Hidden Heritage
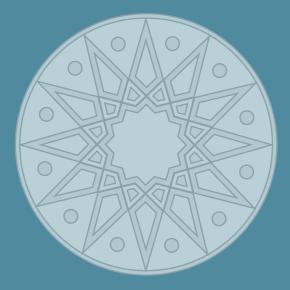
A Guide to the Mamilla Cemetery, Jerusalem

Research and Writing:
Ahmad Mahmoud, Anna Veeder

Professional Consultation:
Gideon Suleimani, Tawfiq Da'adli, Yonathan Mizrachi

Text Editing:
Jessica Bonn

Translation:
Noa Granot

Graphic Design and Maps:
Lior Cohen

Photography:
Emek Shaveh

Contents

The Mamilla Cemetery is an ancient Muslim cemetery, and the largest in Jerusalem. Historical sources –some from as early as the 11th century – recount its great significance. Evidence of burials from the Mamluk period from the 13th-20th century has been discovered at the site. Leaders, high administration officials, intellectuals, the wealthy and notables of the Muslim religion as well as commoners were all buried here. Mamilla also has an ancient water system that was used by the residents of the city throughout the different periods. Urban development over the last century has had a great impact the cemetery, and all that remains of it is a 20-dunam area (20,000 m2), surrounding the Mamilla Pool. The remains of the site and the stories of those who were buried have much to teach about Jerusalem's society and its residents, from the Middle Ages to this day.

Why did we write a guide on Mamilla?

At the heart of Jerusalem, at Independence Park – a well-tended green area that invites passersby to stop for a moment, listen to the water gently streaming through the canals or sit peacefully on the grass, is the Mamilla site that is the focus of this guide. Beside the expansive park that serves the visitors and residents of the city center, which is quite active day and night, you'll also find the Mamilla Pool, which is at once an ancient pool from the Roman period, and a site that figures in the memories of many Jerusalemites of today. Fragments of ancient graves and monuments are scattered throughout the large area surrounding the pool. This abandoned site, prevailing over such a central, bustling part of the city – between the well-kept park and commercial streets - is very conspicuous; yet the site of broken tombs and small burial structures, whose splendor can be discerned despite the devastating impact of time and vandalism, is still mysterious and appealing, and provokes wonder: who is buried there? Why were they buried in the heart of the city? And why doesn't this cluster of graves, lacking any sign or fence, have the obvious look of a cemetery?

The story of the ancient Mamilla Cemetery is little known. It seems as if the city's images of previous centuries and their stories became buried along with the ruins, and it is no longer familiar to many Israelis. In the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods, this was the central graveyard, where the city's wealthiest were buried alongside community leaders and clerks, and the educated alongside the downtrodden and the poor. As is well known, cemeteries are a treasure trove for anyone who wants to research and investigate the lives and characteristics of a society at a specific time and place. To our surprise, when we began to take interest in Mamilla as an archaeological site, it became clear that not a single book in Hebrew was dedicated to the study of the subject, its remains and its cultural heritage. New construction enterprises are eating away at the area of the cemetery and relentlessly inflicting damage on the character of its presence. Specific conservation initiatives promoted by the authorities for the Mamilla Pool or the Byzantine water cistern do not treat the cemetery site as a whole, focusing on making prominent the Byzantine layer and the Roman layer that preceded it, and skipping over the later centuries, identified with the city's Islamic period. Emek Shaveh believes that in a city the likes of Jerusalem, with the cultural, religious and human variety that makes it so unique, it is of supreme importance that the cultural heritage of all periods, cultures and religions that have left their mark are represented.

Given the neglect that plagues the site and the continual deterioration of the tombs and the monuments, it is imperative to examine the remains before they disappear, and publish the story of this important cemetery, wherein lie dozens of personal stories that create a portrait of the city in its Arab-Muslim period. Familiarity with the city's multifaceted heritage enriches us, lives lived here today, and expands our acquaintance with the past and even the present.

This guide is an initial attempt to provide access to information on the cemetery. This is an effort we hope many people, authorities and individuals, will join, take interest in and research, deepening their familiarity with a Jerusalem heritage site that is disappearing before our very eyes.

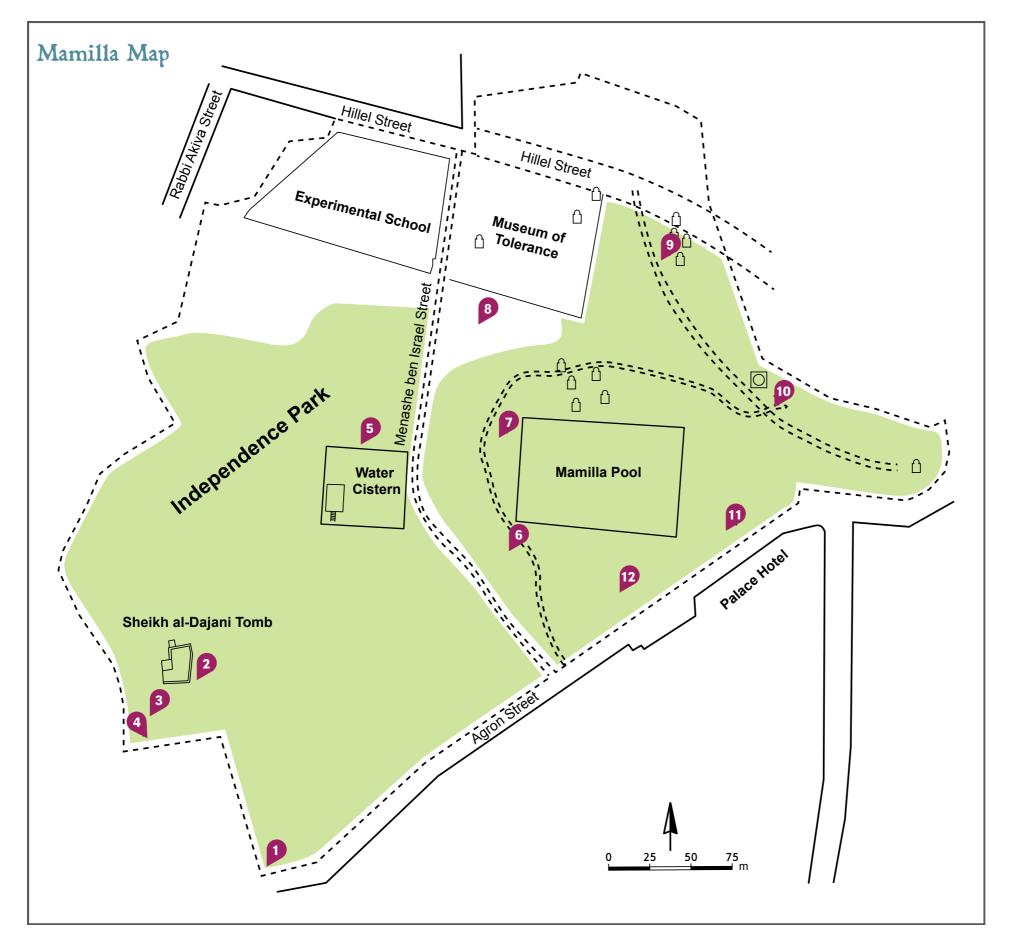# The Mamilla Cemetery and Modern Jerusalem's Urban Landscape from an Archaeological-Critical Perspective

From an archaeological perspective, the city of Jerusalem and the architectural-historical landscape as viewed from its urban space constitute the uppermost stratum of a multilayered, ancient site. As in any time and place, here too, the surface layer is the result of a long process in which the landscape changed and evolved for various reasons. These changes are not merely functional products of the daily needs of city residents, but are also the fruits of political-ideological actions. The settlement of Jerusalem has spanned over 7000 years, and as is known, the city contains architectural layers from a variety of different periods that tell its story.

The modern city began to develop beyond the Old City walls in the mid-19th century. The city's expansion led eventually to the relocation of urban life to the Old City's periphery. Jerusalem developed to the west, north and south, and sites with a practical function (burial areas, quarries, agricultural lands and more) were woven into the heart of the modern city. The Muslim cemetery at Mamilla, the central burial site of of the city during a thousand years of Muslim rule, became an area with some of the city's highest real estate values. This process occurs in many cities around the world that have a long history of hundreds and thousands of years. Already in the British Mandate period, there were confrontations between some elements in Jerusalem seeking to protect the cemetery from damage resulting from urban development, and others that tried to take advantage of the increasing economic value of the land, which had suddenly turned into a central, desirable location.

Damage to the cemetery was not the result of urban development alone; the most dramatic impact on its fate is rooted in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the results of the 1948 war. After the war the city was divided in two, and the cemetery was suddenly under Jewish rule, cut off from the Arab population and community. In the development process of the city from 1948 until today, the State of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality undertook a series of construction projects including the paving of streets (Hillel St. and Menashe ben Israel St.), constructing a playground and park (Independence Park), constructing a school ("The Experimental School"), laying down infrastructure such as sewage and electricity, building the Museum of Tolerance and opening a coffeehouse. In this manner, over a long yet steady process, the cemetery's area shrunk from 130 dunam in the 19th century to an area of 20 dunam today, mostly surrounding the Mamilla Pool.

Mamilla Map

Rabbi Akiva Street

Hillel Street

Hillel Street

Experimental School

Museum of Tolerance

Independence Park

Menashe ben Israel Street

Water Cistern

Mamilla Pool

Sheikh al-Dajani Tomb

Agron Street

Palace Hotel

0   25   50   75
m

Legend

1. Meeting point
2. Sheikh al-Dajani tomb
3. Al-Qureishi tomb
4. Dajani family burial area
5. Water cistern
6. Mamilla pool
7. al-Alami tomb
8. Tolerance Museum
9. Two women's graves from the Mamluk period
10. Al-Kubaki tomb (al-Kubakiya)
11. In front of Waldorf Astoria Hotel (Palace Hotel)

⌂ Graves

Station 1: The southwest entrance to Independence Park adjacent to Agron Street

The Mamilla Cemetery is situated in West Jerusalem, stretching from Agron Street in the south to the Mamilla Mall in the east, the Nahalat Shiva neighborhood in the north and King George Street and the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in the west. At the beginning of the 20th century, a stone fence[1] was built around the cemetery (see Map). The first signs of a burial in Mamilla originate in the Byzantine period (4-7 centuries CE), and burials in the area continued until the 20th century.

