

**THE KA‘BA, PARADISE, AND IBN AL-KHAṬĪB IN
SHĀLLA (RABAT): THE ‘WORK’ OF 14TH CENTURY
MARĪNID FUNERARY COMPLEX***
**La Ka‘ba, el paraíso e Ibn al-Jaṭīb en Šālla (Rabat): El ‘trabajo’ del
complejo funerario meriní del siglo XIV**

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Abstract: By the mid 14th century, the initially modest burial ground of the Marīnid dynasty (668/1269-870/1465) in Shālla had become a funerary complex with several buildings, and its main ‘work’ was to attract and impress huge numbers of visitors. One such visitor was Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb, who, this article shows, lived mostly at the royal shrine from 761/1360 to 763/1362. Following a reconsideration of the time he spent there, and based essentially on his own accounts, this paper focuses on two intertwined hermeneutical questions concerning how the experience of visiting Shālla resonated in the visitors’ perception. First, it demonstrates that some people construed the fourteenth-century garden at Shālla as a representation of paradise. Second, after a short discussion on how the Marīnid shrine developed into a centre of pilgrimage, it argues that some of the coeval written accounts interpret Shālla as an analogue of the Ka‘ba and that some of its visitors performed rites borrowed from the pilgrimage to Mecca. The aim of this article is to investigate some of the ways in which Shālla ‘worked’ of glorifying the members of the Marīnid dynasty.

Resumen: A mediados del siglo XIV, el cementerio inicialmente modesto de la dinastía benimerín (668/1269-870/1465) en Šālla se convirtió en un complejo funerario de varios edificios, cuyo ‘trabajo’ principal era atraer e impresionar a las masas de visitantes. Uno de ellos fue Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Jaṭīb, quien, como se demostrará, vivió principalmente en el panteón real entre 761/1360 y 763/1362. Después de una reconsideración sobre su estancia en el lugar y basándonos esencialmente en sus relatos, el presente artículo se centra en dos preguntas hermenéuticas entrelazadas sobre cómo la experiencia de visitar a Šālla se reflejaba en la percepción de los visitantes. Se demuestra, en primer lugar, que algunas personas interpretaron este jardín del siglo XIV en Šālla como una representación del paraíso. En segundo lugar, después de una breve discusión de cómo el santuario benimerín se convirtió en un centro de peregrinación, se llega a la conclusión de que algunas de las fuentes coetáneas interpretan a Šālla como un sitio análogo a la Ka‘ba, y que algunos de sus visitantes cumplían ritos adoptados de la peregrinación a la Meca. El objetivo de este artículo

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es investigar algunas de las formas en que Šālla ‘trabajó’ para glorificar a los miembros de la dinastía benimerín.

Key words: Marīnid dynasty. Shālla. Ibn al-Khaṭīb. Funerary architecture. Hermeneutics.

Palabras clave: Benimerínes. Šālla. Ibn al-Jaṭīb. Arquitectura funeraria. Hermenéutica.

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INTRODUCTION

A little further out from the town [of Rabat] are the ruins of Shella, [...] probably the Roman colony which seems to have given its name to Salli (Salé), perhaps a Carthaginian settlement. [...] [Here are] the Beni Marīn tombs which lend special interest to the spot, though Roman and other ancient coins have been found here. Among the few remains of antiquity are some stone vaults, an arched canal, perhaps Roman, and a piece of old wall. Otherwise, although picturesquely ruinous, and overgrown with vegetation surmounted with storks’ nests, the beautiful gate-ways and mosque-tower which still stand are all comparatively modern¹.

This introduction to the site of Shālla (often transliterated as ‘Chellah’) by James Edward Budgett-Meakin (1866–1906), probably the first Englishman to conduct research on Islamic Morocco, is still essentially accurate today. Located just outside of the Almohad ramparts of Rabat (Figure 1) and encircled by impressive fortification walls c. 1 km long, the site features extensive remains of the Mauretanian and then Roman town. One should note, however, that by “comparatively modern” Budgett-Meakin is referring to Islamic buildings, most of which date from the Marīnid dynasty that ruled over the north-west corner of Africa between 668/1269 and 870/1465.

