; Erica C. D. Hunter, "An Inscribed Reliquary from the Middle Euphrates," Oriens Christianus 75 (1991): 147–165; Gaby Abousamra, "A Reliquary with Syriac Inscription," Parole de l'Orient 41 (2015): 23–37; Vincent Bernard, Olivier Callot, and Jean-François Salles, "L'eglise d'al-Qousour Failaka, État de Koweit. Rapport préliminaire sur une première campagne de fouilles, 1989," Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy 2 (1991): 145–81 at 165; Roman Ghirshman, The Island of Kharg (Tehran: Iranian Oil Operating Companies, 1964), 19; Palmer, Monk and Mason, 68.

46   André Grabar, Les Ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza-Bobbio) (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1958); Vikan, Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art; Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic," 67; Davis, The Cult of Saint Thecla, 113–133, 172–177; Heather Hunter-Crawley, "Pilgrimage Made Portable: A Sensory Archaeology of the Monza-Bobbio Ampullae," Herom 1 (2012): 135–156; Hunter-Crawley, "Movement as Sacred Mimesis at Abu Mena and Qal'at Sem'an," in Excavating Pilgrimage: Archaeological Approaches to Sacred Travel and Movement in the Ancient World, ed. Troels Myrup Kristensen and Wiebke Friese (London: Routledge, 2017), 187–202.

47   Discussing continuities in Egyptian saint cult from the fifth to eighth centuries, Arietta Papaconstantinou notes the continuing "extreme importance of health questions among the varied problems brought before the saints": "The Cult of Saints: A Haven of Continuity in a Changing World?" in Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 363.

48   Blake Leyerle, "Pilgrim Eulogiae and Domestic Rituals," Archiv für Religionsgeschichte 10.1 (2008): 223–37 at 225; Dina Boero, "Promoting a Cult Site without Bodily Relics: Sacred Substances and Imagined Topography in The Syriac Life of Symeon the Stylite," in Religious Competition in the Greco-Roman World, ed. Nathaniel P. DesRosiers and Lily C. Vuong (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 233–245; Tannous, The Making of the Medieval Middle East, 146; François Nau, ed., "Histoires d'Abraham de Kashkar et de Babai de Nisibe," Revue de l'Orient

location sometimes endowed that space with a blessedness in its own right, which thereby enabled it to provide new gifts of its own. For example, the seventh-century Coptic *Panegyric on Apollo, Archimandrite of the Monastery of Isaac* reports that "many healings came to pass" from the water of a cistern in the Monastery of Isaac, after water that Apollo had used to wash himself was poured into it.[49] By coming into contact with Apollo's used bathwater – a "blessing" through its physical contact with Apollo's body – the cistern emerged as a site of holy power that provided healings and became a site of pilgrimage in its own right.[50] The blessedness understood to reside within sacred relics, persons, and places could thus be transferred to new spaces and "imbue new locations with ... saintly presence."[51]

By "infecting" their locations with their own holiness, holy persons and objects were able not only to sanctify spaces but – in doing so – also to cleanse these spaces of demonic or unorthodox forces that might be residing within them due to their previous usage by pagans or heretical Christians.[52] For example, the first attested *translatio* of relics – the movement of the martyr Babylas'

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chrétien 21 (1918–1919): 161–72 at 164 (Syr.), 170 (Fr.); *Martyrdom of Miles*, in Paul Bedjan, ed., *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, 7 vols. (Paris and Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1890–1897), 2:275; *Martyrdom of the Captives*, in Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum*, 2:324; Richard E. Payne, *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 77; Payne, "The Emergence of Martyrs' Shrines in Late Antique Iran: Conflict, Consensus, and Communal Institutions," in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, ed. Peter Sarris, Matthew Dal Santo, and Phil Booth (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 101–102; Kyle Smith, *Constantine and the Captive Christians of Persia: Martyrdom and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 138–139, 189–190. For a usage of a rabbi's relics as a town's protector, see: Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "A Rabbinic Translation of Relics," in *Crossing Boundaries in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: Ambiguities, Complexities, and Half-Forgotten Adversaries: Essays in Honor Alan F. Segal*, ed. Kimberly B. Stratton and Andrea Lieber (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 314–332.

49   Stephen of Heracleopolis Magna, *A Panegyric on Apollo*, 37 (Coptic), 28 (Eng.).

50   Similar stories about the creation of sources of holy water appear in collections of miracles associated with other saints' cults: Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla*, 45–46. David Frankfurter writes that such stories "are, to be sure, etiological legends for the reservoirs of holy water and oil kept in monasteries for popular use and to keep present the memories of their heroes": Frankfurter, "Syncretism and the Holy Man," 378.

51   Boero, "Promoting a Cult Site," 238–239; Markus, "How on Earth," 270.

52   Béatrice Caseau, "Sacred Landscapes," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 21–59; Christine Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places: Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 239; Robin M. Jensen, "Saints' Relics and the Consecration of Church Buildings in Rome," *Studia Patristica* 71 (2014): 153–169.

relics to the Antiochene suburb of Daphne in 362 CE – was long remembered for the relics' banishment of a powerful oracle of the god Apollo from Babylas' new resting space, in what had formerly been an Apolline sanctuary.[53] Similarly, the fifth-century translation of the relics of saints Cyrus and John from Alexandria to Menouthis in Egypt was associated with the repulsion of the cult of Isis, as the saints "pushed the demons into flight to Tartarus [i.e., hell]" (ἐπιβάσεως εἰς φυγὴν τὸ δαιμόνιον ἔτρεψαν εἰς τάρταρον).[54] When an Arian church in Rome was rededicated to Catholicism in 591 or 592, relics of saints Sebastian and Agatha were installed therein. A series of miracles occurred, including an invisible animal scurrying around the feet of the people in the temple before leaving through the church door, interpreted by the congregants to mean "that the unclean spirit had departed from the building."[55] At a northern Mesopotamian monastery – constructed by the fourth-century saint Mar Yoḥannan the Egyptian in a location that "had formerly been a house of idols and a haven for demons" – demonic squatters continually stoned the monks when they gathered water from the monastery's spring. Only when Yoḥannan's coffin was disinterred and deposited beside this spring for several days did the demons cease their abuse, after which the saint's body was reburied in the monastery's martyrium so that it might further protect the monastic space.[56]