The cemetery was a **sacred endowment** (waqf), and during the British Mandate it was managed by the Muslim Supreme Council – the body in charge of religious affairs among the Arab public. Due to intensive urban development and a lack of burial places in the cemetery, the council decided to cease burials in Mamilla[2] in 1927, and preserve the place as an historic site.[3] After the War of Independence, the sacred property was passed on by virtue of the Absentee Property Law to the Ministry of Religious Services. Today, the cemetery is under the auspices of the Jerusalem Municipality.

The name "Mamilla"

There are differing versions of the origin and meaning of the name "Mamilla"; one claims that the name originates from a Byzantine church bearing the name and was erected in the area in honor of a woman saint named Mamilla. Bernard the Monk, who visited Jerusalem c. 870, recounts that "about a mile to the west of the City of Jerusalem stands the Holy Mamilla Church, containing the bodies of many [Christians] who were murdered by the Saracens [The Persians].[4]" It appears that Bernard the Monk is referring to the event also referenced by St. Sabbas of the 7th century, who reports on thousands of Christians who were slaughtered in the Persian Invasion of Jerusalem in 614, and buried after the battles in caves around the Mamilla Pool.[5] One of the most important historical sources recounting the Muslim period in general and the Ottoman period specifically is Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, who wandered the area from 1693-1694. Al-Nabulsi writes that "they say that the original name is 'Ma min Allah' [that which was granted by God], and sometimes the place is called "Bab Allah" [The Gate of God] or "Zaitun al-Millah."[6] The Jews call the place "Beit Milo," while the Christians call it "Babilla."[7] The names "Ma min l'Allah" or "Bab Allah" express the site's holiness at the time, when Mamilla was a large and important Muslim cemetery in Jerusalem, already hundreds of years old. The name can also be understood as "mai min Allah" – water from God, hinting at the big water system situated on the cemetery grounds. One modern theory raises a hypothesis that the name "Mamilla" originates from the pool, whose construction was funded by a donation from the Roman woman named Mamilla or Maximilla.[8]
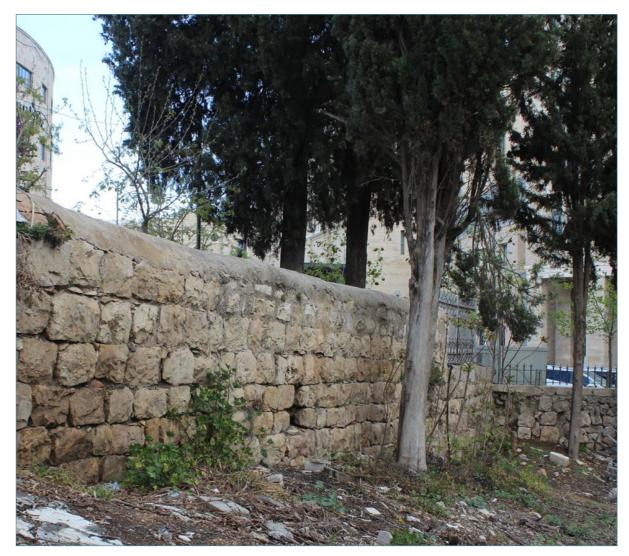

Tomb in the style of the Crusaders

Historical and archaeological research on the cemetery

The main historical source on the history of the Muslim cemetery is a book by the Muslim historian Mujir al-Din al-Ulaymi (1456-1522), who served as a qadi (religious court judge) in Jerusalem. His book about Jerusalem and Hebron is comprehensive and meticulous.[9] According to Mujir al-Din, prominent Muslim clerics were being buried at the site as early as the 8th century. Mamilla is already referenced as an important Muslim cemetery in the 11th century in an essay by al-Wasiti, a preacher at the al-Aqsa Mosque from 1019-1020.[10] According to tradition, 70,000 Muslims were buried at the time of the Crusader conquest in the summer of 1099.[11] The French archaeologist Clermont-Ganneau, who studied the area at the end of the 19th century, identified three of the graves as Crusader graves.[12]

An important written historical source on the Mamilla cemetery from the Ottoman period is the records of the Sharia Court (*sijils*) of Jerusalem from 1529 until 1917 or 1919. Throughout the Ottoman period, the Sharia Court served as the most prominent official institution and managed Jerusalem's Muslim, Jewish and Christian populations. Each resident in the city came to the Sharia Court at least twice during their lifetimes – at birth and at death – as well as in marriage or divorce, when selling or purchasing a house, and regarding inheritances one may have received or bequeathed. The Sharia Court writings are a treasure, thanks to which we are able to learn very much about the history of Jerusalem and about those who were buried in the Mamilla cemetery.

In 1945 the Muslim Supreme Council carried out a survey of the tombstones, and a list of 841 tombs and the names of the buried was compiled accordingly. This list also helps us identify some of the tombs in the area, although some remain anonymous. Among the Muslim Supreme Council documents are also various correspondences. One of the documents from the Mandate period describes how the electric company authorized a man to purchasing 100 meters of the cemetery's land for purposes of erecting a transformer at the site, and the same buyer turned to the Muslim Supreme Council for permission. Today, the Muslim Supreme Council documents are scattered between the Israel State Archives and the Waqf Archives in Abu Dis; the Sharia Court writings are located exclusively in Abu Dis.

Historical and archaeological research on cemeteries is of great importance. In all religions, there is a belief in life after death, and therefore, burial customs teach us about beliefs, lifestyles, relationships between different population groups (wealthy vs. poor, educated vs. uneducated, men vs. women) and more. In addition, research on the cemetery contributes to our knowledge in fields such as the city's economy and geographical borders. The study of the graves sheds light on the lives of those who were buried there: the design of the tombstones, the inscriptions and the interred remains produce a rather live portrait of the dead. The archaeological knowledge accumulated at the site, based on material findings, complements and broadens knowledge drawn from the written historical record.

Part of the old wall that was built around the cemetery

Station 2: Sheikh al-Dajani tomb structure and the nearby graves

We are standing beside the grave of the **Sheikh Ahmad al-Dajani**, an Ottoman Jerusalem figure of considerable importance, a member of the Dajani family, appointed to the Jerusalem aristocracy alongside the Khalidi, Nuseibeh, Jaouni, Nashashibi, Rasas al-Imam and Alami families.

The tombstone inscription

الفاتحة
The Opening Sura (al-Fatiha)

ضريح ولي الله
Grave of Allah's companion

الشيخ أحمد بن الشيخ
Sheikh Ahmad bin Sheikh

علي علاء الدين الدجاني
'Ali 'Alaa-Din al-Dajani

المولود في القدس الشريف
Born in Jerusalem

عام 876 هجري
876 AH [1471]

والمتوفى فيها عام 969 هجري [1561]
And died 969 AH [1561]

According to the family traditions, **Ahmad ibn 'Alaa al-Din al-Dajani** was born in al-Dajaniya village (located 8 km north of Ramallah) in the year 876 AH (1471), and died in Jerusalem in 969 AH (1561). Several versions offer an interpretation of the last name; other than the version that ties the last name to al-Dajaniya village, there is another story that refers to the meaning of the word Dajaniya village in Arabic, "staying". This version refers to the stay of Ahmad al-Dajani in the Ahmad al-Dajani seems to have settled in al-Dajaniya village[14] when he was young. According to oral tradition, al-Dajani intervened in a conflict between two families in his native village and adjucated between the two according to Muslim law; the family of lesser distinction won. As a result, the stronger family sought to harm al-Dajani, who decided to flee from the village to Jerusalem. After he left, the letter "d" was removed from the name of the village and it became "al-Janiya", which means "he who harms himself." Thus did Ahmad al-Dajani become the founder of the family dynasty in the city.[15]

Other sources[16] relate that Ahmad al-Dajani was among the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (*ashraf*) due to his close familial relations to Ali ibn Abu Talib, the last of the first four caliphs and also a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad.

According to the tradition, al-Dajani was a great scholar and Sufi master of many pupils. He accepted the Sufi leadership in Jerusalem from Ali ibn Maimon[17] and was considered the successor of the great scholar Muhammad Ibn 'Arraq.[18] Al-Dajani belonged to the Shafi'i School, and is said to have known the Quran by heart as well as the hadith commentaries. Many miracles are attributed to him, which were documented in writing under the title **Appraisals to al-Sheikh Ahmad al-Dajani**.

The Opening Sura, or Surat al-Fatihah is the first Sura in the Quran. The Sura includes seven verses recited seventeen times a day by the Muslims in each prayer. This Sura is of great importance, since it is expressed in the central ideas of Islamic monotheistic belief.[13]

AH – After the Hijra. Hijra (In Arabic: هجرة) is a term describing the migration of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Yathrib, later called al-Medina. The Hijra took place in 622, which was later determined as the start of the Muslim calendar.

A **Sufi** (Arabic: صُوفِيّ) is someone who belongs to the Sufism movement (Arabic: صوفية). Sufism is a mystical Islamic belief and practice founded on the idea that God cannot be perceived through the senses or the intellect alone. Sufism involves different spiritual practices that enable a union with God. The name is most commonly understood as related to suf (صوف) - a wool cloak worn by the early Muslim ascetics, meant to suppress physical desires. The Sufis follow sharia just like any believing Muslim, but they also seek a deeper understanding of God and his nature - the understanding of absolute truth, haqiqa (حقيقة). In order to reach the understanding of haqiqa, the Sufi believer pledges to observe the esoteric order - the tariqa (طريقة). Throughout the tariqa the Sufi pupil (murid, مريد) follows his guide's instructions and ways of life (murshid, مرشد), until he too achieves union with God. The most important ceremony for the Sufi is the dhikr(ذكر), in which the believer repeats the divine name. The dhikr may take place in silence or accompanied by instrumental music and dance - sema (سماع) - depending on the tariqa.

The Shafi'i School is one of the four schools of Islamic law in Sunni Islam. The school is named after the imam Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, who died in Egypt in 820.