The Marīnid sultans established their dynastic funerary complex, generally recognised as one of the most picturesque architectural achievements of the period, partially on top of the ancient ruins and reusing the Roman water system at the site. Their patronage coincided with the heyday of the dynasty, and the first sultan, Abū Yūsuf (656/1258-685/1286), was also the first Marīnid ruler to be buried there. Most of the extant —though mainly dilapidated— Islamic structures are concentrated in the funerary complex, and date from the reigns of Abū l-Ḥasan (731/1331-752/1351) and Abū ‘Inān (752/1351-759/1358). These two sultans transformed the theretofore modest burial ground into an ensemble of buildings which included a mosque (Figure 2/A), a madrasa (O), two ablution buildings (Q, V) and several mausolea (E, F, G [Figure 3], J, K)². Although the

1. James E. Budgett-Meakin. *The land of the Moors. A comprehensive description*. London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1901, p. 176.

2. For Marīnid Shālla, see ‘Uthmān ‘Uthmān Ismā‘īl. *Tārīkh Shālla al-Islāmīya. Ṣafhāt jadīda fī tārīkh al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā min ‘aṣr al-Adārīsa ilā nihāyat ‘aṣr al-Marīniyyīn*. Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1975; *idem*. *Ḥaḡā‘ir Shālla al-Islāmīya. Abḡāth tārīkhīya wa-kushūf atharīya bi-l-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*.

following rulers stopped using Shālla as their burial ground, their interest in and support of the site did not cease, or at least not abruptly. The sultans Abū Sālim (760/1359-762/1361) and Abū Zayyān (762/1361-766/1365), as discussed below, ensured the maintenance of the royal shrine.

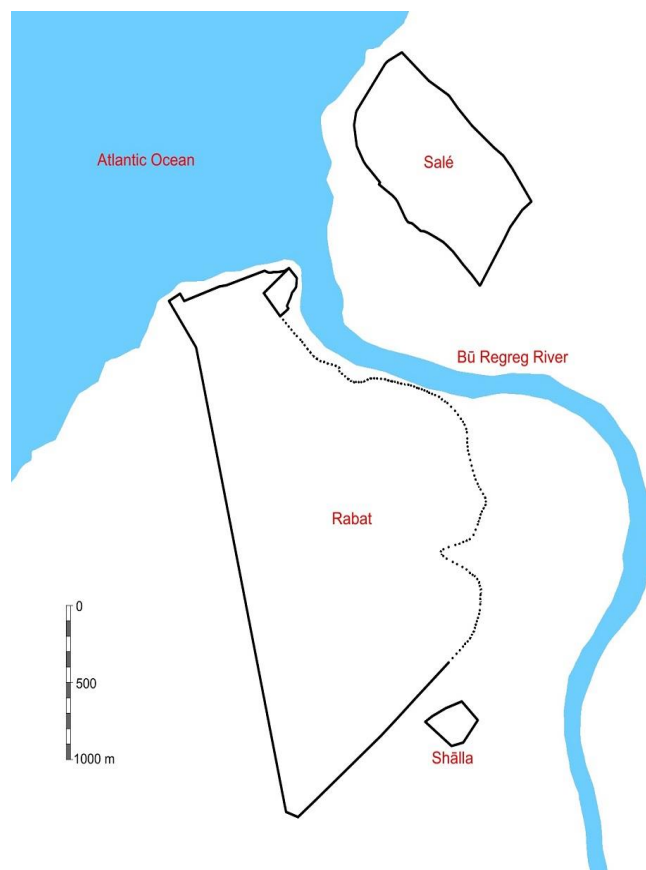


Figure 1. Map of the area of Shālla, including the city walls of Rabat and Salé. The labels ‘Rabat’ and ‘Salé’ follow the modern —and *not* the Marīnid— use of toponyms (cf. Fig. 5). Sketch by the author.

Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1978; Péter T. Nagy. “Sultans’ paradise. The royal necropolis of Shāla, Rabat”. *Al-Masāq*, 26, 2 (2014), pp. 132-146; Ahmad S. Ettahiri and Bulle Tuil-Leonetti. “Chella, de la nécropole mérinide au royaume des djinns”. In *Maroc médiéval. Un empire de l’Afrique à l’Espagne*. Ed. Yannick Lintz, Claire Déléry, and Bulle Tuil-Leonetti. Paris: Louvre, 2014. pp. 502-505.