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53   John Chrysostom, *De Sancto Bab.*; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 3.18; Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 5.19–20; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Contra Jul.* 1.25; Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 3.6; Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.16. Recalling this story in a hymn in honor of Babylas, Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) notes that "even his dust is formidable to the demons": E.W. Brooks, *James of Edessa: Hymns of Severus of Antioch and Others. Syriac Version Edited and Translated*, PO 7.5 (1911): 600 (*Hymn* 142-II-VI).

54   Sophronius, *Laudes in Ss. Cyrum et Joannem* 29 (*Patrologia Graeca* 87.3, 3416); Edward J. Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 197.

55   Gregory I., *Dial.* 3.30; Odo John Zimmerman, trans., *Saint Gregory the Great, Dialogues*, *Fathers of the Church* 39 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc.: 1959), 164–165. In accordance with Roman church policy, the "relics" of Sebastian and Agatha installed were possibly contact relics, demonstrating that "these objects, however small, had intrinsic power to exorcise demons [and] sanctify altars": Jensen, "Saints' Relics," 169; John M. McCulloh, "The Cult of Relics in the Letters and 'Dialogues' of Pope Gregory the Great: A Lexicographical Study," *Traditio* 32 (1976): 145–184.

56   Scher, *Chronique de Séert*, 1/2:250–251 [138–139] (no. 36). A short biography for "Mar Yōḥanan who founded the convent in Beth Zabdai and Qardū" also appears in the ninth-century *Book of Chastity*, which reports "his body was placed in the citadel monastery called Ḥlaḥlaḥ, then Rabban Gabriel came from the convent of Zarnūqā and moved [the body] to the convent in Zarnūqā." J.-B. Chabot, ed. and trans., *Le Livre de la Chasteté composé par Jésudenah, évêque de Baçrah* (Rome: L'École française de Rome, 1896), no. 2; Jean Maurice Fiey, *Saints Syriaques*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004), 119 (no. 244); Fiey, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos*

While these narratives reflect the ability of relics to sanctify heterodox space in the hagiographic imaginary, one late antique source explicitly prescribes the installation of relics as a component in the transformation of pagan spaces into Christian churches. In a letter recorded in the Venerable Bede's (d. 735 C.E.) *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, Pope Gregory the Great advises a monk named Abbot Mellitus on how to treat pagan temples encountered during his missionary work in England. Rather than destroy them, Pope Gregory instructs Mellitus to turn these pagan temples into Christian spaces:

> Take holy water and sprinkle it in these shrines, build altars and place relics in them. For if the shrines are well built, it is essential that they should be changed from the worship of devils to the service of the true God.[57]

Here, holy water, altars, and relics serve to symbolically remove the pagan past and to repurpose these spaces for Christian usage.[58] While the "well built" temples are maintained, their religious orientation and purpose is decisively altered by the presence of these Christian objects. As Pope Gregory's prescription for Abbot Mellitus indicates, relics had an important part to play in the ritual creation of Christian space.

Over the course of the fourth through seventh centuries, this sanctifying role of relics became increasingly institutionalized within Christian buildings, as relics came to occupy a central place within Near Eastern Christian sacred spaces, "architecturally and conceptually foundational to the structure of the church."[59] At sixth- and seventh-century churches in Syria, Palestine, Jordan, the Negev, and northern Arabia, reliquaries were frequently installed within the central altar, thus intertwining relics with the most important ritual components of church services (including the gift of the Eucharist); alternatively, secondary altars containing relics within side apses of the church became

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jours, CSCO 388, Subsidia 54 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1977), 194–199; Fiey, "Īšōʿdnāḥ et la *Chronique de Seert*," *Parole de l'Orient* 6–7 (1975–1976): 447–59 at 450; David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East, 1318–1913*, CSCO 582, Subsidia 104 (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), 116; Philip J. Wood, "The Sources of the *Chronicle of Seert*: Phases in the Writing of History and Hagiography in Late Antique Iraq," *Oriens Christianus* 96 (2012): 106–48 at 142–143; Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 160–163.

57   Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.30; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 106–107.

58   The holy water itself may have also been related to relics, as it was common practice to use water poured over bones and other relics as holy water. See: Godefridus J. C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 344–348.

59   Yasin, "Sacred Installations," 151.

another common architectural feature.[60] The installation of relics in churches and monasteries – often including the relics of a building's deceased monastic founder – appears as a common component in stories about the construction and sacralization of these buildings.[61] Relics were often framed by inscriptions and/or mosaics that "communicated information about the relics in a permanent, place-bound medium," visually highlighting their presence in these spaces even when the relics themselves were not visible.[62] The widespread evidence for these practices – with the installation of relics named a necessary component of church consecration in several ecclesiastical canons – indicates how the presence of relics had become central to the creation of Christian space in the late antique Near East.[63]

3   "Take It as A Mosque": Islamic Adaptations of Late Antique Christian Traditions

Keeping this comparative material in mind, we can now reexamine the story of the Banū Ḥanīfa's church. Though the conversion of a church into a mosque is unusual in the early Islamic landscape, the collection and use of a contact relic

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60   Yasin, "Sacred Installations," 137–148; Tsafrir, "On the Location of Relics," 33–34; Michel, "Le culte des reliques," 34–37; Elizabeth Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (University of California Press, 1999), 55; Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 90–91, 136; Joseph Patrich, "The Transfer of Gifts in the Early Christian Churches of Palestine: Archaeological and Literary Evidence for the Evolution of the 'Great Entrance,'" in *Pèlerinages et lieux saints dans l'Antiquité et la Moyen Âge. Mélanges offerts à Pierre Maraval*, ed. Béatrice Caseau, Jean-Claude Cheynet, and Vincent Déroche (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2006), 341–393; Emma Loosley, *The Architecture and Liturgy of the Bema in Fourth- to Sixth-Century Syrian Churches* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 27–34.