Hadith is a collection of laws and stories about the Prophet Muhammad and his way of life. The hadith are central to Islam, with only the Quran surpassing its importance.

One of the famous miracles attributed to al-Dajani took place while he was sitting in the al-Aqsa mosque, before he became a scholar and was well educated in Arabic grammar. The Prophet Muhammad suddenly appeared before him and al-Dajani asked Muhammad to teach him the grammatic principles of the Arabic language. Another miracle associated with al-Dajani occurred at the burial place of David the Prophet[19] (at Mount Zion), which was under Christian rule at the time. David the Prophet was revealed before al-Dajani and said: "help me."

One document from the Sharia Court dated 10th Shawwal 968 AH (1560) confirms that Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent determined the place as a **sacred endowment,** that is, he dedicated Maqam al-Nabi Daud, a place which included a bakery and gardens, to the Sheikh Ahmad al-Dajani, his offspring and followers.[20] Since then, the Dajani family has lived next to David's tomb - al-Nabi Daud - and called themselves the Dajani al-Daudi family. The family members were in charge to the location throughout the entire Ottoman period as well as the Mandate period, until 1948.

> A **sacred endowment** (waqf, Arabic: وقف) is property endowed for religious and social purposes. The creator of the endowment associates the property with Allah, imbuing it with a religious character. In Islam there are also familial endowments (al-waqf al-ahali) and public endowments (al-waqf al-khayri).

Most likely, Ahmad al-Dajani was an associate of the Ottoman Empire, since it is known that he was sent by the residents of Jerusalem to Damascus, seat of the Turkish ruler of the Damascus district, to which Jerusalem belonged at the time, in order to bring represent Jerusalem residents on various issues. The exact purpose of the trip is not mentioned in the sources, but by comparison to similar cases, one can conclude that it was intended to advance the process of appointing an official to a particular position, or to request the alleviation of taxation and debts. In his final years, al-Dajani lived in his Jerusalem residence, until he passed away and was buried in the Mamilla Cemetery in 1561.

Later, at the end of the 18th century, several of his family members moved from Jerusalem to Jaffa. In 1933, Dr. Fouad Ismail al-Dajani founded the al-Dajani Hospital in Jaffa. He passed away in 1940 and was buried in the hospital garden. Ahmad Sidqi al-Dajani was a politician and one of the founders of the PLO. Three members of the Dajani family served as mayors of Jerusalem during the Ottoman period and the British Mandate. The sons of Ahmad, the founder of the dynasty, wrote a variety of compositions on him, and some of the original manuscripts can be found at the Israel National Library in Givat Ram.

Later, in 1986, an individual, described by representatives of the Dajani family as a criminal, took over the tomb structure and removed the tombs, following which he covered the walls with mirrors and opened a pub at the site. The Dajani family filed charges against the invader, and in 2012 managed to regain possession of the structure and renovate it at their own expense. Today the structure is locked and the family representatives hold the key. In the center of the room is a modern tombstone, placed there during the renovation.

In 1933, the photographer **Zeev Alexandrovich** photographed a series of pictures of the Mamilla cemetery, and the grave of Sheikh al-Dajani appears in a number of them. The photos are located in one of the photo collections of the National Library.[21] Several other graves are pictured in the photos, beside the tomb structure of Ahmad al-Dajani. In addition, another room can be seen next to the structure, which is no longer there. The circumstances of its disappearance are unknown. In the 17th century, Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi documented impressions from his visit to the Mamilla Cemetery, referring to the grave of Ahmad al-Dajani and those of his family members - Abd al-Manam al-Dajani and Yusuf al-Dajani[22] - it may be that due to the importance of Sheikh Ahmad al-Dajani, those who were close to him asked to be buried beside him. In addition, it seems that many members of the Dajani family were buried there because it was the family plot. One 1945 list from the Muslim Supreme Council indicates the names of those who were buried next to the Dajani grave: Muhammad Ahmad al-Dajani (one of the Sheikh's sons), Ali Ahmad al-Dajani (one of the Sheikh's sons), Musa Wafa al-Dajani, Darwish ibn Abdallah Hasan al-Dajani and Alshahi Anis al-Dajani. These graves disappeared and cannot be identified.

Sheikh al-Dajani tomb

The tombstone inside the renovated tomb

Station 3: The al-Qureishi grave

On this large, square grave lies the headstone of Sheikh Abdallah al-Qureshi[23] (henceforth spelled: al-Qureishi). Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Ibrahim, known as Abu Abdallah al-Qureishi al-Hashemi, was born in 1150[24] on the "Green Island" (Algeciras) in the scouth of Spain. The al-Qureishi tribe, the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad, was considered one of the most prominent, strongest tribes in Mecca and in the Arabian Peninsula. According to tradition, Sheikh Abdallah al-Qureishi came from Spain via the Egyptian city Fustat (today part of Cairo) to visit Jerusalem, and passed away here in 1202. Al-Asli, one of Jerusalem's historians, recounts his burial in Mamilla beside the Sufi scholar Ibn Arslan.[25]

Al-Qureishi was a famous Sufi intellectual with healing powers, and had 600 pupils in his zawiyah in Jerusalem. Al-Qureishi's grave was a pilgrimage destination (ziarah), since he was considered one of the highest-ranking Sufi scholars of his time.[26] The grave is mentioned by the historian Aref al-Aref,[27] who wrote a book on the history of Jerusalem. Al-Aref referred to the famous graves in the Mamilla Cemetery, among other things.

> Zawiyah (Arabic: زاوية), place of retreat for Sufis immersed in prayer and the study of Quran.
>
> Ziarah (Arabic: زيارة), visit to a sacred site for purposes of prayer or other rituals.

Tombstone inscription

الشيخ عبد الله القرشي أي معدن الكرامات
Sheikh Abdallah al-Qureishi, that is, source of miracles

وهو يشير الى زمن شيخ الاولياء
And he indicates the time of the leader of all saints

مرقده بجوار بيت المقدس في مكان يدعى ماملا
His grave is near Bayit al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) in a place called Mamilla

حيث ينزل نور الرحمة في الليل والنهار
Where the light of compassion descends day and night

من عمر مقامه في بابلا هو الملك الحق
He who has established his holy place at Baballah is the rightful king

تاريخه في الدنيا صنع الملك اشياء جميلة
In his past in this world, the king produced beautiful things

The tombstone of al-Qureishi

From this tombstone, which explicitly refers to the "Mamilla" cemetery, one can learn about the unique significance the Muslims attribute to burial in this cemetery. The second line of the inscription, which reads: "*In a place called Mamilla where the light of compassion descends day and night*", conveys Mamilla as a place with a divine presence, connecting heaven and earth. Therefore, prayers made at this location would be well heeded. Mujir el-Din writes "God will fulfill the wish of anyone who utters his name while standing among the graves of ibn-Arslan and al-Qureishi." Al-Zarqashi writes in the 14th century that whoever is buried in "Zaitun al-Milla" – Mamilla – it is as though he was buried in the heavens.

In order to understand the uniqueness of this epitaph, we must familiarize ourselves with typical inscriptions appearing on Muslim tombstones. In general, these can be divided into three types:

1. A simple inscription that includes the opening verses of the Quran, the name, a blessing for the deceased, and the date of passing. The tombstone of the Sheikh al-Dajani is an example of this kind of inscription.
2. A more complex inscription may also include a verse from the Quran.
3. The most sophisticated inscriptions also include poetic verses in appraisal of the deceased.

The headstone of al-Qureishi is of the third type. Furthermore, it is the only tombstone in the entire cemetery written in Turkish, even though al-Qureishi was not Turkish but an Arab who died in 1202, during the Ayyubid period, long before the Ottomans conquered Jerusalem. Why?

We have deduced from historical sources that the grave was renovated in 1322,[28] whereas the current tombstone is dated 1557. Translation of the tombstone inscription into Turkish tells us about the development of a phenomenon that became widespread in popular Islam during the Ottoman period – making pilgrimages to the graves of Muslim saints. Famous Sufi graves, such as the grave of Abdallah al-Qureishi, became sacred places. The Ottoman government supported this custom and funded the preservation of tombstones and their renovation, as in the present case.

Another unique detail is the design of the tombstone's frame. Its typical Ottoman style can be found on tombstones in Istanbul as well. The text's calligraphic style is known as "naskhi", which means "copying." This style, developed from an earlier style, Kufic script, used in the 10th century by authors who transcribed the Quran.

The tombstone rests on the foundations of a large square structure, although it doesn't belong to that grave – its original spot is in the lower area of the cemetery, next to where the Museum of Tolerance stands today. In the southern wall of the structure we can see two headstones in secondary use, bearing inscriptions. These are believed to have been taken from another part of the cemetery; most likely, there was once a room on top of the foundations. The grave itself seems to have been a family grave, or a "fosoqiah". It was customary to place more than one tombstone on the grave, at least the prominent ones, during the Ottoman period.

> **A fosoqiah (or fostoqiah)** Is a family grave, intended for members of one family. This was used when numerous burials had to be carried out at once, such as in cases of war victims or victims of an epidemic, and it was also a common practice in times of limited cemetery space. The fostokiah is even more common in modern times.
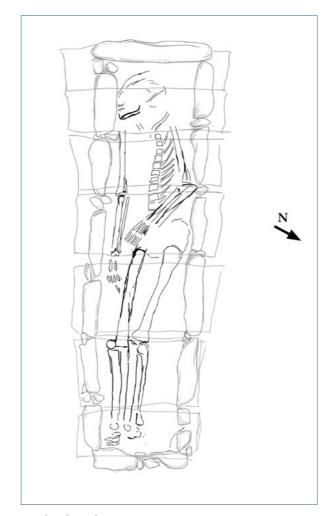
Station 4: The Dajani family burial plot, next to the al-Qureishi grave

We can see different types of graves around us. Several of them have a simple rectangular shape and rest on the ground while others rest on a stone with a square opening. Some graves resemble a sarcophagus, while others have graduated edges. Some are decorated with various ornaments.