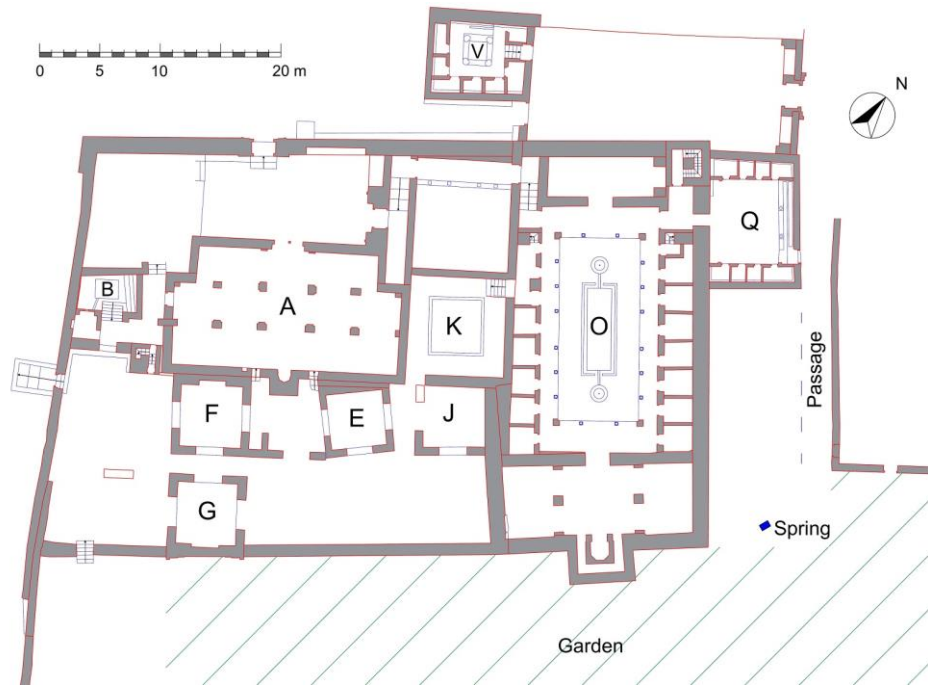


Figure 2. Site plan of the funerary complex of Shälla. Drawing by the author

The present paper focuses on a hitherto neglected aspect of this artwork, the dynastic funerary complex at Shälla, in the Marīnid period. Just as every artwork, by definition, *works*, Shälla made people travel to its location, impressed them with its monuments, showed its inscriptions to them, and encouraged them to perform rites in honour of the deceased. That is, the site carried out acts which can be regarded as its *work*, and which manifested as cognitive perception in the visitors' experience. As Stephennie Mulder phrases it, "the work of art *itself* can be proposed as a kind of active social catalyst, engaged in the process of continuous and shifting creation of significance"³. This approach, originating from the methodology of the anthropologist Alfred Gell and recently adopted by

3. Stephennie Mulder. "Seeing the light. Enacting the divine at three medieval Syrian shrines". In *Envisioning Islamic art and architecture. Essays in honor of Renata Holod*. Ed. David J. Roxburgh. Leiden: Brill, 2014, p. 90 (author's italics).

Simon O'Meara for studying the Ka'ba in Mecca⁴, can also be employed for addressing Shālla. What follows below are three case studies, focusing on how the Marīnid funerary complex made its visitors perceive their experience. The first one, the sojourn of Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1375), presents the story of an exiled Andalusī intellectual who sought solace at the royal tombs. Whereas previous scholars have tended to ignore Ibn al-Khaṭīb's writings on Shālla, I shall argue that those are the most revealing sources for some questions related to the site. Had it not been for him, the second and third case studies —concerning the paradisiac significance and the Meccan association of Shālla— would have remained nearly unknown for us today.



Figure 3. The mausoleum of Abū l-Ḥasan in Shālla (Fig. 2/G) with the modern garden in the background. Photo by the author.

4. Alfred Gell. *Art and agency. An anthropological theory*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998, pp. 1-11; Simon O'Meara. *The Kaaba. Orientations in space and vision*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019 (forthcoming).

IBN AL-KHAṬĪB IN SHĀLLA

The writings of Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb are generally considered among the most important Arabic sources for the period. He was one of the brightest intellectuals of his age, the Naṣrid vizier and an insightful historian of Granada, who also spent some time in the Marīnid sultanate, and yet his lengthy writings on Shālla have never received more than passing attention⁵. Before turning to how he perceived the funerary complex of Shālla, I shall first focus on his sojourn at the site, especially because his exile to Morocco seems to have been misunderstood so far.