61   François Nau, ed. and trans., *Histoires d'Ahoudemmeh et de Maroutha*, Patrologia Orientalis 3.1 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1905), 29; Chabot, *Le Livre de la Chasteté*, no. 23; Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 124; Jeanne-Nicole Mellon Saint-Laurent, *Missionary Stories and the Formation of the Syriac Churches* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 113ff.; Antigone Samellas, *Death in the Eastern Mediterranean (50–600 A.D.). The Christianization of the East: An Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 223–224; Elif Keser-Kayaalp, "The *Beth Qadishe* in the Late Antique Monasteries of Northern Mesopotamia (South-Eastern Turkey)," *Parole de l'Orient* 35 (2010): 325–348.

62   Yasin, "Sacred Installations," 143–46; Ann Marie Yasin, "Sight Lines of Sanctity at Late Antique Martyria," in *Architecture of the Sacred: Space, Ritual, and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium*, ed. Bonna D. Wescoat and Robert G. Ousterhout (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 248–280; Dauphin, "On the Pilgrim's Way," 161.

63   Ann Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 151–155.

to sanctify space fits well within the late antique Christian hagiographic and ritual milieu. I suggest that the story of this Christian/Islamic tribe's utilization of a contact relic from Prophet Muḥammad's body – in this case, water infused with the Prophet's touch – to transform a church into a mosque offers an early Islamic adaptation of late antique Christian narratives and ritual practices involving relics and sacred spaces.

Much like the believers who treasure the soil from saints' footsteps or the water that they had used for bathing, the Banū Ḥanīfa request and collect water that had touched the Prophet's body.[64] While the Banū Ḥanīfa's intentions for taking the water are unclear – and only the Prophet's instructions explicitly connect the liquid to the transformation of the church into a mosque – the liquid clearly was understood as a conveyor of some kind of blessing and/or power. Indeed, a distinct emphasis on this water appears in an alternative version of Ṭalq b. ʿAlī's *ḥadīth* recorded (to my knowledge) only in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855):

> When the Prophet was bidding us farewell, he ordered me to bring him a waterskin. Three times he sipped from the water and spit it back into the waterskin, then he tied the vessel off. He said, "Take this and sprinkle your people's mosque, and order them to raise their heads [in prayer], so that God might elevate them."[65]

Notably, there is no mention here of a church among the Banū Ḥanīfa, but instead the focus is on the water and its role in the sacralization of the Banū Ḥanīfa's mosque. Moreover, rather than the Banū Ḥanīfa requesting the remnants of the Prophet's ablution water, as in the more commonly attested version of the story, here the Prophet himself takes the initiative in the creation of this powerful liquid: he asks Ṭalq for water, repeatedly sips from and spits back into the waterskin, and hands the container to Ṭalq with specific instructions for sprinkling it in the mosque.

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64   Many recent commentators have missed or ignored this corporeal aspect of the report, saying only that the Prophet commands that the church be washed with "water": *EI*[2], s.v. "Masādjid" (J. Pedersen); Bashear, "Qibla Musharriqa," 274; Guidetti, *In the Shadow of the Church*, 76. However, it was noted already by Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī (d. 1163/1750) in his super-commentary on Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) commentary on al-Nasāʾī's *Sunan*. Al-Sindī's gloss includes the comment, "This is an example of seeking blessings from the relics of the pious, something which is well-known" (*fīhi min al-tabarruk bi-āthār al-ṣāliḥīn mā lā yakhfā*): al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 1:476 (no. 700).

65   Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ et al., 50 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1993–2001), 26:220 (no. 16293).

Additional details appear in some versions of the Banū Ḥanīfa report that further illustrate this sacrality of the Prophet's used ablution water. In several versions, the Banū Ḥanīfa express concern that the ablution water will dry up and evaporate during their long journey homeward, leading the Prophet to assure them that they can add more water to the receptacle on their way, "for it [i.e., the added water] will only increase its goodness" (*lā yazīduhu illā ṭīban*).[66] The materiality of the holy water – the "goodness" (alternatively, "purity") of which will "only increase" as ordinary water is added, creating more sacred fluid through contact with the Prophet's ablution water – brings to mind the inexhaustible essence understood to reside in other late antique relics, which possessed a "[s]acred dynamis [that] was transferable seemingly without limit"[67] and was understood to be "miraculously whole despite being constantly broken up into fragments."[68] The indivisible character of the Prophet's ablution water accords with the sacredness understood to inhabit matter that had touched holy persons in the late antique world.