Islamic burial customs

When a Muslim person passes away, his body is brought to a small structure, such as the one found at the edge of the Mamilla Cemetery, beside Beit Agron (next to Kikar Hahatulot). The body is covered with a white shroud and buried in the ground without a coffin. The body rests on its side, so that it faces Mecca (south or southwest), and the grave faces the Qibla (the direction of prayer – Mecca). Wooden boards are often placed on the body, as a divider between the deceased and the earth covering the grave. These characteristics help archaeologists distinguish an Islamic grave from a Christian grave, for instance, where the custom is to bury the deceased on their backs, with their arms crossed on their chest.

According to the Sharia, all are equal in the eyes of God, therefore, there is no need to erect a structure on top of the grave - creating a mound of soil a few centimeters high on top of the grave and placing two stones indicating the location of the head and the feet is sufficient. The Bedouin bury their deceased in this fashion to this day, but in cities we find more complex graves. The simplest graves cannot be dated. On some of the gravestones there is a square-shaped hole that is now empty, but we can surmise from similar stones found in the lower part of the cemetery, near

Muslim burial position

the Mamilla Pool, that the hole was used as a base to hold a pole that marked the location of the head. Several of the graves even had a second square-shaped hole, where a pole was affixed to mark the location of the feet. The graves that resemble a sarcophagus are most likely from the Mamluk period. A turba (mausoleum) was built on top of several of the graves, such as on the *Kubakiya* grave, which we will get to later.

> **Turba**: a fancy burial structure, at times used as a place of prayer and communion with those buried conventionally or as mummies inside the structure.

After 40 days of mourning, on either Thursday or a Friday, Muslims go to the cemetery to recite many blessings over the deceased. The relatives place palm fronds on the grave and give food and charity to the poor in the name of the deceased, in order to help him gain favors on judgment day. Tawfiq Canaan writes: "We see these deeds as a gift from the living to the deceased. The deceased does not eat, but the food is provided in his name. In this way the deceased can perform the greatest deed in Eastern culture – hospitality."

What is the significance of the tombstone ornaments?

The tombstone ornaments are similar to the burial customs, in that we can learn from their artistic style and meanings about those who lived and were buried here, about their culture, taste and beliefs. The flower ornaments may symbolize the wealth anticipated by the deceased in the Garden of Eden, or simply a yearning for beauty. Stars resembling the Star of David are engraved on some of the tombstones. This kind of star is a well-known symbol in Islamic art, and appears in Hisham's Palace in Jericho, among others. A number of tombstones have small bowls embedded in their center. The origin of this custom is unclear. Some claim that the bowl is intended to be filled with water for the welfare of the deceased's soul, or for the birds.

Why is the cemetery neglected?

The level of maintenance and cultivation of the Muslim cemeteries is not the same everywhere and depends on the area and surrounding community. Usually, Muslim cemeteries that were a pilgrimage destination for those visiting the graves of venerated figures were very well maintained and cultivated throughout the generations. It is reasonable to assume that this was the case in the Mamilla cemetery, at least since the beginning of the Ottoman period, while prominent Sufis were buried here. But the cemetery has deteriorated over the years. Urban development, which began during the British Mandate period and has escalated since 1948, together with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the political struggle between the two nations, caused Palestinian organizations to increase their involvement and awareness of the ancient cemetery. By the Mandate period, the Muslim Supreme Council was already complaining to the governing authorities about the accumulation of trash in the cemetery, garage owners dumping oil and gasoline within its borders and other damages were incurred as well. Turning to the authorities, the Muslim Supreme Council asked to send an assistant to the cemetery guard, someone who would keep the area clean. After the war of 1948 the cemetery came under Israeli government control, and responsibility for the cemetery was transferred from the Waqf to the Ministry of Religious Services, and thereafter to the Jerusalem Municipality. The current sight of it is an indication that these bodies have no interest whatsoever in the conservation and maintenance of the cemetery and its tombstones.

An eight-pointed star on the side wall of a tomb

A tomb decorated with a relief

A tomb with holes used as bases for pillars, and a decorated "bowl" at its center

A tomb resembling a sarcophagus in the al-Dajani family burial area

Columns to mark the position of the head and the feet

Station 5: The water cistern

The burial system converted into a water cistern and later into a dwelling

Mamilla is situated east of the watershed line; therefore a great deal of rainwater drains into the area. From ancient times, water cisterns and pools were built here in order to collect runoff used for watering crops. The development of early water systems teaches us about agricultural methods within the urban population.

In 2012, members of the organizations Emek Shaveh and EcoPeace conducted a community excavation with middle school students from the Experimental School at the water cistern, at the outskirts of the Mamilla site.[29] The water cistern is part of a quarried area and is built at the end of the extension that descends from west to east. During the excavations we found that the water cistern underwent three phases of use:
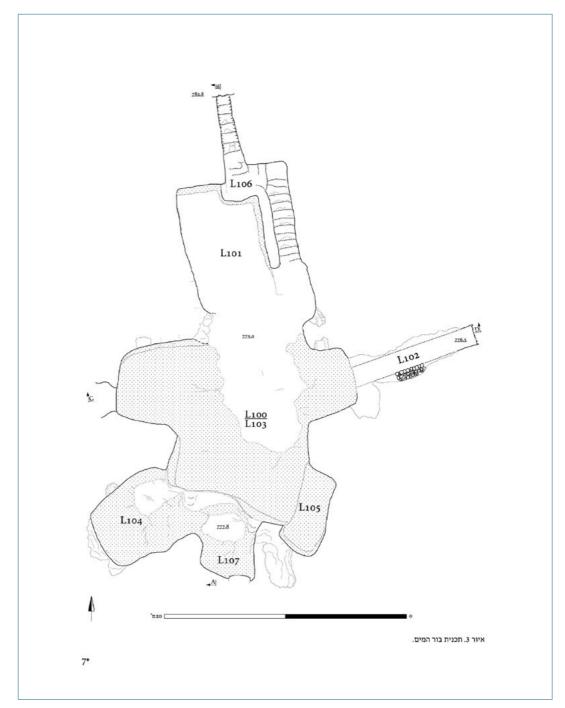
1. During the Byzantine period (4th-7th c.), it was a two-story burial system with quarried burial rooms.

2. In the Early Muslim period, the system was converted into a gigantic water cistern. The walls and floors of the rooms were removed, the sides plastered, openings in the cave ceilings were breached, allowing water to collect, and another opening was made in the northern part of the water cistern making it possible to descend into the cistern to clean and pump out the water. The water cistern was used as a reservoir for many years.

3. In its last phase, apparently over the last hundred years, the water cistern was converted into dwelling rooms, which were built adjacent to its eastern wall. A tunnel was quarried into the hole, connecting it to the rooms.

The burial caves at Mamilla are related to the story of the Persian invasion of Jerusalem in 614, during the war between the Persian Sasanian and Byzantine Empires. Testimonies of Antiochus Strategos, a Monk from Mar Saba, indicate that the bodies of 4,500 Christians were found in the Mamilla Pool.[30] Many of the Christians killed during the battles against the Persians are assumed to have been interred in the burial caves surrounding the pool. In 1989, a small Byzantine chapel (3.45X2.9m) was found in an excavation conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority. A passage into a burial cave was found inside the chapel, containing a large disorderly pile of arbitrary bones had accumulated. Coins originating in the early 7th century (from 602-610) were also found there.[31] It is very likely that this was a mass grave for Christians who were killed during the Persian invasion, as in Strategos' description.

Above one of the burial caves once stood a church called "Saint Mamilla." Its exact location is unknown. It may have stood here, or where the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel stands today. Bernard the Monk mentions the church in a manuscript from the end of the 9th century: "West of the City of Jerusalem stands the St. Mamilla Church, containing the bodies of many [Christians] who were murdered by the Saracens [the Persians]."[32]

Another testimony referring to the passageway and the Christian bodies appears in the writings of Father Daniel,[33] who toured the holy country at the beginning of the First Crusader Kingdom, from 1106-1107. Father Daniel writes that "A bowshot away [from David's Gate, today's Jaffa Gate] is a cave and therein are the remains of many holy martyrs who were killed in Jerusalem at the time of [the Byzantine emperor], Heraclius, and the name of this place is Hagia Mamilla," meaning, holy Mamilla.

This church may have become "Zawiyah Qalandriya", a Sufi site mentioned by Mujir al-Din. A wealthy woman named "Sitt Tunshuq" built this zawiyah in honor of the Sufi sheikh Ibrahim al-Qalandari, and her brother was later buried there.[34]

Map of the water cistern

One cave, many traditions

There is an opening south of the descent into the water cistern, leading to a cave known as "The Lion's Cave." Different traditions may have developed around this cave in the Middle Ages, all related to burial due to battles and involving the image of a lion. Rorgo Fretellus, a priest from Nazareth who at the beginning of the 12th century composed a guide for the European Latin-speaking pilgrim, wrote that "before the gate to Jerusalem, beside the lake that faces South, is a cave into which a lion accompanied by God carried the bodies of 12,000 martyrs who were killed under [the King of the Sasanian Empire of Persia] Khosrow."[35]

According to Jewish tradition, those who were killed were not Christians but Jews who were killed when the Maccabees fought against the Greeks. According to this tradition as well, a lion miraculously appears to protect the bones. This story is told by an anonymous pupil of Nahmanides, who visited Jerusalem at the beginning of the 14th century, that: "There are bones there of the righteous who were martyred the King of Greece, and he said to burn them the following day, and night fell and [the lion] came and brought them one by one from the lower pool that was filled with them, to that same cave. It was morning rose, and the lion was found at the opening of the cave with those who had been killed. Thus did the king and all his people that they were holy and their bones have remained there to this day."[36]

According to Muslim oral tradition, thousands of Muslims were buried here who were killed in the siege of Jerusalem (1099) during the First Crusade.[37] One night, a fire broke out, but in by Allah's providence, the bones moved into the cave. A lion was stationed at the entrance, to protect them forever.

In the 1950s, the Ministry of Religious Services tried to develop "The Lion's Cave" as a Jewish holy site.[38] From 1948-1967, most of the Jewish holy sites were inaccessible since they were on the Jordanian side of the border, and the initiative to develop the cave was one of the solutions to compensate for the lack of accessible Jewish holy sites. The cave was inaugurated in 1954 and a sign explaining the significance of the site for Jews was placed there. The initiative met with public skepticism and criticism, and at the beginning of the 1960s it sunk again into obscurity.