The biography of Ibn al-Khaṭīb is relatively well-known, especially since Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh ‘Inān published his invaluable monograph in 1968⁶. Ibn al-Khaṭīb served at the court of the Naṣrid sultan Yūsuf I (733/1333-755/1354) in Granada as head of the royal chancellery and vizier. He then retained his positions under Muḥammad V (755/1354-760/1359, 763/1362-793/1391), and accompanied his master into exile in Morocco between 760/1359 and 763/1362. It is generally held that he lived in Salé during most of this time. A modern Moroccan scholar local to Salé, Ja‘far ibn Aḥmad al-Nāṣirī, even dedicated a monograph to this period in Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s biography, with the title *Ibn al-Khaṭīb bi-Salā* (Ibn al-Khaṭīb in Salé)⁷. Many scholars have since reiterated the same notion, claiming that he visited Shālla, probably stayed there for a short while, but then moved to Salé⁸. However, there is simply no clear evidence in support of this theory, and, as I shall argue, Ibn al-Khaṭīb lived in Shālla, not Salé, during most of his exile.

5. See, however, Henri Basset and Évariste Lévi-Provençal. “Chella. Une nécropole mérinide”. *Hespéris*, 2 (1922), pp. 22-25. Part of the reason for this lacuna may be found in the judgment by Basset and Lévi-Provençal, dismissing one of the writings of Ibn al-Khaṭīb on Shālla as “jumble of rhetoric” (*fatras de rhétorique*); *ibid.* p. 24.

6. Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh ‘Inān. *Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb. Hayātuhu wa-turāthuhu al-fikrī*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānījī, 1968. See also Barbara Boloix-Gallardo. “Introduction”. In *Praising the ‘Tongue of Religion’. Essays in honor of the 700th anniversary of Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s birth*. Ed. Barbara Boloix-Gallardo. Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 277-287, with a comprehensive bibliography on Ibn al-Khaṭīb.

7. Ja‘far ibn Aḥmad al-Nāṣirī. *Ibn al-Khaṭīb bi-Salā*. Salé: al-Khizāna al-‘Ilmiya al-Ṣubayḥiyya, 1988. This study fails to prove that Ibn al-Khaṭīb actually lived in Salé. The author’s opinion is essentially based on this sentence by Ibn al-Khaṭīb: “I was inclined to live in the town of Salā, where sanctity abides in the premises, and where merit has settled the market due to the sacred mausoleum”; al-Nāṣirī. *Ibn al-Khaṭīb*, p. 23. As demonstrated below, Ibn al-Khaṭīb mentions the “town of Salā” when he describes his experience in Shālla, and by “sacred mausoleum” he most likely refers to that of Abū al-Ḥasan in Shālla.

8. See, for instance, ‘Inān. *Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb*, pp. 76-102; Ismā‘īl. *Tārīkh Shālla al-Islāmiyya*, pp. 65-66; Emilio Molina López. *Ibn al-Jatīb*. Granada: Editorial Comares, 2001, pp. 92-102; Jacinto Bosch-Vilá. “Ibn al-Khaṭīb”. In *The encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 1986, 2nd ed. [EF], vol. 3. pp. 835-837; Alexander Knysh. “Ibn al-Khaṭīb”. In *The literature of al-Andalus*. Ed. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 359; Laila M. Jreis Navarro. “La riḥla jatibiana a través de la *Nuḡādat al-jirāb* de Ibn al-Jatīb”. In *Saber y*