Acknowledgement of the water's sacrality is seen also in the Banū Ḥanīfa's treatment of the water vessel on their journey back to al-Yamāma, as well as after they arrive home. According to several versions, the Banū Ḥanīfa delegates quarreled among themselves over the honor of carrying the water receptacle back to al-Yamāma from Medina, leading the Prophet to appoint turns for them: one day and night for each person. This zeal for contact with the Prophet's water recalls the trope of Christians clamoring for access to such materials from their own saintly figures. This desire for contact likewise continued after their arrival in al-Yamāma: in a version transmitted by Ibn Saʿd, it is noted that after the water had been sprinkled in the former church space, the water vessel was kept in the possession of one of the delegation members, al-Aqʿas b. Maslama.[69] Not unlike the pilgrims who kept their ampullae from

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66 Brannon M. Wheeler translates this sentence, "Extend it with other water, for only the scent is necessary," thus drawing attention to the olfactory valence of the word "*ṭīb*": Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 74. This is indeed possible and suits my interpretation, given the highly perfumed character of many late antique relics and blessed materials: Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 58, 180, 220, 227–228; Hunter-Crawley, "Movement as Sacred Mimesis," 192–196.

67 Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, 25.

68 Patricia Cox Miller, "'Differential Networks': Relics and Other Fragments in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 113–138; Andrew S. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 178.

69 Notably, a tradition (recorded in fourth/tenth-century and later biographical literature) identifies al-Aqʿas b. Salama (not "Maslama" as in Ibn Saʿd's text) as the man that carried

saints' shrines as cherished objects, al-Aqʿas keeps this vessel that had touched the Prophet as a special memento, and perhaps as an object of power.

The deployment of the Prophet's ablution water in transforming the Banū Ḥanīfa's church into a mosque offers some noticeable parallels to the similar usage of Christian relics in the consecration of churches. Just as Pope Gregory advises Mellitus to install relics and sprinkle holy water to turn British pagan shrines into Christian churches, so too the Prophet Muḥammad instructs the Banū Ḥanīfa to sprinkle his ablution water upon the location of their church in order to transform it into a mosque. Just as the installations of the relics of Babylas and other saints enabled spaces to be used for orthodox Christian worship, so too the Prophet Muḥammad's ablution water is sprinkled to create a new worship space for the Banū Ḥanīfa. Like Christian martyrs' relics, divided and translated to new spaces for the sanctification of new spaces, Muḥammad's ablution water offers a transportable "extension of his authority" (or blessing) to a distant location for the establishment of a new Islamic religious space.[70]

This narrative about the Prophet Muḥammad's ablution water sanctifying the church in al-Yamāma likely stands in dialogue with late antique narratives involving similar usages of holy persons' relics: it offers an "Islamized" account of a relic's role in the transformation and consecration of a new religious space, a sort of Islamic relic *translatio*.[71] While the story draws on late antique literary topoi, it adapts these motifs using Islamic signifiers. For example, it is noteworthy that the sacred material used is water with which the Prophet had performed ablution. The usage of a saint's bathwater as a source of blessing appears in Christian sources, as we saw above in the story of Archimandrite Apollo. However, the use of the remainders of the Prophet's *ṭahūr* – water used to perform *wuḍūʿ*, the minor ablution performed before the performance of *ṣalāt* – adds a distinctly Islamic valence to this form of contact relic. Given

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the water vessel and "sprinkled the mosque of Qurrān with it": Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Mandah al-Aṣbahānī, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. ʿĀmir Ḥasan Ṣabrī (United Arab Emirates: Maṭbūʿāt Jāmiʿat al-Imārāt al-ʿArabiyya al-Muttaḥida, 2005), 205 (no. 29); Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, ed. ʿĀdil b. Yūsuf al-ʿAzāzī, 7 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭn li-l-Nashr, 1998), 1:357–358 (no. 1096); Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Istīʿab fī maʿrifat al-aṣḥāb*, 1:139 (no. 146); Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, 62 (no. 213); Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Iṣābah fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, 16 vols. (Cairo: Markaz al-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyya wa-l-Islāmiyya, 2008), 1:212–213 (no. 236). Qurrān was a town/region in al-Yamāma: Al-Askar, *Al-Yamama*, 15, 20.

70   Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden*, 74.

71   For other early Islamic engagements with late antique traditions about relics, see: Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 114; Adam Bursi, "A Holy Heretical Body: Ṭalḥa b. ʿUbayd Allāh's Corpse and Early Islamic Sectarianism," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 2.2 (2018): 147–179.

the close connection between conceptions and practices of purity, the performance of ritual prayer, and conceptions of community among early Muslims, it seems especially meaningful that water used by the Prophet in creating his own ritual purity is deployed in the creation of a mosque.[72]

The story also adapts the functions ascribed to relics in another Islamic way: by transforming a space away from Christian usage. In the Christian narratives examined above, relics enabled pagan shrines or heretical churches to be transformed for usage by orthodox Christian denominations. In this story, however, rather than the remains of a Christian saint or holy man turning a formerly pagan space into a Christian church, a relic of the Prophet turns a formerly Christian space into an Islamic mosque. In this narrative, Islam usurps the place of Christianity, in terms of both a religious space and the relic used to create it.

This shifting of late antique topoi in an Islamic direction is clearest in the story's dénouement. The transformation of the space from Christian to Islamic usage is marked by another distinctly Islamic emblem: the *adhān*. After the Banū Ḥanīfa inaugurate their new mosque by announcing this Islamic call to prayer within it, a monk who had been affiliated with the church emerges and declares the *adhān* to be "A call to truth!" (*daʿwat ḥaqq*).[73] A slightly expanded version appears in Ibn Saʿd's *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, in which the monk declares the *adhān* to be "A word of truth and a call to truth!" (*kalimat ḥaqq wa-daʿwat ḥaqq*).[74] Like many other attestation narratives about the Prophet Muḥammad found in *sīra* and *ḥadīth* texts, the authoritative late antique figure of the monk is deployed to confirm the truth of Islam, here in the form of the "call to truth" of the Islamic call to prayer.[75] Notably, the monk here uses language echoing the pronouncement at Qurʾān 13:14 that "The true call is to Him [God]" (*la-hu daʿwatu al-ḥaqqi*), further linking the monk's statement with Islamic religious vocabulary.