Pupils from the Experimental School excavating

Station 6: Mamilla Pool

The size of the Mamilla Pool is 60X100 meters, with a capacity of 36,000 cubic meters of water – it is one of the largest ancient pools in Jerusalem.[39] The cave is partly quarried and partly constructed. Over the years, a view took root that the pool was part of an entire system that transported water from the Solomon Pools, South of Bethlehem, all the way to Jerusalem. The accepted assumption at the time associated the pool with the Early or Late Roman period (1st c. BCE – 4th c. CE). The popular view nowadays is that the pool is not part of this water system. In a small excavation undertaken in 1999 by the Antiquities Authority, ceramic remains from the Early Roman period (Second Temple period) until the end of the Byzantine period (6th century) were found under the pool's plaster floor. As a result, the pool has been dated from the Byzantine period.[40] An aqueduct was found in the pool's northeastern corner, leading to a public bathhouse discovered under the Jaffa Gate. These, too, have both been dated to the Byzantine period.[41]

In 1947, the British Mandate authorities built a pump along the pool's southeastern side, integrating the old rainwater reservoir into the city's modern-day water system.. The project was halted, because it quickly turned out that the amount of water coming from the pool was insufficient, and that the water was of a poor quality, most likely due to accelerated construction and development in the pool's vicinity.

Each winter the pool continues to fill with rainwater and surface runoff. It has become a small nature reserve with plants, amphibians and other animals. In 1997, a previously unknown species of tree frogs was discovered there and was named the "Mamilla tree frog" or *Hyla heinzsteinitzi* in Latin, after Heinz Steinitz, an Israeli marine biologist. The tree frog has since become extinct, perhaps due to pollution in the water or pesticides for mosquito control applied by the Jerusalem Municipality at the site.

In August 2015, the Jerusalem Municipality advertised a call[42] for architects to submit proposals to renew the Mamilla Pool. The proposals included water slides, and met with protests from green organizations asking to protect the habitat, the flora and the fauna that have evolved at the site.[43] It is foreseeable that development and conservation projects will ensue in the coming years.

Mamilla pool

Station 7: Two al-Alami family graves

Abdallah al-Alami tombstone inscription

قبر نقيب السادة الاشراف في قدس بعبد الله [العلمي؟] واتصف

Grave of the Naqib al-Ashraf (Head Sharif) in Jerusalem Abdallah [al-Alami] and known as

شيخ المشايخ مرغد وصوفية لما انجلا سر الحقايق وانكشف

Sheikh of sheikhs, bounty and Sufism, when he exposed the secret of the truth and was revealed

منهم جمال الاولياء محمد قطب الورى العلمي [وصالح؟] الشرف

one of the beautiful custodians was Mohammad, axis of creation, al-Alamy, an honorable man

ابشر ما ترجوه يا شيخ العلا لا تخشى من هم [وربي؟] لا تخف

Bring tidings of that which you hope for, honorable sheikh / Fear them not, do not be afraid

طوبى لعبد الله صفوة الوفا غرف الجنان له تحلت بالتحف

Blessed is Abdullah, pinnacle of perfection / The chambers of heaven have for him ornamented gifts

فالله يرحمه ويحفظ منه خلف؟ له سادوا ويا نعم الخلف

Allah will have mercy on him and protect him / His descendants and his might, how good are his descendants

اكرم بعبد الله سيد من ولي بعهوده وعلا بحمد واقترف

Bless Abdullah, the lord of his sponsored / and ascend with praise

[ويحل؟] جنات عدن حملت [فيا له] يوم أرخنا غرف
١٢٨٠ [هجري]

And in the day that was dated, he was promised his own paradise.

In the year 1280 (1863)

As written in the inscription, **Abdallah al-Alami**, the **Naqib al-ashraf (head or supervisor of the descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad)**, was buried here. The inscription dedicates eight poetic verses of appraisal to al-Alami. The first verse describes the prominent and high-ranking Ottoman governmental post of the "Naqib al-ashraf", which the deceased had the honor of taking on in the mid-19th century in Ottoman Jerusalem. The second verse refers to the deceased as a religious and spiritual authority, addressing him as the "Sheikh of Sheikhs and Leader of Sufism". The third verse reads: "*one of the beautiful custodians was Mohammad, axis of creation, al-Alamy, an honorable man*". This verse seems to refer to Muhammad al-Alami, the well-known Sufi buried at Mount of Olives.

Naqib al-ashraf ("Head Sharif"): the ashraf (or sharifs in English)– descendants of Mohammad – are considered offspring of *al-Sahaaba* families (among them were the close friends and companions of the Prophet Muhammad, who recognized him as a prophet), or of *al-Ansar* families (residents of Yathrib who supported the Prophet Muhammad when he arrived from Mecca to Yathrib – today's Medina). The sharif families had special rights: their members were exempt from taxes and from serving in the Ottoman military. When stood trial, they were not sent to the Sharia Court like everyone else, but to the Head Sharif; even if the sharifs were sentenced to prison, they completed their sentences at the Head Sharif's residence rather than in jail. It was the Head Sharif's responsibility to identify fraudulent attempts to declare family relations to the prophet and prevent imposters from becoming sharifs, as well as protecting the various rights of the sharifs, should they be violated. The Head Sharif status could only be passed on through inheritance from father to son. In the 18th century, the Head Sharifs were elected from among the scholars, as is the practice with judges.[44] The Head Sharif in Istanbul was responsible for appointing the other head sharifs.

Tomb of Abdallah al-Alami

The Ottoman historian, Mustafa al-Dabbagh wrote about Gaza during the Ottoman period, referring to the Alami family in the city: "In 1260 Hijri (1844), Mustafa ibn Muhammad Wafa al-Alami moved to Gaza where he became a judge, and established a branch of the family there. Another son from the family moved to Lod and established another family branch."[45]

This source proves the familial relationship between the Alamis of Jerusalem, Lod and Gaza, and demonstrates a pattern of Palestinian families branching out across the different cities.

About the Alami family

There are a number of conjectures as to the origin of the family name. One of them maintains that it derives from the word *'alam* in Arabic, meaning "master." According to this tradition, the family founder is Abu Muhammad Abd al-Salam ibn Mashish. Some claim that the family came to Jerusalem during the time of Salah al-Din in order to battle with him against the Crusaders, and their children decided to stay in Jerusalem. This version is based on the name of the family until the Mamluk period, al-Haqaria, the name of Salah al-Din's princes. During the Mamluk period the family name changed to Alami, for political and social reasons.[46]

Another conjecture attributes the name's origin to Mount Alam in Morocco. A Jerusalem historian from the end of the Mamluk period, Mujir al-Din offers a third conjecture, connecting the family roots to the scholar Ibn Alam. It's hard to tell what the family's true origin is, but from studying the sources we know with certainty that the Alami family was an aristocratic family of distinguished lineage - ashraf (sharifs) and one of several families in Jerusalem who were part of the Palestinian elite until the British Mandate period.[47]

Alami family members filled honorable roles and were appointed as ulama, muftis and Sufis. The establishment of al-Sharaf quarter in Jerusalem's Old City, for instance, is attributed to the scholar Sharaf a-Din Musa al-Alami. This is also where he is buried. Muhammad Omar al-Alami,[48] a cleric and famous Sufi, was also a member of this distinguished family.

> **Ulama** (Arabic: **علماء**) are a class of Islamic religious scholars with a number of years of training in the Islamic religious sciences. Their most important role is to rule on different issues in Islamic law.
>
> **Mufti** (Arabic: **مفتٍ**) is an Islamic cleric with expert knowledge of Sharia who is authorized to interpret religious laws and issue a fatwa (a ruling on issues pertaining to Islamic law).The head of the Ulama Council - "The Mufti" or "Grand Mufti" is the highest Islamic religious legal official.

This tombstone inscription is not as prominent as the others we have seen so far, and is carved in stone. The language is brief: Amin abd al-Mu'ati abu al-Fasl al-Alami, who died as a shahid, led worship services (imam) at the Al-Khanqah al-Salahiyya Zawiyah,[49] a Sufi institute in the Christian Quarter near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was established in the days of Salah al-Din.[50] The zawiyah was financed by shops and other properties considered "waqf."

At the end of the 19th century, the Ottomans sold part of the zawiyah to the Franciscans. The last of the Alami family to fill a prominent, public role was Said al-Din al-Alami, who was the Mufti of Jerusalem after Haj Amin al-Husseini, until the beginning of the Israeli Occupation in 1967.

Amin al-Alami tombstone inscription

> **الفاتحة**
> The Opening Sura (al-Fatiha)
>
> **ضريح المرحوم الشهيد**
> Grave of the deceased *shahid*
>
> **أمين عبد المعطي ابو الفضل العلمي**
> Amin abd al-Mu'ati abu al-Fasl al-Alami
>
> **شيخ وإمام زاوية الخانقاه الصلاحية**
> Sheikh and prayer leader in the Zawiya of al-Khanqaa al-Salahiyya
>
> **المتوفي سنة ١٣٤٦**
> Died in the year 1346 [AH]
>
> **وفق سنة ١٩٢٧**
> Corresponding to the year 1927

> **Shahid**: someone who was killed or died a sudden, unnatural death – in battle against the enemy, from a disease, in a fire and so on.
>
> **Khanqah**: a Persian term meaning "dining room" or "where the King feasts." In the Muslim period this term referred to Sufi centers where Sufi ceremonies took place and that were even used for housing. As opposed to the khanqah, **zawiyah**s contain rooms used for solitary prayer and studying the Quran.

Alami family members were in charge of properties such as different stores that served a waqf, and in this way the zawiyah was financed. They managed this sacred property throughout the entire Ottoman period[51] and even exclusively held teaching and other public positions which were passed down from father to son by virtue of the firman - a royal decree issued by the Ottoman Sultan. Another reference to the buried appears in the inheritance certificate of his sister, Zahaya, who passed away in 1333 AH (1914). According to this certificate, her siblings, Amin, Zahara, Amira and Tuwriya were the inheritors, and Amin inherited 967 *para*s (an Ottoman coin)[52] from a total of 9671 *para*s - the overall inheritance. This detail is evidence of the family's economic prosperity and of the economic status of Muslim women in Ottoman society, some of whom owned property and were entitled to bequeath it.