The misunderstanding derives from the writings of Ibn al-Khaṭīb himself, and his seemingly confusing use of toponyms. Mentioning the funeral of Abū l-Ḥasan in 752/1351, he says that it took place in ‘Salā’⁹, despite the fact that it happened in Shālla where his mausoleum still exists today (Figure 2/G; Figure 3). This already indicates that the toponym ‘Salā’ could not have meant the same for Ibn al-Khaṭīb as it does for us today, namely, the town of Salé on the Atlantic coast north of the Bū Regreg river (Figure 1). As this is not the place to discuss the historical geography of the area in detail, a few notes on that must suffice. The site of Shālla was a Roman town known in Latin as ‘Sala’, a name that the early authors writing in Arabic rendered as ‘Salā’¹⁰. The anonymous *al-Istibṣār fī ‘ajā’ib al-amṣār* (written in 580/1184-85) explains that the name ‘Shālla’ is the Berber (*‘ajamī*) equivalent of ‘Salā’¹¹. However, by then, a new city had been founded on the Atlantic coast, which was, confusingly enough, also known as (New) Salā, and which still bears the name Salé today. In the Marīnid period, the sources often mention the location of Shālla as belonging to, or being part of, Salā. This explains why Ibn al-Khaṭīb says that Abū l-Ḥasan was buried in Salā, whereas he actually means Shālla. The same author also mentions “the burial place of [Abū Ya‘qūb’s] ancestor (Abū Yūsuf) in Salā”¹². This can only mean that the toponym ‘Salā’ once designated not only present-day Salé, but also its surrounding area, including Shālla.

poder en al-Andalus. Ibn al-Jaṭīb (siglo XIV). Estudios en conmemoración del 700 aniversario del nacimiento de Ibn al-Jaṭīb (Loja, 1313-Fez, 1375). Ed. María Dolores Rodríguez, Antonio Peláez Rovira, and Bárbara Boloix Gallardo. Córdoba: El Almendro, 2014, pp. 217-249; cf. Ibn ‘Alī l-Dukkālī. *Al-Durra al-yaṭīma fī waṣf madīnat Shālla al-ḥadītha wa-l-qadīma*. Ed. ‘Abīr Fahd Shaddūd. Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 2012, pp. 75-76.

9. Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Raḥm al-ḥulal fī naẓm al-duwal*. Tunis: al-Maṭba‘a al-‘Umūmiya, 1317AH, p. 97. Abū l-Ḥasan was temporarily buried in Marrakesh before being transported to Shālla.

10. Ismā‘īl. *Tārīkh Shālla al-Islāmīya*, pp. 49-63.

11. *Kitāb al-istibṣār fī ‘ajā’ib al-amṣār. Waṣf Makka wa-l-Madīna wa-Miṣr wa-bilād al-Maghrib*. Ed. Sa‘d Zaghlūl ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd. Casablanca: Les Editions Maghrébines, 1985, p. 140.

12. “... *madfani salaḥīhi bi-Salā*”; Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*. Ed. Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh ‘Inān. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānījī, 1973-1977, vol. 4, p. 357. The sultans Abū Yūsuf (656/1258-685/1286) and Abū Ya‘qūb (685/1286-706/1307) were both buried at Shālla. For a similar passage, see Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī. *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*. Ed. Kāmil Salmān al-Jabbūrī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, vol. 4, p. 113; [Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī l-Ma‘ālī Ibn Sammāk]. *Al-Ḥulal al-mawshīya fī dhikr al-akhbār al-Marrākushīya*. Ed. Suhayl Zakkār and ‘Abd al-Qādir Zammāma. Casablanca: Dār al-Rashshād al-Ḥadītha, 1979, p. 177.



Figure 4. Bird's-eye view of Salā, 1574. Georg Braun, Simon van den Neuwel, and Franz Hogenberg. *Beschreibung und Contrafactur der vornembster Stüt der Welt*. Cologne, 1574, vol. 1, following p. 57.

What the sources meant by ‘Salā’ can also be understood from medieval and early modern maps and depictions, in which the toponym always stands for the area as a whole. A German bird's-eye view image from 1574 (Figure 4) labels the area as “SALA”, modern Rabat as “Sala Vetus” (Old Sala), modern Salé as “Sala Nova” (New Sala), and Shālla as “Sepultura Regum Feßae” (Sepulchre of the kings of Fez)¹³. That is, ‘SALA’, according to the image, encompassed all the other localities. Using this toponym as the name of the area accords with other pre-modern maps, such as al-Idrīsī’s world map (c. 548/1154)¹⁴, the atlas of

13. Depictions and maps of the city retain using the general toponym ‘Sala’ until the mid-eighteenth century, often differentiating between ‘Old Sala’ and ‘New Sala’ on either side of the river. See Robert Ricard and Jacques Caillé. “Salé-le-Vieux et Salé-le-Neuf”. *Hespéris*, 34 (1947), pp. 441-442; Jacques Caillé. *La ville de Rabat jusqu’au protectorat français. Histoire et archéologie*. Paris: Vanoest, 1949, plates XXVIII-XXIX, XXXVI-XXXIX.