After declaring the veracity of the Islamic call to prayer, the monk then flees into the mountains, from whence he was "never seen again." Rather than converting to Islam as the Banū Ḥanīfa had done – and which monks not infrequently do in other Islamic stories of encounters between monks and early Muslims – this Christian figure leaves the space that he and his faith had

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72   Marion Holmes Katz, *Body of Text: The Emergence of the Sunnī Law of Ritual Purity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 29–99 and *passim*.

73   See the sources cited in note 17 above.

74   Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, 1:274.

75   Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity*, 156–161; Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 48–52; Garth Fowden and Elizabeth Key Fowden, *Studies on Hellenism, Christianity and the Umayyads* (Athens: Diffusion de Boccard, 2004), 157, 172.

previously occupied.[76] The monk is seemingly repelled by the presence of the new religious dispensation present in the church.

As discussed above, Christian hagiographies depict saints and their relics casting out pagan gods (understood by Christian authors as demons) from their residences in pagan shrines and temples as part of the repurposing of these spaces for Christian usage.[77] Here, however, instead of removing demonic forces from a formerly pagan shrine in order to repurpose it for Christian usage, a Christian holy man is himself dislodged from a formerly Christian space by the call of Islam. The monk here appears to take the place of the demons repulsed by the power of saints or saintly relics: when he encounters a new religious power that he cannot overcome, he flees. Like the demons who yell in anger or sorrow at the saints that exorcise them, the monk verbally acknowledges his defeat before leaving, never to be seen again.

4   "Never Seen Again": A Textual Embodiment of Hardening Muslim-Christian Relations?

As I have argued, the *ḥadīth* about the Banū Ḥanīfa delegation displays a clear engagement with important late antique Christian signifiers, including a church, bodily relic, and monk. In the deployment of these topoi, a seeming rejection of the continuing validity of Christianity appears in the destruction

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76   Suleiman A. Mourad, "Christian Monks in Islamic Literature: A Preliminary Report on Some Arabic *Apophthegmata Patrum*," *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 6.2 (2004): 81–98; Christian C. Sahner, "'The Monasticism of My Community is Jihad': A Debate on Asceticism, Sex, and Warfare in Early Islam," *Arabica* 64 (2017): 149–183; Thomas Sizgorich, "Monks and Their Daughters: Monasteries as Muslim-Christian Boundaries," in *Muslims and Others in Sacred Space*, ed. Margaret Cormack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 193–216; Najam Haider, *The Rebel and the Imām in Early Islam: Explorations in Muslim Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 143.

77   Robert Wiśniewski, "Pagan Temples, Christians, and Demons in the Late Antique East and West," *Sacris Erudiri* 54 (2015): 111–128; Helen Saradi, "The Christianization of Pagan Temples in the Greek Hagiographical Texts," in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*, ed. Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 113–134; David Frankfurter, "Iconoclasm and Christianization in Late Antique Egypt: Christian Treatments of Space and Image," in Hahn et al., *From Temple to Church*, 135–159; Frankfurter, "Where the Spirits Dwell: Possession, Christianization, and Saints' Shrines in Late Antiquity," *HTR* 103 (2010): 27–46. The trope of pagan gods as demons likewise appears in early Islamic literature: Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Aṣnām*, 25–26; al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, 2:841, 3:873; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, 2:135–136; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 13:403–404 (no. 37935); Johns, "The 'House of the Prophet,'" 94.
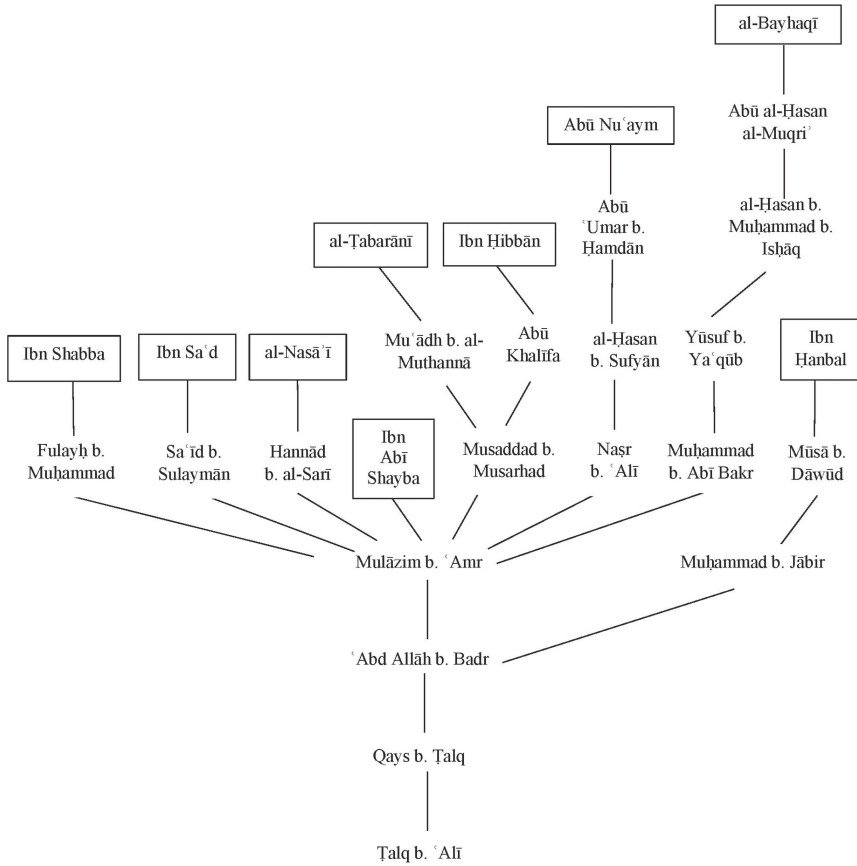
FIGURE 1　　Chart of *Asānīd* for the Banū Ḥanīfa Mosque Ḥadīth

of the church and the monk's flight from the new mosque. In what context might we place the attitude towards Christian spaces and symbols displayed in this *ḥadīth*?

