

Research Article

## Peculiarities of Mosques in Islamic Tradition and it's Evolution

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Received : July 17, 2026

Revised : August 15, 2026

Accepted : September 13, 2026

Available online : October 19, 2026

**How to Cite:** Muhammed V P. (2026). Peculiarities of Mosques in Islamic Tradition and it's Evolution. *Maklumat: Journal of Da'wah and Islamic Studies*, 4(3), 177-188. <https://doi.org/10.61166/maklumat.v4i3.100>

**Abstract.** Mosques, the primary centres of Islamic civilization, had been a matter of study regarding the history of growth and development of Islam. These studies focused on the conventional roles that were played by mosques in early Islamic period, emphasizing mosques as the sacred places in Islamic belief. This reductionist approach exposed the Islamic history for wide criticism of lacking a systematic structure, especially in administration. Such as the criticisms raised by Patricia Crone and Michael Cook on Islam lacking proper political institutions. This study aims to answer the criticisms by explaining the mosques beyond its conventional definition and roles, from social into political and commercial, in order place the mosques of early Islamic period as the effective political institutions. Using a qualitative method, this analysis tries to explain the institution of mosque in the view of Shari'a and then gradually elaborates the idea of mosque beyond the conventional understanding. Thoroughly examining the history and location of early Islamic mosques, it elucidates the socio-cultural and geo-spatial factors that contributed to the construction of each mosque. And in conclusion, as a result, it

describes the various roles played by mosques, depicting mosques as the structural institution of early Islamic administration and polity.

**Keywords:** Mosques, Conventional roles, Early Islam, Islamic political institutions, Western criticisms..

## INTRODUCTION

Mosque, an Islamic religious institution, has been a matter of study regarding the Arab historiography, in particular and world history, in general. In the view of an historian, mosque is held as an indispensable part of Arab history for multiple reasons and especially when it comes to the architecture and urban settlements of Arabs. Because Arabs, who were nomadic in communal terms, only started their sedentary way of life in the late fourth and fifth centuries during the period of *Qusayy*<sup>1</sup>. So, there was no architectural works practiced and developed by Arabs except some dynasties who settled in the outskirts of Arabian Peninsula such as Al-Manadhira, who were settled adjacent to the Sassanian empire, and Al-Ghassasina, who were settled adjacent to the Byzantine empire. They adopted the architecture of their adjacent empires and became the only Arabs with architectural legacy<sup>2</sup>. Such in a way, mosques were the first architectural work that Arabs developed and the religious institution that flourished through long centuries, blending various imperial and indigenous cultures within the divine realms of material settlement.

Moreover, in axiological terms, mosques constitute a key role in the development of various social and political institutions in Arabia, as mosques were accommodating them from its very origin until the super-structuralist bureaucratic era<sup>3</sup>. Actually, this fact made Francesco Gabriel to opine that Arabic historiography is essentially the historiography of Islamic civilization<sup>4</sup>. However, mosques were not limited to the purpose of mere worship. Rather the concept of mosque was even broadened beyond the imagery of a ritualistic space and it was utilized as much as like a social institution with multiple functions attributed to it. This characteristic of Islamic mosques was better portrayed by Ṣafī' al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakfūrī in his text *Al-Rāḥiq al-Makhtūm* as he stated:

The mosque was not merely a place for performing prayers. Rather, it was a university where Muslims received the teachings and guidance of Islam; a forum where various tribal elements—often divided by pre-Islamic tribalism and wars—came together in unity and harmony; a headquarters from which all matters were managed and major initiatives launched; and a parliament where consultative and executive meetings were held. In addition to all of this, it also served as a shelter for

<sup>1</sup> Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, rev. ed. (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006)

<sup>2</sup> Su'ād Māhir, *Masājid Miṣr wa-Awliyā'uhā al-Ṣāliḥūn* [Mosques of Egypt and Their Pious Saints] (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-Āmmah lil-Ta'līf wa-al-Nashr, 1971), 18–27.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Gabrieli, Francesco, and M. S. Khan. "Arabic Historiography." *Islamic Studies* 18, no. 2 (1979): 81–95.

many poor Emigrants (Muhajirun) who had no home, wealth, family, or children in the new land.