14. As reproduced by Konrad Miller (1844-1933); see Tindaro Gatani, Konrad Miller, and Michele Amari (eds.). *L’opera di al-Idrīsī, geografo arabo-siculo del XII secolo*. Palermo: Arti Grafiche Palermitane, 2012.

Petrus Vesconte of Genova (c. 1320-1325)¹⁵, the Catalan Atlas made in Majorca (c. 1375)¹⁶, as well as the so-called Maghrib Chart (Figure 5). Produced either in Morocco or al-Andalus in the first half of the fourteenth century, this chart is of particular relevance to the present question because it also names the area as ‘Salā’¹⁷. It is therefore evident that, at least in pre-modern sources, ‘Rabat’ and ‘Shālla’ were generally understood as subordinate toponyms of the main geographic entity, ‘Salā’. Consequently, whenever a medieval author says ‘Salā’, one cannot simply identify it with the modern town of Salé, and this observation is particularly significant when it comes to Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s accounts.

The events that lead to Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s exile from al-Andalus begin in Ramaḍān 760/August 1359, when a palace revolt breaks out in the Alhambra, and the Naṣrid sultan Muḥammad V is ousted from power. He first flees to Guadix, and then, on the invitation of the Marīnid sultan Abū Sālim, arrives in Fez on 6 Muḥarram 761/28 November 1359, along with his vizier Ibn al-Khaṭīb. While Muḥammad V enjoys a palace provided for him in Fez, Ibn al-Khaṭīb has apparently no interest in staying there. He would rather go explore Abū Sālim’s realm, and so he asks for the Marīnid sultan’s permission to travel around in Morocco. Then, having completed his journey, he chooses to settle down in the area mentioned as ‘Salā’ in Rajab 761/May 1360¹⁸.

15. Marino Sanuto. *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis*. MS British Library (London) Add. 27376*, fols. 180v–181r.

16. *Catalan Atlas*. MS Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris). MS Esp 30.

17. *Maghrib chart*. MS Biblioteca Ambrosiana (Milano) S.P.II.259. For Salā, see Juan Vernet-Ginés. “The Maghreb Chart in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana”. *Imago Mundi*, 16 (1962), p. 14 (toponym no. 226).

18. On Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s exile, see Laila M. Jreis Navarro. “Cartas y noticias de ambos lados del estrecho. El universo jatibiano a través de la *Nuḥḍat al-ḡirāb*”. *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos. Sección Árabe-Islam*, 62 (2013), pp. 83-106; *idem*. “La *rihla jatibiana*”; *idem*. *Entre las dos orillas. El viaje de exilio de Ibn al-Jaṭīb a través de su obra Nuḥḍat al-ḡirāb fī ‘ulālat al-igṭirāb*. PhD dissertation. University of Granada, 2016, pp. 121-144.