　　Situating this *ḥadīth*'s appearance in space and time, the recorded *asānīd* suggest that the narrative of the Banū Ḥanīfa delegation began to circulate in Iraq in the second/eighth century. In all versions that include an *isnād*, the narrative is attributed to Ṭalq b. ʿAlī through a series of Ṭalq's family members, almost always extending up to Mulāzim b. ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Badr al-Ḥanafī (d. *ca.* 190/805–806), a distant relative of Ṭalq b. ʿAlī's and a *ḥadīth* transmitter of Yamāmī background resident in Baṣra.[78] As illustrated in Figure 1, Mulāzim

78　　On Mulāzim b. ʿAmr, see: al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh*, 4/ii:73 (no. 2215); Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Muʿallimī, 9 vols. (Hyderabad:

b. ʿAmr is the "common link" who related this story to several Iraqī *ḥadīth* transmitters active in the late second/eighth and early third/ninth centuries, including Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), Musaddad b. Musarhad (d. 228/843), and Hannād b. al-Sarī (d. 243/857), among several others.[79]

Putting aside the difficult question of the authenticity of this "family *isnād*," the multiple lines of transmission stemming from Mulāzim b. ʿAmr indicate that this story's oral and/or written circulation among *ḥadīth* collectors – and thus its eventual incorporation into the literary corpus – likely occurred in Iraq in the mid to late second/eighth century.[80]

As Milka Levy-Rubin has argued, "the eighth and ninth centuries appear to have been a period in which the regulations concerning the *dhimmī*s were the subject of a lively debate."[81] One of the significant issues faced by Muslim jurists as they sought to formalize the rights and privileges of the non-Muslim populations was the status of churches in Muslim-governed territories: while conquest treaties guaranteed the rights of Christians over their buildings, the terms of these agreements were reexamined as the Muslim populations of Near Eastern cities grew over the eighth and ninth centuries, bringing them into closer daily contact with non-Muslims. On the one hand, some jurists argued for the continuing validity of the old agreements. For example, Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798) proclaimed that "the treaty [*ṣulḥ*] is as valid as it was in the days of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, until the Day of Resurrection," thus forbidding the destruction of churches.[82] However, other jurists argued that the newly Muslim population of a city altered its status from whatever had been agreed upon in

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Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1941–1953), 4/i:435–436 (no. 1989); Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, 9 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1973–1983), 9:195; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Mashāhīr ʿulamāʾ al-amṣār*, Majdī b. Manṣūr b. Sayyid al-Shūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995), 153 (no. 982); Yūsuf al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, 35 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1983), 29:188–191 (no. 6325); Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Aḥmad al-Arnāʾūṭ and Turkī Muṣṭafā, 29 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2000), 26:39–40. The only exception is the version found in Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*.

79   For perspectives on the idea of the "common link," see: Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 171–175; G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance, and Authorship of Early Ḥadīth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 206–217; Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, trans. Marion H. Katz (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 25, 44.

80   On family *isnād*s, see: Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 170; G. H. A. Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society as Reflected in Its Use of *Isnād*s," *Le Muséon* 107 (1994): 151–194 at 171–179; Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth*, xxix.

81   Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 60–61.

82   Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 64, 74; Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 147.

the conquest era, and thereby allowed the potential takeover or destruction of its non-Muslim prayer spaces.[83]

The story of the Banū Ḥanīfa's church offers a condensed version of these interreligious issues in the form of a Prophetic narrative. Much like the Muslims who were increasingly populating what had previously been Christian-majority cities, the Banū Ḥanīfa's conversion to Islam calls into question the continued existence of a church in al-Yamāma. Here an explicit answer to what is to be done in such a situation is offered by the Prophet Muḥammad himself: destroy the church and create a mosque in its place. With the quick departure of the remaining Christian inhabitant of the previous church space – the unnamed monk, who was "never seen again" – a clean conversion of previously Christian space is facilitated, enabled by the Prophet's instructions and (seemingly) by the sanctifying relic he provided.

Despite its potential convenience for Muslim jurists, the Prophet's prescription for converting the Banū Ḥanīfa's church into a mosque appears not to have been a commonly used source to handle these issues. The story is infrequently attested in Islamic legal sources: though a rare piece of textual evidence for the Prophet Muḥammad's interaction with Christian churches, the story largely occurs within biographical and historical texts, rather than in compilations of legal ḥadīth or commentaries thereupon.[84] The ḥadīth does, however, appear in a few significant legal compilations of the ninth and tenth centuries. The Muṣannaf of Ibn Abī Shayba includes an abbreviated version of the ḥadīth in a chapter on prayer in churches, alongside several Companions' and jurists' sanguine opinions and anecdotes on the acceptability of Islamic prayer in unaltered Christian spaces.[85] By contrast, Aḥmad b. Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī (d. ca.

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83   Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 64–68.

84   Notably, *sīra-maghāzī* and *taʾrīkh* were genres in which the standards for the "reliability" of ḥadīth transmission were adhered to somewhat laxly, and their traditions were thus approached with some reservation by jurists in the formulation of legal rulings. Jonathan A. C. Brown, "Even If It's Not True It's True: Using Unreliable Ḥadīths in Sunni Islam," *Islamic Law and Society* 18 (2011): 1–52; Andreas Görke, "The Relationship between *Maghāzī* and *Ḥadīth* in Early Islamic Scholarship," BSOAS 74.2 (2011): 171–185; Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16–17, 87–89; Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Sayf Ibn ʿUmar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship," *Der Islam* 67 (1990): 1–26.