It is a fact that mosques were primarily used for ritualistic and educational purposes. And the Al-Azhar University in Cairo is an example of such activities as it was initiated as a study platform associated with a mosque which later became the largest university of the Islamic world<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, mosques were facilitated in a way that it could accommodate various functions beyond ritualistic and educational dimensions. And some historians limited, wittingly or unwittingly, the role of mosques to only spiritual and pedagogical aspects by the process of a wide generalization of Islamic history. They adopted a reductionist policy and ignored evident aspects of mosques. This reductionist behaviour resulted in a common misunderstanding regarding the social and political institutions of early Islamic period. Such as the criticisms Patricia Crone (d. 2015) raised against Islam as lacking proper political institutions in the early phase<sup>6</sup>. On the contrary, as pointed out by Rasdi, Islam and Islamic states of early time had kept very systematic social and political institutions within their mosques until these premises were shifted to separate entities as a part of building bureaucratic republic. One of such examples can be traced back to the Umayyad Dynasty when the administrative activities which were previously conducted within the premise of mosque were shifted to the palace of the Khalifa<sup>7</sup> and later to Dar-ul Hakam, a courthouse to conduct judicial activities.

Because mosques were fundamental element of Islam, many scholars had engaged in the discourse of mosques. But all of them were focused on the history, development and the sacredness of mosques. Among such works are *I'lām al-Sājid bi-Aḥkām al-Masājid* of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Zarkashī and *Masājid Miṣr wa-Awliyā'uhā al-Ṣāliḥūn*, written by al-Duktūrah Su'ād Māhir Muḥammad. When these works limited the institutional roles of the mosques, other works such as *The early Islamic conquests* by Fred M Donner, perceived Islam as a purely political institution, placed by Muslim rulers in all new garrison cities.

This paper attempts to reconstruct the role of mosques in Islamic tradition, as an answer to the reductionist criticisms and explains what in fact mosque stands for in the view of Shari'a and how it is dealt with in Muslim praxis. Additionally, it elucidates how mosques were placed and utilized in the newly conquered garrison cities. For this, both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed in this study. The materials used in this research include books, journal articles, public lectures, and conference papers.

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<sup>5</sup> Haifaa Al-Awadi, Women Inspired by the Beloved (ﷺ) (RGB Audio, Meem LTD, 2007), accessed June 5, 2025, <http://www.islamicbookstore.com/a4939.html>.

<sup>6</sup> See Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> Mohamad Tajuddin Haji Mohamad Rasdi, The Mosque as a Community Development Centre: Programme and Architectural Design Guidelines for Contemporary Muslim Societies (UK: Penerbit UTM, 1998), accessed June 5, 2025, [http://eprints.utm.my/29825/2/MohamadTajuddinMohamad1998\\_TheMosqueAsACommunityDevelopmentCentreProgrammeSYN.pdf](http://eprints.utm.my/29825/2/MohamadTajuddinMohamad1998_TheMosqueAsACommunityDevelopmentCentreProgrammeSYN.pdf).

## Mosque in the View of Sharī'a

The term mosque, in terms of philology, stands for the Arabic word *Masjid*, which means the place of *Sujud* viz. prostration. Terminologically, mosque means, in the view of Sharī'a, a place where the prostration is done. Imām al-Zarkashī added that every place where God is worshipped can be called a mosque<sup>8</sup> — a definition that was put forward by Al-Zujāj<sup>9</sup>. This conception of mosque is further strengthened by the prophetic narrative. It was reported that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Wherever you pray, that place is a mosque."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, an interesting and factual notion can be found in the book *Islamic Architecture: form, function and meaning*, where the author stated that, a wall oriented towards the Al-Ka'bah in Makkah, can be designated as a mosque so much so that no roofing, no minimum size, no enclosing wall, no liturgical accessories are required. Immediately after this comment he said again, even the wall is also not necessary and as a support he brought up the hadith stated above.<sup>11</sup>