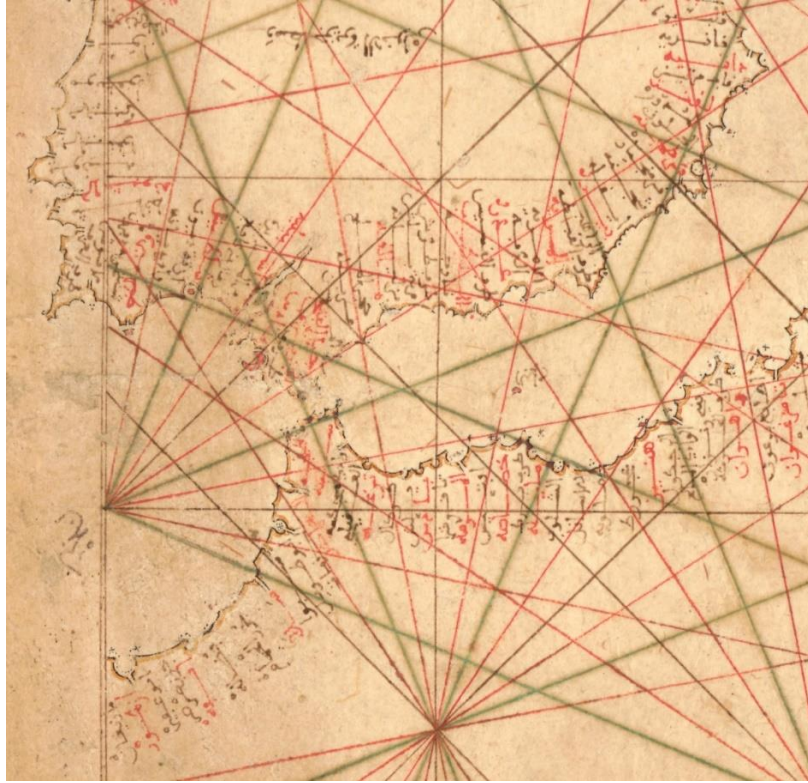


Figure 5. *The Maghrib Chart*, map of the Western Mediterranean and Western Europe, detail. Ink on paper, 23.5 cm x 16 cm. Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana/Mondadori Portfolio ©

The most detailed source for Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s exile in Morocco is his *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb*. It has a chapter dedicated entirely to Shālla, which contains some of the letters that he receives or sends from there. Notably, the chapter is titled “Returning to the town of Salā” —and the chapter heading comes from the original manuscript— even though the town known today as Salé is not even mentioned in the text. As demonstrated above, this should warn us that ‘Salā’ cannot refer to what is modern-day Salé, but only to a wider geographical area encompassing Shālla. In this chapter of the *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb*, one reads that Ibn al-Khaṭīb arrives in Shālla, and writes a letter to the sultan Abū Sālim:

This is Ibn al-Khaṭīb, who is devoted to the burial site of the lord, your father (Abū l-Ḥasan), writing from the sacred mausoleum in Shālla [...]. He has decided voluntarily not to leave these noble premises and the protected precinct until the reply concerning the question of the grave of this noble lord arrives from your highness¹⁹.

The actual subject of the letter unfolds gradually; Ibn al-Khaṭīb first transmits Abū l-Ḥasan's message to his son, Abū Sālim. In other words, Ibn al-Khaṭīb performs necromancy as he engages in conversation with Abū l-Ḥasan, who died almost a decade before:

I lent my ears to [Abū l-Ḥasan's] grave [...], and it was as if he was saying to me: "Tell your lord (Abū Sālim): 'My son, the apple of my eye [...], Ibn al-Khaṭīb told me that his money had been stolen, he had many dependants, his body was weak [...], but he was hoping that he could devote himself to my premises, and stay in my precinct and in my service. [...] Today, I want this man to be my servant'"²⁰.

Then a bit further down in the letter, Ibn al-Khaṭīb eventually states his goal explicitly, asking the sultan: "Appoint me to the service of this lord, to his pilgrimage, to his seekers, and to praising the Prophet [...] on the night of his birthday in the premises [of Shālla]"²¹. The letter is dated to 11 Rajab 761/28 May 1360, and one can see from it that Ibn al-Khaṭīb intends to live in Shālla. Given his devotion to the site and its neglected state suggested in his text, he has the idea of creating a position for himself there, and applies for it to Abū Sālim. According to the sultan's reply, he welcomes idea and hires Ibn al-Khaṭīb²².

In a second letter to Abū Sālim, Ibn al-Khaṭīb describes briefly what else he is doing in Shālla: "I told the seekers: 'Oh you, we have been reciting the Book of God, the exalted, for days, strengthening our faith and forming fraternity in this

19. *Al-Munqaṭi'u ilā turbati l-mawlā wālidikum, Ibnu l-Khaṭībi, mina l-ḍarīhi l-muqaddasi bi-Shāllata [...]. wa-qaḍ 'azama allā yabraha fū'an min hādhā l-jiwāri l-karīmi wa-l-dakhīli l-mar'iyi ḥatā yaṣila min maqāmikum mā yunāsibu hādhā l-taṭāruḥa 'alā qabri hādhā l-mawlā l-'azīzi; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. Nufāḍat al-jirāb, vol. 2, p. 81.*

20. *Aṣghaytu bi-udhunayya 'inda qabrihī [...] fa-ka-annī bihī yaqūlu lī: "Qul li-mawlāka: 'yā-waladī wa-qurrata 'aynī [...], hādhā bnu l-Khaṭībi [...], qaḍ akhbarānī annahū salību l-māli, kathīru l-'iyāli, ḍa'ifu l-jismi [...], wa-ammala an yanqaṭi'a bi-jiwāri wa-yastatira bi-dakhīli wa-khidmatī [...]. fa-anā l-yawma urīdu an yakūna hādhā l-rajulu khadīmī..."*; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nufāḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, pp. 82-83.