85   Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 2:501 (no. 4903). Ibn Abī Shayba's version is seemingly condensed from the longer narrative to focus on its "legally relevant parts": Görke, "The Relationship between *Maghāzī* and *Ḥadīth*," 177. See also: Bashear, "Qibla Musharriqa," 274. On the infrequent citation of the Prophet's example in comparison to that of Companions and Followers within Ibn Abī Shayba's text, see: Scott C. Lucas, "Where are the Legal Ḥadīth? A Study of the *Muṣannaf* of Ibn Abī Shayba," *Islamic Law and Society* 15 (2008): 283–314.

303/915) includes the report in a self-contained chapter on "taking churches as mosques" in his *al-Sunan al-kubrā* and in his canonical Sunnī *ḥadīth* compilation *al-Mujtabā* (often referred to as his *Sunan*).⁸⁶ Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān (d. 354/965) similarly includes it as the only text in his chapter on "the permissibility of taking a Muslim mosque in the location of churches" in his *al-Taqāsīm wa-l-anwāʿ* (also known as Ibn Ḥibbān's *Ṣaḥīḥ*).⁸⁷

Though these scholars did include the tradition in their compilations of legal *ḥadīth*, there is little context or commentary to indicate that it was commonly drawn upon as an important precedent or model for Islamic practice. Notably, Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaf* cites the Ṭalq *ḥadīth* in a chapter on prayer in churches, but not in a chapter discussing whether or not non-Islamic religious spaces can be destroyed.⁸⁸ While al-Nasāʾī's and Ibn Ḥibbān's chapter titles suggest the permissibility of seizing churches for Muslim usage, jurists do not appear to have actively utilized the report in making such rulings.⁸⁹ Instead of drawing out the *ḥadīth*'s implications for Muslim commandeering of churches, commentators on al-Nasāʾī's *Sunan* largely restrict themselves to explaining the linguistic obscurities in the report.⁹⁰ Rather than commenting on the politics of sacred spaces evoked by Ṭalq b. ʿAlī's story, Ibn Ḥibbān uses the story of the Banū Ḥanīfa's visit to the Prophet in order to situate chronologically a different *ḥadīth* – in which Ṭalq asks the Prophet about an issue

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86 Christopher Melchert, "The Life and Works of al-Nasāʾī," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 59 (2014): 377–407.

87 The report appears in a similarly titled chapter in the rearrangement of Ibn Ḥibbān's work by ʿAlī b. Balbān (d. 739/1339), and in a chapter simply titled "on the subject of mosques" (*mā jāʾa fī-l-masājid*) in the rearrangement by Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807/1404). ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Balbān al-Fārisī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān bi-tartīb Ibn Balbān*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ, 18 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1993), 4:479–480 (no.1602); Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr al-Haythamī, *Mawārid al-ẓamān fī zawāʾid Ibn Ḥibbān*, ed. Ḥusayn Salīm Asad al-Dārānī and ʿAbduh ʿAlī Kūshuk, 9 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Thaqāfa al-ʿArabiyya, 1990), 1:453–454 (no. 304).

88 Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 11:345–346 (nos. 33526–33533).

89 The story is cited in the context of prayer within churches, but without any discussion of the conversion of churches into mosques, at: Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd li-mā fī-l-Muwaṭṭaʾ min al-maʿānī wa-l-asānīd*, ed. Saʿīd Aḥmad Aʿrāb, 26 vols. (Ribat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1967–1992), 5:227–229. Conversely, in a discussion of the legality of the construction of a mosque on the site of a church, the Ṭalq *ḥadīth* does not appear: Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Zarkashī, *Iʿlām al-sājid bi-aḥkām al-masājid*, ed. Abū al-Wafā Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (Cairo: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1996), 347.

90 al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 1:476 (no. 700); Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums. Band I: Qurʾānwissenschaften, Ḥadīṯ, Geschichte, Fiqh, Dogmatik, Mystik, bis ca. 430 H* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 168; Joel Blecher, "'Usefulness without Toil: Al-Suyūṭī and the Art of Concise *Ḥadīth* Commentary," in *Al-Suyūṭī, a Polymath of the Mamlūk Period*, ed. Antonella Ghersetti (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 183.

relating to ritual purity – and thereby to argue that the Prophet's position on this issue changed after Ṭalq left Medina to return to al-Yamāma.[91] The story of the Prophet's prescription for converting a church into a mosque, thus, does not appear to have been commonly deployed by early or medieval Muslims to rule on the seizure of churches for the construction of mosques.

While the Banū Ḥanīfa ḥadīth is not often cited within the legal literature, its inclusion in the collections of Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Nasāʾī, and Ibn Ḥibbān suggests that it was perceived to have some utility and/or authenticity. Notably, legal discussions about the continued existence of Christian worship spaces within Muslim territories occurred against the backdrop, especially in the late-eighth and ninth centuries, of both attempted and actual destruction of churches by several caliphs and other authorities.[92] This ḥadīth – in which the Prophet Muḥammad seemingly provides sanction for the seizure and conversion of a Christian space – was likely understood as an advantageous citation in these debates about the rules for how to treat Christian inhabitants and buildings within Muslim-controlled lands. That it did not attract more attention, however, may reflect the fact that its prescription for the treatment of non-Islamic religious space was deemed less useful as a consensus emerged among jurists and rulers that such buildings would be allowed to stand.

