

Introducing the New Terminology of Islamicjerusalem And it's Field of Inquiry

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Abstract

As an essential part of introducing the field of Islamicjerusalem Studies to South East Asia, it is important to be clear first on what is meant by this new terminology; and a working definition needs to be established. The objective of this article is namely to introduce the new terminology of Islamicjerusalem and its field of inquiry to South East Asia. To introduce new definitions of Islamicjerusalem and Islamicjerusalem Studies, this article discusses the background of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies since 1994, and also highlights some of the latest research and developments in Islamicjerusalem Studies. It is hoped that it will enrich our understanding of this inimitable region in West Asia, address some of the sensitive, important and key issues on the subject, and open up and promote intellectual and academic debate and understanding of Islamicjerusalem and its role widely enough to shed light on new lines of explanation, interpretation, and understanding.

Keywords: Islamicjerusalem, *bayt al-Maqdis*, Aelia, Holy Land, Jerusalem, Muslim Jerusalem, West Asia, Islam, Muslin contributions, Islamicjerusalem Studies.

Introduction

As an essential part of introducing the field of Islamicjerusalem Studies, it is important to be clear first on what is meant by this new terminology; and a working definition needs to be established. A number of questions need to be raised. Is Islamicjerusalem the same as Jerusalem the city? What sort of Jerusalem are we talking about? Is it simply the area of al-Aqsa Mosque? (This is only one fifth of the Old Walled City.) Is it the Old Walled city of Jerusalem, East Jerusalem, West Jerusalem, Greater Jerusalem, the whole of Palestine or part of Palestine? These all address the question of a definition from a contemporary context. It is important however to link this to historical, geographical, and geopolitical contexts for a definition to be produced.

It should be noted that this article is not a study of the history or politics of Islamicjerusalem, but a serious and scholarly attempt to introduce Islamicjerusalem and its intellectually exciting and stimulating new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies aiming

to give a better understanding of this new term and set the scene for advanced research. In other words, the objective of this article is namely to introduce the new terminology of Islamicjerusalem and its field of inquiry. To introduce new definitions of Islamicjerusalem and Islamicjerusalem Studies, this article discusses the background of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies since 1994, and also highlights some of the latest research and developments in Islamicjerusalem Studies.

As this article has been written for scholars and the wider public who are interested in understanding Islamicjerusalem and its new field of inquiry, it is also hoped that it will enrich our understanding of this inimitable region, address some of the sensitive, important and key issues on the subject, and open up and promote intellectual and academic debate and understanding of Islamicjerusalem and its role widely enough to shed light on new lines of explanation, interpretation, and understanding.

However, this new terminology may be seen as provocative and challenging for those in academic, religious, and political establishments who are interested in the region and who may not accept the term on the basis that it goes beyond their political and religious agenda and attachments, or for those who cannot go along with innovation and new ideas. Indeed, if you have a political agenda, it is difficult to adopt a neutral approach in the case of Islamicjerusalem, where the competing claims of the adherents of the three world religions and the international interest meet and sometimes clash. Accordingly, the author, for a long time, has been adamant that 'the political agenda and its activism and scholarship be separate.' He argues very strongly that 'political movements, religious or secular in any country in the world (including Western countries), restrict the intellectual development of scholars and impose restrictions on their freedom of thought' in some issues, such as Islamicjerusalem. He (2007:3) also argues, 'To be taken seriously, any academic agenda should be taken away from religious or political agendas.'

Methods

The author has adopted interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches in this research. In addition, he did not embark on his research with set definition(s). Instead, his findings/results have emerged over the course of his examination and analysis of the data collected systematically throughout the process of this research, in particular on the first Muslim *Fatih* of Islamicjerusalem and Umar's Assurance of Safety *Aman* to the people of Aelia.

Some available English translations suffered from the translators not understanding the original Arabic texts. When translating terminologies from Arabic into English, an attempt has been made by the author to strike a balance between the strength of expression in the original and its exact meaning. However, to avoid the mistranslating of any particular Arabic terminologies, the author employed an approach of not translating these into English but leaving them in their original Arabic language and gives his own understanding of the term. This should help to avoid any ambiguities stemming from different or strange understandings and interpretations.

The main source of data for this research is from the author personal archive as a Professor of International Relations and historian as well as the founder of the field of inquiry of

Islamicjerusalem Studies. As the founder, the author has been actively involved with the development of the field from the first day of its inception in London in 1994. Indeed, this article was developed from the author's long and deep involvement in Islamicjerusalem Studies which was a great advantage for this author in conducting this research. In short, his main tools are his continuous observations, monitoring, and deep involvement.