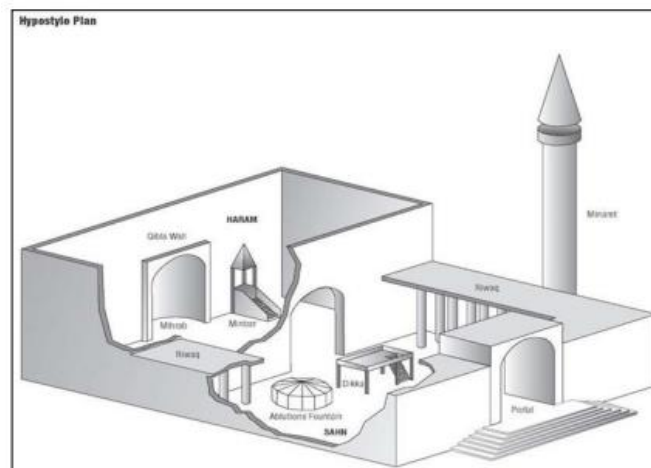


Fig 1: Elements of Mosque (Source- <http://islamic-arts.org/2012/islamic-architecture/>)

Nowadays, mosques are built on the basis of some social stereotypes and a mosque that do not accord with an established environment regarding the mosques, is never considered a mosque. To put it differently, there are several fundamental elements that constitutes the established environment including Mihrab, Mimber, Dome, Minar etc. as portrayed in the Figure 1. However, in fact, these elements are not necessary for a mosque. In fact, mosque doesn't require any special demanding of the size, enclosing walls or liturgical accessories. It is said by Prophet Mohammad that people can pray anywhere and where they pray that place is mosque but notable point is the direction of performer's face which has to be towards Al-Ka'bah at

<sup>8</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Zarkashī, *I'lām al-Sājid bi-Aḥkām al-Masājid*, ed. Faqīlat al-Shaykh Abū al-Wafā Muṣṭafā al-Murāghī (UAE: Ministry of Awqaf, n.d.), 15–36

<sup>9</sup> Māhir, *Masājid Miṣr*, 18–27.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 645, accessed June 5, 2025, <https://books.google.com/books?id=81uo8Vco4gQC&pgis=1>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Makkah.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, these all elements were not included in the early Islamic mosques. If we observe the gradual evolution of Islamic mosques through early centuries, we can trace that the most of these elements were later developed under various Islamic Caliphates. For example, the earliest form of mihrab was found in Prophet's Al-Masjid an-Nabawī, means Al-Masjid an-Nabawī, which was restored during the Umayyad Khālifah al-Walīd I dated 705 C.E and the, mihrab was lacking in early Islamic mosques<sup>13</sup>. Meanwhile, the dome became a symbolic element of Islamic mosques after the construction of "The Dome of Rock" and the first Islamic minaret was built under the Khālifah Mu'āwiyah in 665 C.E.<sup>14</sup>

Imām al-Zarkashī further elaborated the reason for which the mosques were named by Masjid. Because the term masjid means the place of prostration, which is one of the activities in a prayer. However, in a prayer there are several other activities such as bow, sitting etc. then why mosque was named after prostration? Imām al-Zarkashī opined that prostration is the most praised part of prayer as it is the status when a man becomes more nearer to his god.<sup>15</sup> This idea was conveyed through a prophetic narrative that "The closest that a servant comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating, so increase your supplications therein"<sup>16</sup>

### Defining the Mosque Beyond the Conventional Understanding

Although defining a religious institution in the conventional approach is much easier, often it limits the vast meaning which an institution may contains.<sup>17</sup> This same phenomenon was occurred in the conventional definition of mosques and many of the scholars tried to define it using a reductionist policy. In this context, Dr. Tajuddin said, the conception of mosque as a religious architecture is one of the major problems in defining mosque as it limits the ontological and axiological dimensions in the notion of just a religious institution.<sup>18</sup> This crisis in defining the mosque, in fact, resulted in undermining the historical and institutional importance of mosques. Because, mosques were the primary point of Muslim community mobilization in early Islamic cities and it was the focal point for any Muslim agglomeration.<sup>19</sup>

However, prophet had broadened the functional horizon of mosques beyond the cognitive general understanding and also offered flexibility to adopt the institution of mosque according to the context and culture of different Muslim

<sup>12</sup> Rahul Maurya, "Origin and Development of Mosque Architecture," *Advances in Environmental Biology* 9, no. 5 (April 2015): 371-74.

<sup>13</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 645.

<sup>14</sup> Maurya, "Origin and Development of Mosque Architecture," 371-74.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Zarkashī, *I'lām al-Sājid*, 15-36.