5   Conclusion: Fluid Boundaries/Bounded by Fluids

The story of the Banū Ḥanīfa's church offers an Islamic adaptation of late antique Christian topoi regarding holy persons, relics, and the transfer of their sacred touch to new materials and places. Many early Muslims were familiar with such ideas and practices, and both material and literary evidence suggests that early Muslims collected blessed materials from several Christian places and persons. Beyond the Kathisma Church discussed above, a reliquary at Ruṣāfa – where Christian and Muslim worship spaces stood in close proximity in the early eighth century – enabled oil or water to be poured over the bones of Saint Sergius and then collected.[93] Based on the iconography on some glass souvenir bottles used for collecting fluids from holy sites in seventh-century

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91   Ibn Balbān, Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān, 3:404–406. The specific legal question at issue is the necessity of wuḍūʿ after touching the genitals. On this debate, see: Brannon Wheeler, "Touching the Penis in Islamic Law," History of Religions 44.2 (2004): 89–119; Katz, Body of Text, 123–135.

92   See note 32 above.

93   Fowden, The Barbarian Plain, 38, 85–86. Dorothea Weltecke, "Multireligiöse Loca Sancta und die mächtigen Heiligen der Christen," Der Islam 88.1 (2012): 73–95 at 81–82.

Jerusalem, Julian Raby has suggested that these objects were produced for and used by Muslims to collect perfumed fluids at the Dome of the Rock.[94] Finbarr Barry Flood has written, "There is no evidence for the manner in which the matter contained in such flasks was consumed by early Muslims, but in light of well-documented Christian practices and the viscosity of many of the materials used to mediate sacrality, it is likely that they were applied both externally and internally."[95]

References in literary sources further point to Muslim familiarity with, and likely participation in, rituals involving such sacred materials. In the *responsa* of the Syrian Orthodox bishop Jacob of Edessa (ordained in 684), Jacob is asked, "Is it right for a priest to give the eucharist or *ḥnānā* [oil and water mixed with dust from the relics of saints] to Hagarenes [i.e., Muslims] or to pagans possessed by evil spirits … so that they might be healed?" Jacob replies, "By all means. None should at all hinder anything like this."[96] Likewise in Christian hagiographies of the eighth and ninth centuries, Muslims visit Christian saints to receive blessings and collect blessed materials from them.[97] We find here direct engagements – though certainly literary constructs, to lesser or greater degrees – between Muslims and Christians in the usage of holy dust and fluids.

The proximity of these boundaries would widen over time. Something of this expanding gap between Muslim and Christian may be reflected in the ambiguity of the story of the Banū Ḥanīfa's church/mosque, with its simultaneous acceptance and rejection of Christian space and symbol. The story's engagement with late antique Christian discourse and ritual practice is illustrative of the continuity with, but difference from, Christian identity that Muslims pursued in the early centuries of Islamic rule in the Near East. Several

94   Julian Raby, "In Vitro Veritas: Glass Pilgrim Vessels from 7th-Century Jerusalem," in Johns, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, 113–190.

95   Finbarr Barry Flood, "Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam," in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 466.

96   Arthur Vööbus, ed. and trans., *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, 4 vols. (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975–1976), 1:249, 2:228–229 (trans. adapted here); Karl-Erik Rignell, *A Letter from Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite of Litarab Concerning Ecclesiastical Canons* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1979), 52–53, 83–84. On this text, see: Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 159–160; Herman G. B. Teule, "Jacob of Edessa and Canon Law," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, ed. Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 97; David G. K. Taylor, "The Syriac Baptism of St John: A Christian Ritual of Protection for Muslim Children," in *The Late Antique World of Early Islam: Muslims among Christians and Jews in the East Mediterranean*, ed. Robert G. Hoyland (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2015), 452–453; Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 154.

97   Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 97, 134–139, 155–159; Sizgorich, "Monks and Their Daughters," 209–210.

Christian signifiers – church, monk, and relic – are drawn upon, illustrating the continuing valence of these Christian symbols in the late antique symbolic *koine* inherited by early Islam.[98] Yet the story subverts these symbols and redirects them in order to illustrate the supersession of Christianity by Islam.[99] As Guidetti describes early Muslims drawing upon the "aura and sacredness" of Christian architecture in constructing their mosques alongside pre-existing churches, in this story Christian symbols are "not devoured but slowly emptied in order to be transferred into a new Muslim context."[100] Like the gradual, material transfer of the sanctity of Christian spaces, Muslim storytellers here demonstrate the Islamic narrative and ideological inheritance of Christian symbols, while stripping those symbols of their previous, specifically Christian explanatory power. In this Islamic hagiographic story, a relic can make a church into a mosque, and a monk can deem Islam to be true.

Acknowledgements

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98   Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity*, 13, 144–149.

99   Supersession of Christianity is an even stronger theme in an Ottoman-period myth with interesting parallels to the story examined here. According this myth, Byzantines in the seventh century used mortar that contained the Prophet's saliva, sand from Mecca, and Zamzam water in order to repair the dome of the Hagia Sophia. Patrick Franke notes that the story "demonstrate[s] that Aya Sofya was not a pure Christian building, but one which was already Islamized at the time of Muhammad by his saliva, which here functions as a symbolic carrier of sacred energy." On this story, see: Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium," in *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present*, ed. Robert Mark and Ahmet Ş. Çakmak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 200; Patrick Franke, "Khidr in Istanbul: Observations on the Symbolic Construction of Sacred Spaces in Traditional Islam," in *On Archaeology of Sainthood and Local Spirituality in Islam: Past and Present Crossroads of Events and Ideas*, ed. Georg Stauth (Bielefeld: Transcript; Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2004), 42–44.

100   Guidetti, "Churches Attracting Mosques," 12. Monasteries experienced similar dynamics over the centuries: Campbell, "A Heaven of Wine," 199–238.