Results/Findings and Discussion

Background: 1994 - 2007¹

The establishment of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem was a process and a journey that took nearly a decade, 1994-2003, adopting the principle of gradual development and travelling through several stages. It also went through a number of stages on the road to its establishment through an integrated programme which included a number of new academic initiatives and practical steps which include both developing institutional framework and the modes of delivery of the new field in the UK.

As part of his vision for the new field, the founder (author) paid particular attention to establishing the concept of Islamicjerusalem Studies in the building of its foundations; and to develop a new frame of reference for its study. From the initial stages he was keen to provide practical steps to deliver the essential contributions of knowledge in the new field to the world of learning, and to encourage young researchers to specialise in this field. These have been delivered mainly through organising an annual international academic conference on Islamicjerusalem Studies (thirteen to date), the *Journal of Islamicjerusalem Studies*, and the securing of a good number of postgraduate research studentships in Islamicjerusalem Studies.

These elements were very significant in creating the new frame of reference for the study of Islamicjerusalem. Indeed, both the annual conference and the *Journal* have successfully 'highlighted the gap in the available literature' on Islamicjerusalem Studies, provided the 'necessary knowledge' to develop the field, and have become an international discussion forum for scholars who are interested in the field (Al-Ahlas, 2004: 35). In its initial and crucial stage of development, the Academy for Islamicjerusalem Studies (ISRA) also successfully secured funding for young students to pursue Islamicjerusalem Studies at postgraduate level at a number of Scottish universities.

In addition, other serious practical steps were needed to institutionalise the development, integration and promotion of the field. These were initiated by developing the first new course entitled 'Islamicjerusalem', which the author taught at undergraduate level at the University of Stirling, Scotland and before that in Arabic at Al-Quds University where he taught that course in Al-Aqsa Mosque itself.

This first course has been developed into a taught Master's programme at Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies since its inception in Dundee in 2001 and was accredited degrees from the University of Abertay Dundee and later Aberdeen University in the UK. Indeed, to pioneer the field, the Institute embodied the founder's vision by inaugurating the first and unique taught Master's programme in Islamicjerusalem Studies

worldwide. After the establishment of the Institute came the creation of its first academic post, the first chair in Islamicjerusalem Studies. The Centre for Islamicjerusalem Studies was founded to focus all its efforts, and to play a key role in developing the new field.

This was a natural and progressive development aimed at structuring the research and teaching of Islamicjerusalem Studies in the UK. Al-Ahlas (2004:80) argued that the ‘main reason behind the success’ of establishing the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies was the ‘uniquely close relationship between the two elements, knowledge and power’. This formal model of relationship between ruler and scholar is absent in Arab and Muslim countries. Indeed, as stated in the *Dundee Declaration for the Future Development of the Study of Islam and Muslims* on 18 March 2004, one of ‘the crises in the contemporary Muslim world is the absence of co-operation between knowledge and power.’

Definitions

After the initial research on Umar’s Assurance of Safety to the people of Aelia (El-Awaisi, 2000), the author started from 2000 to develop his new findings. In 2004 this helped to define both Islamicjerusalem and Islamicjerusalem Studies. Indeed, Umar’s Assurance was the jewel of the first Muslim *Fatib* (i.e., introducing new stage and vision) of Aelia, and the beacon for developing Islamicjerusalem’s unique and creative vision and nature.

I Islamicjerusalem

Al-Ahlas (2004: 32) argued that the fifth international academic conference on Islamicjerusalem Studies held on 21 April 2003 was ‘a turning point’ in the history of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies. Although he was the one who in 1994 had invented this new terminology of Islamicjerusalem, a coherent definition was not possible when the author was trying, especially in the years from 2000 to 2005, to come to an understanding of what he specifically meant by Islamicjerusalem. This is due to the complex nature of the concept.

On 21 April 2003 in the fifth international academic conference on Islamicjerusalem ‘Islamicjerusalem: Prophetic Temples and al-Aqsa Mosque Demystifying Realities and Exploring Identities’, the author presented a keynote speech on ‘Exploring the identity of Islamicjerusalem’. Here he publicly admitted that ‘It took me nearly three years to come to the working definition which I would like to present to you today’. He added ‘We need to start with a working definition. So, what do we mean by Islamicjerusalem? ...?’.

Although the author did not at that time present his final definition of Islamicjerusalem, his presentation contained its three key elements. For the first time, he argued that Islamicjerusalem is not a mere city or another urban settlement, but a region which includes several cities, towns and villages. From this working definition, it can be seen that Islamicjerusalem is best described as a region with three key interlinked elements. He also made the same point when he presented his public lecture at the Academy of Islamic Studies at the University of Malaya on 24 September 2004. However, what is presented here is the revised definition of this new terminology² of Islamicjerusalem which takes into

consideration the discussions the author has had since then, the new definition of Islamicjerusalem Studies, and the latest progressive research in the field and developments.