<sup>16</sup> Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 482

<sup>17</sup> Maurya, "Origin and Development of Mosque Architecture," 371-74.

<sup>18</sup> Mohamad Tajuddin Haji Mohamad Rasdi, *Rethinking Islamic Architecture* (Kuala Lumpur: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2010), 191, accessed June 5, 2025, <https://books.google.com/books?id=dsDCSAAACAAJ&pgis=1>.

<sup>19</sup> Ismail Serageldin, "Faith and the Environment: An Inquiry into Islamic Principles and the Built Environment of Muslims," in *Space for Freedom: The Search for Architectural Excellence in Muslim Societies* (Geneva: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Butterworth Architecture, 1977), 213-25; Report No. 27, Award Cycle III, AKKA, December 1985.

communities.<sup>20</sup> But the prophetic sayings need clear interpretation and thus we can deduce the essence of the meaning attained to the mosque in Islam.

### First Mosque in Islam

Even the mosque is the primary point of Muslim mobilization, scholars had been engaging in consistent debate regarding the question of which is the first mosque in Islam. In a nutshell, the arguments of the scholars revolve around either Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, Masjid Qubā' or Al-Masjid an-Nabawī. Most of the classical Islamic scholars, who wrote precise treatises on the idea of mosque in Islam, have engaged with the debate to determine the first mosque in Islam. But due to the compelling logical arguments and textual evidences for the cause of each mosque, they could not reach to a final judgement for the quest.

Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, which encompasses the Ka'bah, is often highlighted as the first mosque and the first house of worship built for humanity. Most of the traditional Islamic scholars hold this view. This argument is further strengthened by the Quranic verse "Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Bakkah [Makkah]—blessed and a guidance for the worlds."<sup>21</sup> In fact, this Quranic verse led many scholars to claim that the Ka'aba along with the extended Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is the first mosque in Islam.

Meanwhile, another group of scholars claimed that the Masjid Qubā', a mosque located in the outskirts of Madinah, is the first mosque built in Islam, apparently, under the Islamic rule. Masjid Qubā' was established by prophet Muhammed [PBUH] during his migration from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE.<sup>22</sup> The Quran had referred to this mosque that it is "A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is worthier for you to stand in..."<sup>23</sup>. Islamic classical scholar Imam ibn Kathīr interpreted this verse that this verse indicates to the Masjid Qubā', ascertaining that Masjid Qubā' was the first mosque built in Islam.<sup>24</sup> But some historians contrast this interpretation with a prophetic Hadith reported by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that It was said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "The mosque founded on piety (Masjid al-Taḳwa), is it the mosque of Qubā'?" He replied: "No, it is this mosque of mine (Al-Masjid an-Nabawī)."<sup>25</sup>. However, Imam Ibn Ḥajar asserted that the mosque founded on piety, as pointed out in Quran, is Masjid Qubā', and prophet replied that it is his mosque, intentionally, to disable the chances for a misunderstanding that the piety is limited to only Masjid Qubā'.<sup>26</sup> A similar causation was put forward by Imām al-Suhaylī also.<sup>27</sup>

A group of scholars argued that Al-Masjid an-Nabawī is the first mosque in Islam in the regard of the broader definition given for the mosques beyond its

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<sup>20</sup> Maurya, "Origin and Development of Mosque Architecture," 371–74.

<sup>21</sup> See Quran 3:96.

<sup>22</sup> Lings, *Muhammad*.

<sup>23</sup> See Quran 9:108.

<sup>24</sup> See *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, commentary on 9:108

<sup>25</sup> See Sahih Muslim, Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer, Hadith No. 1398

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Wafā' al-Wafā' bi Aḥwāl al-Muṣṭafā*, vol. 2, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Suhaili, *Masālik al-Abṣār*, 128.

conventional meaning. While it is not the first structure built by Muslims, historians point out that the Al-Masjid an-Nabawī is the first mosque to be exemplified by the full spectrum of Islamic functions; worship, education, administration and judiciary. And historical texts on the emergence of Islam had emphasized the central role of Al-Masjid an-Nabawī in the establishment of Islamic governance in Al-Madīnah.<sup>28</sup> From the above discussion, it is clear that the core of the debate lies in how scholars define the first mosque. In terms of chronological sanctity, it is Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. And the first mosque built by Muslims in Islam is Masjid Qubā'. And Al-Masjid an-Nabawī is the first mosque serving comprehensive Islamic functions. This fact was vividly described by Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn in his *Sharḥ Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, (vol. 2) as he noted that:

If the intent is the first mosque in the world, it is al-Masjid al-Haram. But if it is the first built in Islam, it is Qubā'. And the most significant is al-Al-Masjid an-Nabawī.