Station 8: Museum of Tolerance

Engulfment by the city: the history of building and development plans at Mamilla

The construction of the Museum of Tolerance is the final chapter in of a series of building and development plans that gnawed away at the cemetery site since the days of the British Mandate. In 1929 Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, decided to erect the "Palace Hotel" at the cemetery's southern border – south of Agron Street today – in an area that was outside the cemetery borders at the time. Skeletons were discovered while digging the foundations for the structure. A warrant was issued by the Mufti and the skeletons were removed from the site and buried elsewhere. Cries of protest resounded among Jerusalem's Muslim population when they heard of this, and the Mufti's opponents filed a petition in court against the desecration of the graves.[53]

Hamdi Nubani, the Antiquities Supervisor on behalf of the Mandate authorities, conducted a survey of the cemetery in 1946. In the survey, Nubani wrote that the Muslim Supreme Council was numbering the graves as part of their preparations for a development plan for the cemetery and the Mamilla Pool on behalf of the British Mandate.[54] According to the plan, the entire east side of the cemetery would be approved for construction. This plan also appears in a book by Henry Kendall, the head of the Jerusalem Municipality Urban Planning Department from 1935-1948. Kendall writes: "*Proposals are now being considered to repair and beautify the immediate surrounds of the pool, to develop part of the land for high class commercial and residential purposes. In addition it is hoped to lay out spacious public and private open spaces with tree lined boulevards between the blocks of buildings. Many fine tombs which date back to the times of Saladin will be preserved and protected from further damage and neglect.*"[55] This plan fell through after the British left the country in May, 1948.

In the 1960s, the Jerusalem Municipality began constructing Independence Park on part of the cemetery grounds. In 1964, Mordechai Ish-Shalom, who was mayor at the time, turned to the highest Qadi in Israel in Jaffa, requesting that he declare the area as not sacred, so the development of a public park could be approved in terms of Islamic law. After some hesitation, the Qadi acquiesced to the municipality's request.[56] Israel promised to conserve the part of the cemetery that was south of Mamilla Pool in return, where graves in good condition could still be found. In the area declared as not sacred, the Municipality built additional structures that the Qadi had not approved – and was not even asked to approve – namely, the Experimental High School and Beit Agron. In addition, a parking lot was built on the cemetery grounds, and infrastructure was laid down there, such as roads and sewage. The development did not spark much protest among the Muslim population, although by that time there were almost no Muslims in West Jerusalem, while a military warrant valid until 1966 limited access to the area for Muslims in the north of the country, who therefore were therefore denied active involvement in Jerusalem affairs.

Construction of the Museum of Tolerance

The Museum of Tolerance, situated in the northeastern part of the cemetery, is part of the cemetery site. In the 1980s, an underground parking lot (beneath Kikar Hahatulot) and an outdoor parking lot were built at the site. The initiative to open a museum was announced in the 1990s by Mayor Teddy Kollek. Ehud Olmert, who succeeded him, continued to advance the process, and in 2004 the Simon Wiesenthal Center published the building plan, whose architect was Frank Gehry, and whose construction was supposed to be completed in 2009. In 2005, the cornerstone was laid at a ceremony, in which Arnold Schwarzenegger, the governor of California, and Israeli President Moshe Katzav, took part.

As is customary, an archaeological excavation preceded construction of the site. In December 2005 the Antiquities Authority began clearing the area and trial trenching at the site. A dense and complex concentration of graves was discovered over the entire area and the Antiquities Authority conducted a rescue excavation so they could begin construction of the museum. During the excavation, a thousand graves were discovered on five different layers dating from the Ayyubid period (11-12 centuries) until today. The excavation also revealed a residential structure from the end of the Iron Age (6-7 centuries BCE) and an aqueduct from a Roman-Byzantine-Muslim period. With the exception of a number of individuals buried according to Christian tradition, all the skeletons unearthed in the excavation lay in a Muslim burial position, with children, babies, men and women among them. Various burial structures were also exposed, including pit graves (a grave dug into the ground in a rectangular shape) covered with stone tablets, rectangular graves built from stone, several graves in fancy tomb structures, a large number of secondary burials,[57] family burials and more.

In December 2005 the Islamic Movement, together with descendants of those buried at the site, petitioned the High Court of Justice against the construction of the Museum of Tolerance at the Mamilla Cemetery. Following the petition, the archaeological excavation was halted in February 2006, even though most of the cemetery's area had not been excavated. The petition was rejected in 2008. The Antiquities Authority position claimed that all the archaeological investigations had been exhausted and that the area was ready for construction, with the exception of one small area, which was being excavated by Tel Aviv University. As a result of the Antiquities Authority's decision, 30%-40% of the graves exposed at the site were excavated as part of the archaeological excavation, while most were dismantled and removed without an excavation. The only antiquity that remained undestroyed was the aqueduct, which was dated from the Hasmonean period (although this dating is rejected by many researchers).[58]

The Muslim Cemetery at Mamilla has been a declared antiquities site since the British Mandate. Despite the widespread development projects conducted there over the years, not a single archaeological study or rescue operation was carried out by the Israeli Antiquities Department or by other professional archaeological body. In deciding not to conduct an archaeological investigation of the entire area intended for construction, or even to conserve even a few of the graves, the Antiquities Authority missed an opportunity – perhaps their last opportunity – to research, document and conserve this ancient cemetery.

Station 9: The grave of al-'Izzi Aydamur al-Shujai's wife, from the Mamluk period

Here two graves from the Mamluk period were found, where the wife of al-'Izzi Aydamur al-Shujai was buried,[59] along with her mother-in-law. Unfortunately, the graves have been neglected and are in an advanced state of decay. Only the daughter's tombstone can be identified on-site. The inscription on the two tombstones, as they appear in an article by Tawfiq Da'adli, are as follows:[60]

The inscription on the tombstone of the wife of al-'Izzi Aydamur al-Shujai

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم كل من عليها فان ويبقى وجه

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
Everyone that is thereon will pass away;

ربك ذو الجلال والاكرام هذا قبر الحاجة الفقيرة الى الله

there remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory.
[Qur'an 55: 26–27] This is the tomb of the Hajja yearning for God,

تعالى زوجة المقر العالى ألعزي أيدمر الشجاعي ناظر الحرمين

be He exalted, the wife of the honoured al-'Izzi Aydamur al-Shuja'I,
the superintendent of the two blessed Harams.

الشريفين توفت نصف رجب سنة ثلاث وعشرين وسبع مائة

She died in the middle of [the month of] Rajab in the year 723 [20 July 1323].

The inscription on the tombstone of the mother-in-law:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم كل من عليها فان ويبقى وجه ربك

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
Everyone that is thereon will pass away;

ذو الجلال والاكرام هذا قبر...

there remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory.
[Qur'a¯n 55: 26–27]. This is the tomb of [...]

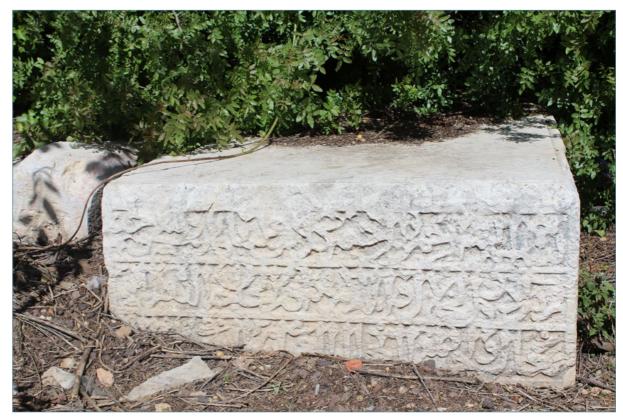والدة المدفونة جنبها حمات المقر العالي ألعزي ايدمر الشجاعي

mother of the one buried beside her, mother-in-law of the illustrious
lord al-'Izzi Aydamur al-Shuja'i

ناظر الحرمين الشريفين توفيت في شهر شوال سنة احد وعشرين وسبع مائه

the Superintendent of the two blessed Harams, she died in the month
Shawwa¯l in the year 721 [October– November 1321].

Al-Shujai held an important position as "head of the two sacred sites," that is, Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem (the mosques at Temple Mount) and the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron (Cave of the Patriarchs). The four verses written on the mother's tombstone are inscribed in the Mamluk Naskhi script. The mother passed away in 721 AH (1321). The inscription on the daughter's tombstone is also four verses long and is written in Mamluk Naskhi script. The daughter is called "hajja" in the inscription - a name for someone who observed the precept of making a pilgrimage to Mecca. In addition, the inscription mentions that the daughter passed away in 723 AH (1323). These graves are a unique instance of women's burials at Mamilla Cemetery.

In an image from the Mandate period, you can see that the grave was built as one unit divided into two graves, a detail that teaches us about advance planning, according to which the daughter will be buried beside her mother when her time comes. The resemblance between the script styles in the pair of inscriptions suggests that a famous calligrapher in the city served the aristocracy in the area.[61]

Naskhi: a style of Arabic calligraphy.

Inscription on the tomb of al-'Izzi Aydamur al-Shujai's wife

Station 10: The grave of 'Alaa al-Din Aydughdi al-Kubaki, governor of Safed

The structure before us is a turba (mausoleum), built during the Mamluk period at the end of the 13th century and called "The Kubakiya," after the deceased buried there. Above the entrance to the structure is an inscription that reads:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وصلواته على نبيه محمد واله

In the name of God the merciful and the compassionate and his blessing upon his prophet Muhammad and his family

هذه تربة العبد الفقير الى الله تعالى الأمير علاء

This is the grave of the servant to God almighty, Prince 'Alaa

الدين ايدغدي بن عبد الله المعروف بالكبكي توفي

Al-Din Aydughdi bin Abdullah known as al-Kubaki who died

في يوم الجمعة الخامس من شهر رمضان المعظم سنة

Friday, the 5th of month of Ramadan in the year

ثمانية وثمانين وستمائة تغمده الله برحمته واسكنه جنته

688 (22 September 1289) God covered him in his mercy and set him in the Garden of Eden

---

Mujir al-Din called the structure "Zawiyat al-Kubakiya."