Islamicjerusalem (one word) is a new terminology for a new concept, which may be translated into the Arabic language as *Bayt al-Maqdis*. It can be fairly and eventually characterised and defined as a unique region laden with a rich historical background, religious significances, cultural attachments, competing political and religious claims, international interests and various aspects that affect the rest of the world in both historical and contemporary contexts. It has a central frame of reference and a vital nature with three principal intertwined elements: its geographical location (land and boundaries), its people (population), and its unique and creative inclusive vision, to administer that land and its people, as a model for multiculturalism, cultural engagement and *Aman* (peaceful co-existence and mutual respect).

Islamicjerusalem can thus be described as a region with three key interlinked elements. Its geographical location (land), its people (i.e.: who live or used to live there) and its vision to administer or to rule that land and its people. It is not possible to separate these three elements as they are interlinked. In addition, they are linked with their historical context.’ (For the author, if geography is the theatre, history is the play). The last part of the definition has been partly borrowed from the political science theory of the three elements of any state, but replaces the concept of sovereignty with the vision of inclusivity and plurality of Islamicjerusalem.

Indeed, this ‘unique creative vision’ of Islamicjerusalem is considered more important than the issue of sovereignty in the case of Islamicjerusalem. It could be argued that the final product is normally the issue of sovereignty. However, the agenda for Islamicjerusalem is not the desire to achieve colonialist and imperialist goals of occupying lands and people which could be based either on economic ambitions or on racist nationalist and theological claims. If there is no vision, or a vision of exclusivity, in Islamicjerusalem, this would naturally lead internally to injustice, oppression, and divisions in its multicultural society. Such a repressive regime would work hard to subvert the wishes and aspirations of the people under its rule. It would mean the involvement of external powers to try to resolve these internal troubles and problems, leading to instability and barriers to the steady progress and prosperity of the region. Indeed, the unique aspect of Islamicjerusalem is highlighted through its vision, which presents a model for *Aman* (peaceful co-existence and mutual respect) and a way for people from different religious and cultural backgrounds to live together in an environment of diversity, multiculturalism, and cultural engagement. This understanding of Islamicjerusalem was presented by the author, for the first time, in his public lecture on ‘Islamicjerusalem as a Model for Multiculturalism’ at the Academy of Islamic Studies at the University of Malaya on 24 September 2004. Subsequently, this led him to write a number of developing articles on the topic which were based on the findings of his research on Umar’s Assurance in 2000.

The definition also argues that Islamicjerusalem is not a mere city or another urban settlement, but a region which includes several cities and villages. Identifying the centre of

the *Barakah* led him to develop a new theory for geopolitics, ‘the *Barakah* Circle Theory of Islamicjerusalem.’ This theory is based on new interpretations of the core Muslim sources and history.

The origin of the Term

The Arabic term *Bayt al-Maqdis* has been used in the past in both core and early Muslim narratives and sources to refer to the Aelia region (Al-Tel: 2003: 291) . It may be claimed that Prophet Muhammad was the first to use the term *Bayt al-Maqdis* to refer to that region. Indeed he used both terms, Aelia and *Bayt al-Maqdis*, in many of his traditions. However, one can argue that the Arabs before the advent of Islam may also have used the same term to refer to the same region. Although the Prophet did use *Bayt al-Maqdis*, the author cannot be certain when the term was first used.

It is worth mentioning that, since its launch in the winter of 1997, the *Journal of Islamicjerusalem Studies* has also carried the Arabic term *Al-Quds al-Islamiyyah* or Islamic Quds. However, the author’s new findings on Umar’s Assurance of Safety to the people of Aelia have led to a change in the use of that Arabic term. The change was reflected in the Arabic title of the *Journal* from *Al-Quds al-Islamiyyah* to *Bayt al-Maqdis* in the issue of summer 2000. This was the same issue of the *Journal* which published the author’s article on Umar’s Assurance in both the English and Arabic languages.