Here some historians, conservative in behaviour, raise an argument that neither Masjid Qubā' nor Al-Masjid an-Nabawī is the first mosque built in Islam, rather it is the private mosque of Imam Abū Bakr (RA) that he set up in his house in pre-Hijra Makkah. And there is a serious question that why most scholars excluded it from the debate of first mosque? The answer of the question lies in the fact that a private space built for worship is whether considered as mosque or not. We can find mentions, describing the private space of Imam Abū Bakr (RA) as mosque, in several historical texts such as Imam ibn Hisham's *sīrah* as he explains that Abū Bakr built a mosque by the side of his house and used to pray and recite the Qur'an there. The women and children of the polytheists would gather around and watch him in admiration and amazement.<sup>29</sup> And Imam al-Bukhārī had included a narration in his *Sahih* from 'Ā'ishah (RA) describing how Abū Bakr prayed openly in his courtyard. 'Aishah (RA) narrated that Imam Abū Bakr (RA) made a mosque for himself in the courtyard of his house and used to pray and recite the Qur'an there. The women and children of the pagans used to stand around him, amazed by what they heard.<sup>30</sup> although the private space is depicted as mosques in these narrations, Islamic scholars of later period had drawn a clear line of division between Muṣallā— a designated place of prayer, which may be temporary or private— and a Masjid— a consecrated, communal place of worship open to the public, with religious, legal, and social roles. However, while Imam Abu Bakr's private space was ritualistic in nature, it lacked the institutional and communal characteristics of a mosque, which in turn make it only a Muṣallā. This fact is clearly explained by Imam Ibn Ḥajar as he stated that A Muṣallā is not equal in status to a masjid unless it is waqf (endowed) for the community.<sup>31</sup> And this is why Imam Abu Bakr's private Muṣallā was excluded from the discourse.

<sup>28</sup> Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> See Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*, vol. 1, 379.

<sup>30</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book 65, Hadith 492

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, hadith no. 492.

## Mosques in Early Islamic Cities and Their Roles

Islam as a religion had expanded its hand on the whole Arabia and later on a larger part of Asia, Africa and Europe within a short span of time. To put it differently, Islam was able to conquer a large part of the world within a century from its very origin, not only through bloodshed but also by negotiations and peace treaties.<sup>32</sup> During the Al-Khilāfah ar-Rāshidah, especially during the Umar's reign, Islam reached at its zenith of its expansion. And to be centrifocal, mosques were the symbol of Muslim authority in newly conquered cities. Mosques were built in the newly conquered cities not just as a part of religious identity, but political hegemony.<sup>33</sup> However, the discussion on the mosques in early Islamic cities starts from the Masjid of prophet means Al-Masjid an-Nabawī, which was the mother structure of all mosques in Islam and the first centre of Islamic governance.

Explicitly, in the early times of Islam, mosques were at the centre of the city, along with cultural, social, political, and economic activities. They were the focal point of public settlements and also the centre of all social life.<sup>34</sup> And the Al-Masjid an-Nabawī is better exemplified for all these characteristics. it was not only a place of worship, but also a management and education centre where legal, commercial, and social issues are discussed, diplomatic receptions and meetings are held, the state treasury is protected, and religion is taught.<sup>35</sup> The marketplace, which is thought to be an effective tool for inviting masses to Islam, is located close to the mosque at an appropriate distance.<sup>36</sup> Even though the Al-Masjid an-Nabawī was built in simple structure, it was utilized at a great extend for all religious and social functions.