'Alaa al-Din Aydughdi al-Kubaki was a slave soldier in Syria (Mamluk) in his earlier years, under the rule of the Mamluk Sultan Baibars. He advanced to esteemed positions and was the governor of Safed and of Aleppo in Syria, until the new Mamluk sultan rose to power and exiled him to Jerusalem, where he died at the age of 60.

The Kubakiya is the only Mamluk structure outside the Old City walls that has remained intact. The structure is almost square (6x6m) with a dome on top. The Qibla wall faces southwest and contains two barred windows. Inside the structure is a grave situated directly under the dome. The grave is positioned perpendicular to the Qibla, as is accepted in a Muslim burial.[62] The entrance is on the northwest side, and is decorated with two elbow columns and a pointed arch.

Mamluk: The Mamluks (Arabic singular مملوك, pronounced Mumluk, "acquired," "purchased") were slave soldiers originating from the steppes of Asia. They first appeared in service of the Abbasid Caliphate in 9th century Baghdad. During the downfall of this dynasty, the Mamluks increasingly served as slave soldiers, and they served the other Muslim dynasties in the area as well. Over the years, the Mamluks managed to establish independent kingdoms in Egypt, which ruled in Syria, Jerusalem and the Baghdad area.

Qibla: A wall niche shaped like a semicircle, indicating the direction of prayer in Islam – facing Mecca.

Although the structure is designed in typical Mamluk style, it also includes many architectural elements borrowed from Crusader graves that were once at the Mamilla Cemetery. The French researcher Clermont-Ganneau surveyed the cemetery in 1873 and found that this grave had characters chiseled into it, which he identified as characteristic of the work of Latin builders.[63] ((Two additional graves that he found at the cemetery were destroyed since then, and can no longer be identified out in the field). According to Clermont-Ganneau, the grave was built from elements of Crusader graves originating from the Old City's Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In his opinion, the entrance to the structure is not originally a Crusader entrance, but is influenced by the Crusader style. There very well may be a Crusader-style tombstone inside the structure, as is the case for many Muslim structures.

Mujir al-Din writes that across from the Kubakiya was a "large structure" indicating the burial location of Omar ibn Ibrahim ibn Ottoman ibn Kaab al-Wasiti, who died in 684 Hijri (1285). South of his grave, Mujir al-Din mentions another grave called "Wajadna," and as an aside he mentions a trail that passed through there. A sort of "Holy Route" may be reconstructed, which passed through the north-south axis, from the women's grave from the Mamluk period (Station 7) beside the Kubakiya and al-Wasiti's grave, and from there, beside the grave called "Wajadna."[64] By retracing this route we begin to see just how powerful the place was in the 14th century. The turba of al-Wasiti was already ruined by the Ottoman period, and today it is no longer possible to identify its remains on site, but his tombstone is situated on a different grave, in the southeastern section of the cemetery, across from the Waldorf-Astoria hotel.

Over the years, homeless people have broken into the structure and lived in it. As a result, in 2009, the municipality decided to block access to the structure, and the magnificent opening was covered with concrete and bricks. Later, the barrier was partially dismantled and an iron door was installed. Evidently, the municipality blocked the structure while it was being renovated by the Islamic Movement, as evidenced by the cement and other building materials left inside the structure.

The Kubakiya, the turba (mausoleum) of 'Alaa al-Din Aydughdi al-Kubaki, governor of Safed

The decorated entrance to the Kubakiya

The cenotaph inside the tomb

Station 11: Opposite/in front of the Palace Hotel

The Palace Hotel – or Waldorf-Astoria by its current name – is situated southeast of the Mamilla Cemetery, on the south side of Agron Street.

The Palace Hotel was built in 1929 as an initiative of the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini. While digging the foundations of the hotel, human bones were discovered and the Mufti instructed that they be moved for burial in another location. The Palace Hotel was built while the development of West Jerusalem was gaining momentum, accompanied by a significant increase in property values in that area. The construction of the Palace Hotel and destruction of the graves gave rise to protest among the Muslim population against the construction of the hotel, during the course of which the Mufti was sued. Following the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s, the hotel absorbed economic losses and was converted into an office building and a place of assembly for the Muslim Supreme Council.[65] In addition, the hotel was used by the British government for various gatherings, for example the Peel Commission, which decided upon the partition of the State of Israel, and where the discussions on the matter were held.[66]

In 2010, in the context of the hotel's restoration as the Waldorf-Astoria, archaeological excavations were conducted, revealing two central findings. In the western part of the excavation site, a plastered quarry was exposed, whose date is unknown. However, according to the pottery findings at the site, it seems that the quarry was last in use during the Ottoman period. Eighty meters east of the quarry, six Muslim graves were found, dating from the 11th-15th centuries. These graves suggest that in certain times, the Mamilla Cemetery stretched out to this point.[67] In 2014 the hotel was reopened under the international chain "Waldorf-Astoria." Restoration of the hotel took six years, whereby only the facade of the original structure was conserved – the inside was completely destroyed and rebuilt. The decision to exclusively conserve its facade gave rise to a great deal of criticism from conservation activists and residents of the area, who claimed that the inside of the structure held a great deal of significance, in terms of both its architectural value as well as the historic events that took place within its walls.[68]

As stated in Station 8 (Museum of Tolerance), the Palace Hotel played a central role in the decision to approve construction of the Museum of Tolerance. During discussions at the High Court of Justice, much weight was placed on the question of whether the Mufti knowingly initiated construction of the Palace Hotel on top of ancient Muslim graves. This was considered a precedent that qualified construction the Museum of Tolerance for construction on top of an ancient cemetery. However, the graves exposed at the Palace-Astoria site in the 2010 excavation were dated from the 11-15 century. We can conclude from this that at the time of the hotel's construction in the days of the Mufti, the area was not being used as a cemetery.

Waldorf Astoria Hotel (former Palace Hotel)

Waldorf Astoria Hotel: view from the cemetery

Station 12: The grave of Hasan al-Nashashibi

Our last station is one of the best maintained, beautiful graves in the cemetery: the grave of Hasan al-Nashashibi. The grave is built on a three-stepped base, and adorned with large floral patterns on three of its sides. The following inscription is engraved on its south side, facing the Waldorf-Astoria hotel:

The tomb of Hasan al-Nashashibi

الفاتحة

زر قبر بدر قد توارى وانكشف والكل منا في محامده اعترف

Visit the grave at the full moon that was hidden and then revealed /
and we have all acknowledged his goodness

وقضيت فضل في غضون شبابه جار الزمان عليه يوما فانقصف

And without compassion when he was young /
Time betrayed him one day and he was broken

قد كان يثمر كل معروف وما منا بحسن صيغه احد اختلف

He abounded in good deeds And no one denied his goodness

حسن النشاشيبي الذي عن فرضه مع واجبات الدين دوما ما أنجرف

Hasan al-Nashashaibi he who did not miss one of his religious obligations for single day

ناداه مولاه لجنة قربه واحله مذ ارخوا اوج الغرف٦

The Master of the Universe called him to be near him in the Garden of Eden
and brought him to reside there since then in the high rooms

سنة ١٣٢١

The year 1321 AH
(1903)

In the beginning of the fifth verse we find the name of the deceased, Hasan al-Nashashibi. The word "good" - *hasan* - in the fourth line has a double-meaning and refers both to the deceased's good deeds, and his name - Hasan.

Hasan was a member of the Nashashibi family, one of the oldest Jerusalem aristocratic families. The family members, who already settled in Jerusalem in the Mamluk period, were landowners in villages in the Jerusalem area and traded agricultural products.[69] The family name derives from the word arrow, since the family worked in the arrow industry during the Ottoman period. Around 1910, Rashid Nashashibi was elected to represent Jerusalem in the Ottoman Majlis (Consultative Assembly). He built a large, beautiful villa from Jerusalem stone in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, where the Ambassador Hotel is situated today.[70] In 1920, under the British Mandate government, Raghib al-Nashashibi was elected[71] as the Jerusalem Municipality Chairman.

Hasan al-Nashashibi became famous at the end of the 19th century, and was nicknamed "Çelebi", "the great merchant". When he died, al-Nashashibi bequeathed one million *gurush* to his sons – this explains the artistic wealth and quality of his unique grave.
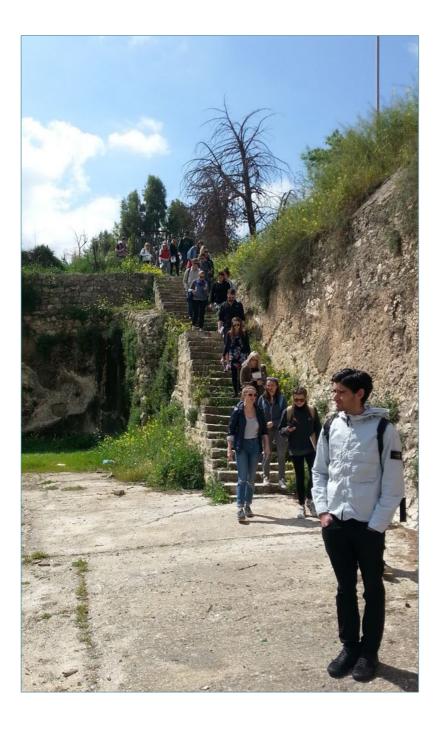

Inscription on the tomb of Hasan al-Nashashibi

Closing words

Our tour ends here. We have gone back in time to the days of Islamic Jerusalem and delved into the stories hidden under the green grass of Independence Park. From here we can easily continue to the Mamilla Mall across the street, and from there to the Old City, or enjoy a cup of coffee in the newly opened coffeehouse in the park. As a result of public protest, it is also open on Saturdays. We hope the tour we conducted here has aroused your interest and curiosity. Now that you have had a peek into the world of Islamic Jerusalem, we hope your knowledge on the subject will continue to grow and expand. More chapters on the city's rich life are yet to be written, and increasingly become well known to the public.