Moreover, the terminology Islamicjerusalem as a new concept appeared and was used in its comprehensive sense for the first time originally in the English language by this author, as has been documented, characterised and defined in this article. It should be noted that Islamicjerusalem is one word and not two separate words, i.e. Islamic and Jerusalem. It should also be made clear that Islamicjerusalem is not the same as Jerusalem or Islamic Quds *al-Quds al-Islamiyyah*. It is also different from Muslim Jerusalem as in Jewish Jerusalem and Christian Jerusalem. The historical period when the Muslims ruled Islamicjerusalem for several centuries should be called Muslim Jerusalem and not Islamicjerusalem. Islamicjerusalem is a new concept, whereas Muslim Jerusalem refers to the periods when Muslims ruled Islamicjerusalem. To illustrate this point, Umar Ibn al-Khattab’s *Fatih* of the region is the first Muslim *Fatih* of Islamicjerusalem. Indeed, this should also apply to the later Muslim period up to 1917 and to any Muslim rule of Islamicjerusalem in the future. In addition, contemporary Muslim Jerusalem is shaped in part by dialogue with the concept of Islamicjerusalem, the classical and modern history of Muslims, and in part by response to external interests, influences and occupation of the region. Accordingly, contemporary Muslims seek to relate their heritage in Muslim Jerusalem from the concept of Islamicjerusalem and the Muslim past to the radical situation of today.

It must also be noted that this term Islamicjerusalem (one or two words), has been used widely by scholars since 1994, and has now established and created its modest legacy. To support this argument, one could argue that the term became the norm in which degrees were awarded and books were printed. It was, for example, used in the subsequent titles of the International Academic Conferences on Islamicjerusalem Studies (12 to date) which attracted prominent international speakers from the Western and Muslim worlds. It was used in the title of the refereed *Journal of Islamicjerusalem Studies*, as well as prizes and awards; and in Masters and PhD degrees initially awarded by the University of Abertay

Dundee (Islamic Jerusalem Studies, two separate words) and then with the University of Aberdeen in the UK (Islamicjerusalem Studies, one word). Many academics who attended the Islamicjerusalem annual international academic conference and published articles used this term. One recent example of a scholar who published with the term as one word is Ghazarian of Oxford University on the *Armenians of Islamicjerusalem*. This has also now been adopted by several academic publishers and refereed journals who have published books and articles using this term in its new form as a single word. Some national and international academics have accepted this new terminology and adopted it in their articles in some internationally referred journals such as the *American Journal of Islamic Social Scientists*. Also publishers such as Sophia University Press and Cambridge Scholars Publishing have adopted the term in their publications. In addition, the term has been used as two separate words by various renowned scholars from different disciplines such as Armstrong (1997), Grabar (1996), Walls (1990) and Aist (2009) amongst others.

In the recent past and during the establishment of the new field in the UK, a number of scholars were concerned about the reception of this new terminology, especially linking the term 'Islamic' with Jerusalem. Their main concern was that the use of this term in particular the word 'Islamic' could open up hostility and non-acceptance by some Orientalists and Israeli academics. At that time, the author's main counter-argument was that, without the term Islamic, the whole terminology would lose its niche, meaning and definition. In addition, if it were to be only Jerusalem without the term Islamic, which Jerusalem would we be talking about? Moreover, there were also already much research and teaching programmes in Jerusalem Studies which meant that our contribution to knowledge would be very limited. However, Islamicjerusalem opened up a new area of specialisation with a new frame of reference.

The word-for-word translation of the Arabic term *Bayt al-Maqdis* could be 'the Holy House'. This might be understood from a theological point of view, but it would definitely be difficult to understand it from the historical, geographical and geopolitical contexts. In addition, the use of the term *Bayt al-Maqdis* does not represent the definition which has been presented in this section. This is especially true since it became obvious that Islamicjerusalem is a new concept which carries historical, geographical, geopolitical, religious, cultural, and political backgrounds. In addition, it is also not only al-Aqsa Mosque nor the Walled City of Jerusalem, as some outdated arguments might suggest. Indeed, it is not just a city nor yet another urban settlement, but a region which includes several villages, towns, and cities which has an inclusive multicultural vision. In short, the new terminology of Islamicjerusalem cannot be understood without placing it in historical, geographical, geopolitical and religious contexts.

After examining all of the different terms (Bayt al-Maqdis, Holy Land, Aelia, Muslim Jerusalem) by the scholars, experts and specialists in the Field of Islamicjerusalem Studies for nearly a decade (2000-2009), it has been found by consensus that none has the same potential in representing the field and providing a better alternative to Islamicjerusalem *in English*. There has been various attempts to change this term; the alternative terms presented mainly rotate around two terminologies: '*Bayt al-Maqdis*' and 'Jerusalem'. Neither of these terms represent the field well: the first alienates the English speaking world which is unfamiliar with this terminology and the latter does not reflect the new findings of the research conducted to develop the field.