As Islamic rule expanded into the Byzantine, Sasanian, and later North African and Iberian territories, new cities and new urban settlements, with distinct social and cultural structures, were formed. In order to reconfigure the culture of new urban centres with the high culture of Islam, Islamic rulers soon formed several structures among which mosques were the primary structure built in every garrison towns. This tradition of mosque-centrism was initiated by prophet, as the first thing he done in Madinah after migration was to build a mosque as Al-Imām al-Ghazālī explained in his *Fiqh al-Sirah*:

The very first act the Prophet ﷺ undertook upon arriving in Madinah was the construction of the mosque. This served as a place where the symbols and rituals of Islam—long suppressed—could be openly practiced. It was a space for prayer, which connects the individual to the Lord of all worlds and purifies the heart from the stains of earthly concerns and the impurities of worldly life.

<sup>32</sup> Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2010).

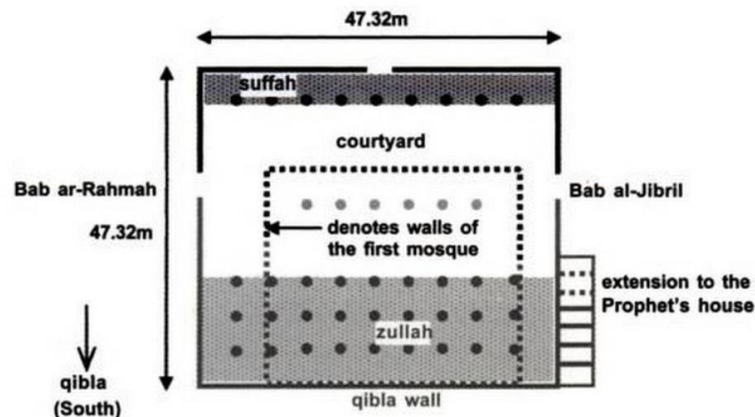
<sup>33</sup> K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>34</sup> Hamid, Garsivaz-Gazi, Salwa Mikhail, and M. J. Estamboli. "The position of mosque in Islamic cities and its location design in new cities." *Damascus University* 28, no. 1 (2012): 49-67.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Koçyi Ğit, Tahsin. 2013. Medine'deki uygulamalarından hareketle—Hz. Peygamber'in , şehir tasavvuru hakkında bazı de Ğerlendirmeler. Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi 31: 73-88.

Fig. 2 Structure of Al-Masjid an-Nabawī .



Plan of the enlarged Prophet's mosque after the Conquest of Khaybar in 7/628

Furthermore, Umar I quickly realised, after conquest of several regions of North Africa and Middle East, that it was not sufficient to appease the largely Bedouin contingents in his armies through allocations of booty. Thus, in each garrison town, and in every locale where there happened to be a Muslim population, a mosque was erected.<sup>37</sup> This place of worship was to serve several functions for the emerging Muslim community, but at the outset it was limited mainly to bringing together the Muslims residing in the garrison town for the Friday prayer and sermon – both intended, among other things, to imbue the Bedouin with religious values.<sup>38</sup>

For this course Umar I paid a great attention and he wrote to each of his governors to erect a mosque for various political and religious functions. He ordered Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, governor of Al-Baṣrah, to build special mosques for each tribe and a Jami Masjid<sup>39</sup> to conduct Friday sermons. This same order was issued to Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, governor of Kufa and 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ, governor of Egypt.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the simple structure of Al-Masjid an-Nabawī, portrayed in Figure.2, was followed in most of the early Islamic mosques, including mosque of Al-Baṣrah built

<sup>37</sup> R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it: A survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam* (Princeton, 1997), pp. 561ff., 567–73, 639.

<sup>38</sup> Wael Hallaq, "Islamic Law: History and Transformation," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. Robert Irwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 142–183.

<sup>39</sup> Jami Masjid, during the initial period, was said for big mosques were mass of people used to gather for Friday sermons and other programmes. Similarly, there were local mosques for various tribes. Often the institutional functions beyond rituals, were conducted in Jami Masjids. However, later during the reign of Umayyads, the term Jami Masjid was limited for only the official mosque of the state viz. Umayyad mosque in Damascus. (Māhir, Su'ād. *Masājid Miṣr wa-Awliyā'uhā al-Ṣāliḥūn* [Mosques of Egypt and Their Pious Saints]. Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyah al-Āmmah lil-Ta'lif wa-al-Nashr, 1971.)