Endnotes

1) Fahmi al-Ansari, *Maqbarat Ma'man Allah. Dirasa.* Jerusalem: PA's Ministry of Information, 2010, 33-36.

2) Kamal J. al-'Asali, "The Cemeteries of Ottoman Jerusalem", in: Sylvia Auld and Robert Natsheh, *Ottoman Jerusalem, The Living City: 1517–1917*, London 2000, 281.

3) Asem Khalidi, "The Mamilla Cemetery; A Buried History", *Jerusalem Quarterly 37*, 105.

4) Antiochus Strategos, The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 AD, in: F.C. Conybeare, *English Historical Review 25* (1910), 502-517.

5) Denys Pringle, The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, Cambridge University Press , 1993, vol. 3, 218.

6) Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Wasiti, *Fada'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* (Arabic).

7) Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, al-Haqiqa wa al-majaz fi al-rihla ila bilad al-sham wa misr wa al-hijaz, Edited by Ahmad Abd al-Majid al-Haridi, Cairo, 1986. (Arabic)

8) Pringle, 219.

9) Mujir al-Din al-'Ulaymi (1973) *Al-Uns al-Jalil bi-Tarikh al-Quds wa'lKhalil.* Amman: Maktabat al-Mihtasib. Written c. 1495.

10) Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Wasiti, Fada'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas (Arabic). Moshe Gil, Cambridge University Press (1997). A history of Palestine, 634-1099, 422. "Muslim Literature in Praise of Jerusalem," Notes and Studies on the History of the Holy Land Under Islamic Rule, M. Sharon, ed. (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak ben Zvi Publications, 1976), 43-68. (Hebrew)

11) Yitzhak Reiter, Allah's Safe Haven? The Controversy Surrounding the Mamilla Cemetery and the Museum of Tolerance: Contesting Domination over the Symbolic and Physical Landscapes, Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2011. (Hebrew)

12) Charles Clermont-Ganneau, Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873-1874, Palestine Exploration Fund, 1899, p. 287.

13) Wikipedia, Al-Fatiha.

14) https://sites.google.com/site/dajaniforum/home/about-dajani/arabic-intro-family

15) H. Abbas, 'A'ilat Bayt al Maqdas, (Arabic)

16) Arabic manuscript: Tarjamat sidi al-'Am al-Marḥum al-Said al-Sheikh Hussein, p. 1-2

17) 'Alī ibn Maymūn al-Ghumārī (Abū al-Ḥasan) 845-917 hijri/ 1450-1511, faqıˉh, sufi, qadi(judge), from north Africa, spent part of his life at Syria died in Mjdal Ma'oush village in Lebanon. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dabbāgh. Min a'lām al-fikr wa-al-adab fī al-' al- al-Marīnī, al-Dār al-Bayḍā' : Maktabat al-Ummah, 1992, 292

18) Ben 'Araq (878-933 / 1473-1526), Muhammad bin 'Ali bin 'Abd al-Rahman, a leading sheikh, *, scholar, Sham al-Din Abu 'Ali al-Qinani al-Dimashqi, al-Mundi, al-Shaafi, b. Damascu, lived in Beirut, made pilgrimage to Mecca (*haj)*, stayed in Mecca and died there.

19) This refers to David, a king according to Jewish tradition, but considered by Islam to be a prophet.

20) Sijlat mahkamat al-Quds al-Shar'ia: *sijl* 40: the 16th day of the month of Rajab from the year 968-969 AH, p. 378.

21) Photo Series by Zev Alexandrovich, the website of the Israel National Library, Jerusalem.

22) Kamal al-Asli, *Bayt al-Maqdas fi kutub al-rihlat 'aind al-muslimin*, Amman 1992, pp. 274-275.

23) The tombstone reads "Qurshi", but the name is attributed to the Al-Qureishi tribe such that the name should be pronounced "Al-Qureishi". Most likely, the letter "i" was dropped as a result of the calligrapher's work.

24) Shams al-Din al-Kilani, Ramziat al-Quds al-ruhiya. Damascus: Ithar al Kutab al Arab, 2005, p. 100.

25) Abu Arslan al-Ramli (1371-1440), Ahmad ibn Hussein ibn Ali ibn Arslan al-Muqaddasi al-Ramli, al-Shaf'i, Sufi.

26) Yusuf ibn Isma'il al-Nabahni al-Uliya, Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Asariya, 2001, vol. 1, p. 173-176.

27) 'Aref al-'Aref, *Al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh Al-Quds* (Detailed History Of Jerusalem) , Beirut, 2007, p. 728.

28) Mujir al-Din al-'Ulaymi (1973) *Al-Uns al-Jalil bi-Tarikh al-Quds wa'lKhalil*, vol. 2, p. 240. See also: al-Asli, *ajdaduna fi thara bayt al-Maqdas*, p. 179.

29) Archaeological Community Excavation in the Ancient Water Cistern – Independence Park, Mamilla, Emek Shaveh 2012.

30) Pringle, p. 217.

31) Ronny Reich, "The Cemetery in the Mamilla Area of Jerusalem," *Qadmoniot* 103-104 (1993), p. 103-109 (Hebrew).

32) Pringle, p. 218.

33) Pringle, p. 218.

34) p. 13 in Daphna Ephrat, "Sufism and Sanctity: The Genesis of the walī Allāh in Mamluk Jerusalem and Hebron," in David Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon (eds.), Mamluk and Ottoman Studies in Honor of Michael Winter (Frank Cass, 2006), 4-18.

35) Pringle, p. 218.

36) Doron Bar, "Holy for a moment: the lion's cave at Mamilla cemetery' Jerusalem," Etmol 231 (2013), pp. 23-26 (Hebrew).

37) Kamal J. Al-Asali, "The Cemeteries of Ottoman Jerusalem," 281.

38) Doron Bar, ibid.

39) Tzvika Tsuk, *Water at the End of the Tunnel. The History of Ancient Water Systems*, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2011 (Hebrew).

40) Rafa Abu Raya and Ya'akov Billig, "Jerusalem, Mamilla Pool", *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 115 (2003), 49-50.

41) Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron, "Excavations in the Mamilla Area, Jerusalem:– The Medieval Fortifications," *Atiqot* 54 (2006), 125-152.

42) Call for proposal of ideas for the development of the Mamilla Pool area at the "Harry Wolf" Park (Independence Park), https://www.jerusalem.muni.il/Municipality/kol/Documents/mala.pdf (Hebrew).

43) See the petition "Save the Mamilla Pool! Stop the destruction of nature, history and culture!" http://www.atzuma.co.il/savemamilanow.

44) Ādil Mannā' ,Liwā' al-Quds fī awāsiṭ al-'ahd al-'Uthmāni, Bayrūt: Bayrūt : ‡b Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyah,2008, pp169

45) 'Uthmān Muṣṭafá al-Ṭabbā', Itḥāf al-a'izzah fī tārīkh Ghazzah, Ghazzah : Maktabat al-Yāziji, vol.3, pp320, 1999

46) Ahmad al-'Almi. A-sheikh sa'ad a-din al-'almi. Ramallah: dar al-majid, 2007, 7-8.

47) Ahmad al-'Almi. A-sheikh sa'ad a-din al-'almi. Ramallah: dar al-majid, 2007, 7.

48) Abbas Khader, 'Ailāt Bayt al-Maqdis.

49) al-Madni, 260.

50) 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī, al-quds fi al-ftrah al-aslamyia al-ula " al-Quds fī al-tarīkh". Amman: Maṭba'at al-Jāmi'ah al-Urdunīyah, 1992, 146.

51) Mousa Sroor, Al-awqaf al-islamyia fi hart al-nsara fi al-quds, Tunis: 2010, 155

52) The daily salary of a construction worker in Istanbul at the beginning of the 19th century was 8 paras. See: Şevket Pamuk, Coins and Currency of the Ottoman Empire, Note 4.

53) Gil Zohar, "Grand Hotel," *Jerusalem Post*, 30 July 2009.

54) Tawfiq Da'adli, "Mamluk Ephitaphs from Mamilla Cemetery", Levant 43/1 (2011), 79.

55) Henry Kendall, Jerusalem City Pan: Preservation and Development during the British Mandate 1918–1948, 181.

56) Yitzhak Reiter, Allah's Safe Haven? The Controversy Surrounding the Mamilla Cemetery and the Museum of Tolerance: Contesting Domination over the Symbolic and Physical Landscapes, Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2011.

57) Burial caves were exposed, in which large skeletal bones were found (skulls, hips, legs and arms), indicating a reburial of the bones (secondary burial), as opposed to a first burial of the body.

58) David Amit, "Discoveries from the First and Second Temple Periods near the Mamilla Pool in Jerusalem," *Qadmoniot* 141 (2011), 29-35 (Hebrew).

59) Da'adli, 88-89.

60) Da'adli, 87-89 (Epitaph 5 and 7).

61) Da'adli, 89 (Fig. 17).

62) Michael Hamilton Burgoyne, "Mamluk Jerusalem. An Architectural Study," The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 143.

63) Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the years 1873-1874", Palestine Exploration Fund, 1899, 287.

64) Da'adli, 96.

65) Yitzhak Reiter, Allah's Safe Haven? The Controversy Surrounding the Mamilla Cemetery and the Museum of Tolerance: Contesting Domination over the Symbolic and Physical Landscapes, Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2011.

66) Nir Hasson, "The Palace Hotel is Reduced to a Shell," *Haaretz* Online, 19 January 2009 (Hebrew).

67) Annette Nagar, "Jerusalem, Mamilla," *Archaeological News* Online 122, 2010 (Hebrew).

68) YNET. "Waldorf Astoria: Opening," 27 March 2014, *YNET* (Hebrew).

69) Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *A City Reflected in its Times: Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century*, Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi , 1979 478 (Hebrew).

70) Ben-Arieh, 477 (Hebrew).

For more information
or to schedule a tour:

Email: tours@alt-arch.org | www.alt-arch.org

עמק שווה

عمق شبيه

Emek Shaveh

חל"צ | ش ل خ | CPB