In short, within the English speaking world, the term Islamicjerusalem as one word seems to be the most appropriate term which was originally developed in the English language and represents the concept best, even with its problems. Indeed, the use of the word 'Islamic' in the English terminology Islamicjerusalem in the West is the right term to shock, confuse, and throw doubt on some of what has been taken for granted in the past by scholars representing various schools of thought, trends, and approaches. It also covers new ground, addresses some of the sensitive key issues, opens up and promotes constructive dialogue, initiating intellectual and academic debates that should shed light on new lines of explanation, new horizons of critical thinking, and enrich our understanding of this inimitable region. Indeed, to advance such knowledge, promote serious and constructive dialogue, is to challenge long-established Orientalist claims.

II Islamicjerusalem Studies

The sixth international academic conference on Islamicjerusalem Studies organised on 31 May 2004 celebrated the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies. This was another significant event in the history of the new field. In his keynote speech, the founder presented for the first time his definition of Islamicjerusalem Studies. However, what is presented here is the revised definition of Islamicjerusalem Studies, which has taken into consideration more recent discussions, the new definition of Islamicjerusalem, and the latest progressive research in the field and developments.

Islamicjerusalem Studies can be fairly eventually characterised and defined as a new branch of human knowledge based on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. It aims to investigate all matters related to the Islamicjerusalem region, explore and examine its various aspects, and provide a critical analytic understanding of the new frame of reference, in order to identify the nature of Islamicjerusalem and to understand the geopolitical uniqueness of this region and its effects on the rest of the world in both historical and contemporary contexts.

Islamicjerusalem Studies is a field of inquiry which covers several disciplines, such as international relations, history and archaeology, art and architecture, geography and geology, environment and politics, the study of Islam and Muslims, and other related disciplines. Accordingly, research conducted within the field combined interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches which include historical and theological, theoretical and conceptual, empirical and cultural approaches. The new field also adopts the policy of escaping the trap of reacting to others and trying to engage with them through creating a new agenda, dialogue and debate on the subject which will lead to more constructive dialogue between scholars in several disciplines.

The new field not only provides an understanding of Islamicjerusalem but examines the new frame of reference within which Muslims understand Islamicjerusalem. Several questions will be key to addressing this point: What are the reasons for Muslims having close links to and concern with Islamicjerusalem? What is the significance of Islamicjerusalem to Islam and to

Muslims? Does Islamic Jerusalem have any special status and position in Islam compared with any other region?

In-depth discussion of the various aspects and dimensions of Islamic Jerusalem opens up new horizons for those interested in understanding its vision, nature and the reasons for its distinctness from other regions. For example, the study of the inclusive vision of Islamic Jerusalem should not only be restricted to its people's religions and cultures, it should also include 'equal measures' of the roles of its two genders, male and female. A young promising Egyptian researcher, Hassan (2005: 69), argues that:

Women as much as men left their marks in the beginning of the Muslim history of, and the physical attachment to, Islamic Jerusalem, and both genders played a role in asserting its inclusiveness to religions and genders. [Only] when this crucial element of inclusiveness is sufficiently taken into account, can Islamic Jerusalem become a model for 'multiculturalism' in practice.

As 'gender' has become 'a useful category of historical analysing' (Scott, 1999: 28-50), the author agrees with Hassan's argument (2005: 2-3) that 'the usage of gender as a tool of analysing both its (Islamic Jerusalem) past and present is a necessity for the completion and advancement of this new field of inquiry (of Islamic Jerusalem Studies).'

In order to demonstrate this inclusive vision, there is a need to use gender as a tool of analysis in approaching the study of Islamic Jerusalem through examining the active role played by Muslim women and their vital contributions in underpinning and demonstrating the significance of Islamic Jerusalem. This calls for a re-examination of the interpretation of the Qur'anic verses, the *Abadith* that were narrated, and the Muslim juristical rulings that were made by Muslim women and compare them with those made by Muslim men regarding Islamic Jerusalem. In addition, Muslim women's participation should be analysed and their role reinstated in the making of Islamic Jerusalem history in all its periods. For example, Hassan (2005: 45) claims of the Mother of Believers, Safiyyah Bint Huyayyi Ibn Akhtab that her 'life story in general, and her visit to Islamic Jerusalem in particular, illustrate vividly, how the whole process of negotiating her Jewish background and her Muslim religion culminates in Islamic Jerusalem.' In her conclusion, Hassan (2005: 69) presented her dissertation as 'merely the cornerstone for a whole range of possible further gender studies on Islamic Jerusalem. The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches that characterise Islamic Jerusalem Studies must be utilised in further discussions and examinations of gender in Islamic Jerusalem.'

In addition, this new field could be argued as consolidating the Qur'anic, *Hadith* and Muslim historical disciplines by shedding light on new lines of explanation, interpretation, and understanding. Numerous verses revealed about Islamic Jerusalem in the Qur'an, and about the frequency with which the Prophet spoke about Islamic Jerusalem (El-Awaisi, 1998: 49), lead one to argue that the new field has revealed greater insights into several disciplines such as the interpretation of the Qur'an and the *Abadith*. In addition, it has clarified several contradicting historical events and resolved a number of problematic historical issues (Al-Tel: 2003).