<sup>40</sup> Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'ārif, 1958).

in 637 CE, mosque of Kufa built in 638 CE and the mosque of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ in Al-Fuṣṭāṭ built around 641- 642 CE.<sup>41</sup>

This legacy of mosques was kept and utilized fruitfully along all these cities for centuries. Especially these mosques acted as the symbol of Islam in almost all garrison towns and played a key role in the Islamic reconfiguration of the cities. Furthermore, this tradition was not limited, at its entirety, only the mosques of Arabian Peninsula, but also in North Africa and other initial garrison regions of Islam. Such as the the mosque of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ was more than a place of worship; it was the nucleus of urban development in Al-Fuṣṭāṭ.<sup>42</sup>, and the Al-Qayrawān's Great Mosque, built by 'Uqbah ibn Nāfi' in 670 CE, reflects both the ideological assertion of Islam and the adaptation to local architectural forms and played a key role in organizing community life and organization.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the mosque was where the ummah gathered, debated, and reaffirmed its commitment to the cause—be it religious, political, or military.<sup>44</sup> Such in a way, early Islamic mosques acted as religious centres, political symbol and a community hub hosting discussions, education and judgements.

In addition to that, usually a mosque was placed in the appropriate centre of city and adjacent to the main market, a tradition introduced by Prophet Muhammed [PBUH] in his Al-Masjid an-Nabawī. Because the Al-Masjid an-Nabawī was located approximately in the centre of Madinah<sup>45</sup> as well as the mosque was and will be the centre of Muslim life<sup>46</sup>. Especially early Islamic rulers were keen to locate mosques at the precise centre of a newly conquered city in their urban planning. In this cause, they undermined all other social, political and religious factors in a particular area. Al-Khalīfah al-Walid establishment of Great mosque of Damascus around 705-715 CE on the cite of a Roman temple and later a Christian church is a good example of such activity and it underscored the permanence of Islamic rule.<sup>47</sup> Then this legacy was kept and preserved by all other Islamic states including the Islamic dynasties of, medieval period. Even those dynasties had developed systematic and separate structures for social and political institutions ripping off the roles of mosques, they managed to locate mosques using the traditional method, thus making mosques capable of continuing its multi-dimensional activities. Such as the mosques of Seljuk

<sup>41</sup> Māhir, *Masājid Miṣr*, 18–27.

<sup>42</sup> Oleg Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan M. Bloom and Sheila S. Blair, eds., *The Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Fred M. Donner, *Islamic Expansion and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 212.

<sup>45</sup> Hamid, Garsivaz–Gazi, Salwa Mikhail, and M. J. Estamboli, "The Position of Mosque in Islamic Cities," 52.

<sup>46</sup> S. Omer, *Studies in the Islamic Built Environment* (2013), accessed November 11, 2014, <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop/wwwgooglecom-18>.

<sup>47</sup> Finbarr B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

period which fulfilled more than one function until the assemblies and Dīwān (high government ministries) were established.<sup>48</sup>

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, the role of mosques in Arab and Islamic historiography needs a reconstruction further comprehending the various roles that mosques in the social and political aspects of general Arab population. Two factors even aggregate the need for such a re-reading. Firstly, to answer the criticisms that some oriental historians, including Patricia Crone and Berkey regarding the social and political institutions of early Islamic states. Secondly, to overcome the issue of the “over sanctification”<sup>49</sup> of mosque, believed and practiced by some conservative Muslims, so that Muslims are only allowed to conduct certain ritual activities within the premise of the mosque.

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<sup>48</sup> Büşra Selin Kepenek, Engin Kepenek, and İbrahim Bakır, “Trade and the Mosque: An Investigation of Commercial Activities and Mosques in Antalya with Spatial, Legal and Functional Recommendations,” *Religions* 13, no. 10 (2022): 958.

<sup>49</sup> Mohamad Tajuddin Haji Mohamad Rasdi, *The Mosque as a Community Development Centre: Programme and Architectural Design Guidelines for Contemporary Muslim Societies* (United Kingdom: Penerbit UTM, 1998), accessed [date], [http://eprints.utm.my/29825/2/MohamadTajuddinMohamad1998\\_TheMosqueAsACommunityDevelopmentCentreProgrammeSYN.pdf](http://eprints.utm.my/29825/2/MohamadTajuddinMohamad1998_TheMosqueAsACommunityDevelopmentCentreProgrammeSYN.pdf).

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