Finally, one could argue that a definition should be short, and succinct, yet these definitions of Islamicjerusalem are very long. However, what has been provided here is a scholarly presentation of what can be fairly eventually characterised and defined of Islamicjerusalem and its field. So the definition is not only the definition but also the characteristics of these definitions. Such definitions also aim to raise questions and provide researchers and scholars in the field with the key aspects of Islamicjerusalem.

Although these definitions are the author's most important contributions to the field, they should be considered as working definitions, to set the scene for the field's future development. They by no means claim to be theological or divinity *Ilahiyat* definitions which cannot be changed or developed, as some would claim. They are, as in the case of Islamicjerusalem Studies, characterised and defined as a new 'branch of human knowledge'. Indeed, there are human explanation, interpretation, and understanding of new concepts and terminology which are continually subject to change and development based on the latest research in the field by scholars, experts, and specialist within the field of Islamicjerusalem Studies.

Latest Progressive Research on Islamicjerusalem Studies

Through the Institute and the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, the author developed unique teaching and research programmes, based on current and progressive research, which take into consideration the needs and preferences of our local, national and international students, so that they can appreciate and understand the various schools of thought within a specific line of study. This has produced a new generation of young scholars with Master and PhD degrees in Islamicjerusalem Studies, students who hopefully now have a thorough grounding in the new field. We have to date a community of 47 graduates in Islamicjerusalem Studies working across the globe at several levels: 11 PhDs, 33 Masters, 3 PG Diplomas/PG Certificates. In addition, theses programmes have trained qualified postgraduate students and created a team of young scholars in a variety of disciplines in Islamicjerusalem Studies and have conducted high quality research both at taught Master or PhD levels.

Moreover, through his teachings and supervisory role, the author has inspired and encouraged his postgraduate students to develop research into this new branch of human knowledge of Islamicjerusalem, its central frame of reference, vital nature, uniqueness, and various other aspects and dimensions. Many of his discussions and arguments, have been studied seriously by his postgraduate students and developed into essays, dissertations and theses, all of which have made vital contributions to our knowledge of Islamicjerusalem Studies. Below is a list of some of the latest progressive research on Islamicjerusalem Studies:

1. Othman Ismael al-Tel wrote his PhD thesis (2002) on *The first Islamic conquest of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem): A critical analytical study of the early Islamic historical narrations and sources.* (July 2003)
2. Haithem Fathi Al-Ratrout wrote his PhD thesis (2002) on *The architectural development of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Islamic Jerusalem in the early Islamic period: Sacred architecture in the shape of the 'Holy'.*

3. Maher Younes Abu-Munshar wrote his PhD thesis (2003) on *A historical study of Muslim treatment of Christians in Islamic Jerusalem at the time of Umar Ibn al-Khattab and Salah al-Din with special reference to the Islamic values of justice*. (Nov 2003)
4. Mohammad Roslan Mohammad Nor wrote his PhD thesis on *The significance of Islamicjerusalem in Islam: Qur'anic and Hadith perspectives*. (Dec 2005)
5. Aminurraasyid Yatiban wrote his Master's dissertation (2003) on *The Islamic concept of sovereignty: Islamic Jerusalem during the first Islamic conquest as a case study*. He also wrote his PhD thesis on *Muslim understandings of the concept of Al-Siyada (sovereignty): an analytical study of Islamicjerusalem from the first Muslim conquest until the end of the first Abasid period (16-264.AH/637-877CE)* (April 2006).
6. Ra'id Jabareen wrote his PhD thesis on *Muslim juristic rulings of Islamicjerusalem with special reference to Ibadat in Al-Aqsa Mosque: A critical comparative study* (April 2006).
7. Khalid Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi wrote his Master's dissertation (2003) on *Mapping Islamicjerusalem: Geographical boundaries of Islamicjerusalem*. He also wrote his PhD thesis on *Mapping Islamicjerusalem: The geographical extent of the land of Bayt al-Maqdis, the Holy Land and the Land of Barakah* (Aug 2006)
8. Abdallah Ma'rouf Omar wrote his Master's dissertation (2005) on *Towards the conquest of Islamicjerusalem: the three main practical steps taken by Prophet Muhammad – Analytical study*. He is now writing his PhD thesis on *The Prophet plan towards Islamicjerusalem*. He also wrote his PhD thesis on *The preparation and strategic plan of the prophet Muhammad for Islamicjerusalem: a critical study of Muslim sources* (September 2008).
9. Fatimatu Zahra' Abd Rahman wrote her Master's dissertation (2004) on *Political, social and religious changes in Islamicjerusalem from the first Islamic conquest until the end of Umayyad period (637 to 750CE): An analytical study*. She is now writing her PhD thesis on *The Muslim concept of change: An analytical study of the political, social and economic changes in Islamicjerusalem from the first Muslim conquest till the end of the Fatimid period (637-1099 CE)*.
10. Mahmoud Mataz Kazmouz wrote his Master's dissertation (2006) on *The Ottoman implementation of the vision of Islamicjerusalem as a model for multiculturalism with a special reference to Sultan Suleiman I, the magnificent (1520 – 1566)*.
11. Aisha Muhammad Ibrahim Al-Ahlas wrote her Master's dissertation (2003) on *Islamic Research Academy (ISRA) 1994-2003: background, activities and achievements with special reference to the new field of inquiry of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*.
12. Sarah Mohamed Sherif Abdel-Aziz Hassan wrote her Master's dissertation (2005) on *Women: active agents in Islamising³ Islamicjerusalem from the Prophet's time until the end of the Umayyad period*.
13. Ramona Ahmed Ibrahim wrote her Master's dissertation (2005) on *Islamicjerusalem as a model of conflict resolution: a case study of the negotiations between Salah al-Din and Richard the Lionheart (1191 – 1192 CE)*.
14. Fadi Al-Rabi wrote his Master dissertation (2007) on *Islamicjerusalem: the First Qiblah*.
15. Dina Al-Askari wrote her Master's dissertation (2008) on *The Inclusivity of Islamicjerusalem: A Qur'anic perspective*.
16. Nour Abu-Asab wrote her Master's dissertation (2009) on *Muslim's Attitude towards Christian Holy Sites in Islamicjerusalem from 636CE until 969 CE*.
17. Sara Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi wrote her Master dissertation (2010) on *Towards a Geopolitical Understanding of Islamicjerusalem during the Ayyubids: A critical study of three cases*.

This latest research of Sara El-Awaisi in 2010, is one example of the current and progressive research in the field. If the re-discovery of the geographical boundaries of Islamicjerusalem helped to clarify several contradicting historical events and resolved a number of problematic historical issues, Sara Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi's dissertation is another significant contribution to knowledge. It is also an important new addition to the field of Islamicjerusalem Studies which strengthen the current contribution to international relations discourse within the field's interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. Indeed, she is the first young promising scholar in the field who has studied geopolitical theories to understand historical events.

Latest Development in Islamicjerusalem Studies: A New Strategic Plan

In 2007, the Academy for Islamicjerusalem Studies (ISRA) developed a new strategic plan to expand, “transfer”, and promote the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies to the Arab and Muslim countries. Implementing this new strategic plan became one of the author's priorities. To implement this strategic plan, the author decided to change his place from being in a higher education environment in the West and return back to Asia. One of the main aims of this move is to promote and expand Islamicjerusalem Studies to Asian countries.

He first moved in August 2007 to Sana'a in Yemen where he successfully established, for the University of Science and Technology, a research centre “Humanities and Social Sciences Research Centre”. As an initial step, he organised in Sana'a in November 2007 the first conference in the West Asia which lead to Sana'a Declaration for Islamicjerusalem Studies. In August 2008, he moved again to Syria where he successfully developed the Faculty of International relations and Diplomacy at the University of Kalamoon. However, due to the current developing serious unrest in Syria, which started in March 2011 as part of the Arab Awakening which initiated in Tunisia in January 2011, left no room (at least for the present) to develop the field in Syria. So, in June 2011, he again decided to move this time to South East Asia. He moved in July 2011 to Malaysia as a Visiting Consultant to the University of Malaya; and now as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at UUM..

To implement ISRA's new strategic plan; and to move forward in developing and implementing its strategic plan for the next 13 years (from 2012 to 2024), ISRA decided in December 2011 to focus its efforts to find, in the coming years (three to five years), homes for Islamicjerusalem Studies in key regions by establishing a basis/partnerships in three hubs from which the field can be promoted: West Asia, with possibly Turkey as a base, North Africa, with possibly Egypt as a base, and South East Asia, with possibly Malaysia as a base. As the leading actor in promoting the field of Islamicjerusalem Studies to the Arab and Muslim world, ISRA will work very closely with universities / institutions / organizations / societies/individuals to facilitate the required means to successfully accomplish the establishment of these three hubs. However, each of these hubs would develop the field within those key regions according to its own circumstances and needs.

To justify establishing a hub in Malaysia, for example, one could argue that ISRA has since 2001 a long and fruitful relationship with a number of institutions in Malaysia. For example, ISRA has invested very heavily in Malaysian young academics. It granted full scholarships to four PhD students, and 12 Masters postgraduate students (nearly one third) of the total

graduates in the field. These local Malaysian graduates are truly the core of the field's greatest assets who will take the new field out into south East Asia. The appointments of Dr Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor at the University of Malaya (UM) in 2007 and Dr Aminurraasyid Yatiban, initially, at the University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) in 2011 and now (from October 2012) at the Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) are significant steps to promote this new field of inquiry to Malaysia. Dr Mohd Roslan and Dr Aminurraasyid were the first postgraduate students from Malaysia who joined the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies in the UK . On 13 February 2008, the University of Malaya's Academy for Islamic Studies launched the Malay edition/translation of the author's monograph *Introducing Islamicjerusalem*. In short, the plan was to find a Malaysian university where we could focus all the efforts and taking the lead in developing this field in South-East Asia in particular and the Muslim world in general.

During the official opening ceremony of the 13th International Academic Conference on Islamicjerusalem Studies (2012) "Palestine and Islamicjerusalem: Introducing Islamicjerusalem Studies to South East Asia" on 10 April 2012, at UUM, the University Utara Malaysia (UUM) has decided to establish an "Institute of Excellence for Islamicjerusalem Studies" at UUM College of Law, Government and International Studies. This is the first research-led Institute of Excellence for Islamicjerusalem Studies established in South-East Asia in particular and the Muslim World at large in general. Indeed, the UUM is now the second university worldwide (after the University of Aberdeen) and the first Muslim university to take a lead on this field on inquiry.

This newly established Institute is aiming to play a key role in structuring the research and teaching of Islamicjerusalem Studies at local and international levels. Accordingly, this is an excellent opportunity for UUM to take a lead in a niche research area, as well a model of cross disciplinary research. Being a young field of inquiry and is still developing it has a great potential in many areas that still need to be studied. Indeed, this will provide unique research topics across many disciplines at UUM. In addition, as a unique institute across the Muslim World, it is hoped that it would attract international interest and postgraduate students from the Muslim world.

Conclusion

This article gave the revised definitions of the new terminology of Islamicjerusalem and its field of inquiry, Islamicjerusalem Studies, which takes into consideration the more recent discussions and research in the field. One of its main conclusions is that within the English speaking world, the term Islamicjerusalem as one word seems to be the most appropriate term which was originally developed in the English language and represents the concept best, even with its problems. Moreover, based on the approach of specialisation and integration, the establishment of this field was a journey and a process, which adopted the principle of gradual establishment and development. It also went through a number of stages on the road to its establishment and development. With clear vision, passion, determination and a good team of young scholars in a variety of disciplines in Islamicjerusalem Studies, the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies was founded and developed, together with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, and a new frame of reference on Islamicjerusalem was established in the UK. Through the establishment of the Academy for

Islamicjerusalem Studies (ISRA), the founder (author) planned that research and scholarship take place in building the foundation stones of his vision for the field. In addition, through taking practical steps, he institutionalised the development, integration and promotion of the new field within academia, especially within the British higher education establishments. Moreover, it is at present being taught, as individual's courses, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in a number of Arab and Muslim universities, including Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Malaysia. However, ISRA developed a new strategic plan to expand, "transfer", and promote the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies to the Arab and Muslim countries in the coming thirteen years (2012 – 2024).

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¹ This background of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies was based on (Al-Ahlah, 2004).

² According to the Oxford English Dictionary, terminology means a 'set of terms relating to a subject'; term (s) means 'a word or phrase used to describe a thing or to express an idea'; concept means 'an abstract idea'; abstract means 'having to do with ideas or qualities rather than physical or concrete things'; nature means 'the typical qualities or character of a person, animal, or thing'; and vital means 'absolutely necessary'. The author is very grateful to Sarah Hassan, an MLitt postgraduate student in Islamicjerusalem Studies in 2005, for collecting these definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary.

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- ³ The author strongly disagrees with the usage of this terminology, 'Islamising Islamicjerusalem', in the context of Hassan's dissertation (2005). Indeed, it goes against the recent historical findings, the historical nature of Islamicjerusalem, and its vision at the time under discussion in her dissertation. After she submitted her dissertation, the author felt bound to discuss this issue with Sarah at length. He also raised the point that, on examination of the dissertation, it was revealed that she did not mean 'Islamising Islamicjerusalem'. In addition, he pointed out that she used phrases such as 'underpinning the significance of Islamicjerusalem', 'demonstrating the significance of Islamicjerusalem', 'making the significance of Islamicjerusalem', and 'developing the significance of Islamicjerusalem'. Sarah agrees that this is not the appropriate terminology to use in this context.