21. "...an ... tu'ayyinūnī li-khidmatī hādhā l-mawlā wa-ziyāratihī wa-tafaqqudihī wa-madhī l-nabīyi [...] laylata l-mawliḍi fī jiwārihī"; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nufāḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, p. 84. The letter also contains a poem that summarises the same content.

22. Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nufāḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, pp. 86-88. Abū Sālim also assures that he will send messengers to reclaim the confiscated property of Ibn al-Khaṭīb in Granada.

sacred *ribāt*, and I live among you”²³. Here Ibn al-Khaṭīb reveals that he is living at the site, apparently instructing the “seekers” (*ṭalaba*, that is, pilgrims or students) there, with whom he would read the Qur’ān. The letter ends with Ibn al-Khaṭīb interrupting the Qur’ān-reading and saying a prayer for Abū l-Ḥasan, inviting the others to “say ‘amen’ wholeheartedly for my prayer”²⁴. That is, Ibn al-Khaṭīb intends to teach respect and loyalty to the dead sultan.

As for the length of Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s sojourn in Shālla, it should be noted that he apparently receives and sends letters from there until 27 Sha‘bān 761/13 July 1360, and even recounts the annual feast of the site on 27 Ramaḍān [761]/11 August [1360]²⁵. This means that he is still there at the time. He then travels to Fez in order to offer his services to the new Marīnid sultan Abū Zayyān (762/1361-766/1365)²⁶. In his *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb*, he quotes two sultanic decrees (sg. *ḡahīr*) which are issued for him on this occasion in the palace of Fez, and which prove that he continues working for the Marīnid state. His status as an employee along with his salary is confirmed on 6 and 10 Rabī‘ II 763/2 and 6 February 1362 by Abū Zayyān, who also requests Ibn al-Khaṭīb to report to Fez on what he witnesses. Although these documents mention ‘Salā’ as Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s place of residence, they clearly refer to the sacred funerary complex and popular pilgrimage site, that is, Shālla. In one of the decrees, Abū Zayyān says: “May [God] watch over [Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s] service of the elevated and majestic ancestor (Abū l-Ḥasan)!”²⁷. In between the two documents, Ibn al-Khaṭīb rejoices over “the renewal of the contract of the pilgrimage to the blessed abodes”²⁸, which should be understood as a reference to Shālla²⁹. Consequently, it seems that his earlier job and the one renewed by these decrees were one and the same.

After his visit to the Marīnid court, Ibn al-Khaṭīb travels to southern Morocco in Rabī‘ II 763/February 1362, and when he returns and reaches the Tāmasnā region (south of Rabat-Salé), he complains about his illness, and decides to settle

23. “*Thumma qultu li-l-ṭalabati: ‘ayyuhā l-sādatu, baynī wa-baynakum tilāwatu kitābi llāhi ta ‘ālā mundhu ayyāmin wa-munāsabatu l-naḥlati wa-ukhuwwatu l-ta’alluḥi bi-hādhā l-ribāṭi l-muqaddasi, wa-l-suknā bayna azhurikum*”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, p. 90.

24. “*...fa-amminū ‘alā du ‘ā ‘ī bi-ikhlašīn min qulūbikum*”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, p. 90.

25. Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, pp. 91, 122.

26. Jreis Navarro. *Entre las dos orillas*, p. 129.

27. “*Wa-ra ‘ā lahū khidmata l-salaḥi l-raḥī ‘i l-jalālī*”; Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb fī ‘ulālat al-ighṭirāb*. Ed. al-Sa‘īdiya Fāghiya, Casablanca: Maṭba‘at al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1989, vol. 3, p. 67; also *idem. al-Iḥāṭa*, vol. 4, p. 456.

28. “*...tajdīdi l-‘ahdi bi-ziyārati l-ma ‘āhidi l-mubārakati*”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 3, pp. 67-69.

29. As discussed above, Ibn al-Khaṭīb says in his first letter to Abū Sālim: “Appoint me to the pilgrimage (*ziyāra*)!”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, p. 84.

down again in the area of ‘Salā’³⁰. Therein he seeks “the help of God and the blessing of the lord (*mawlā*) whose mercy has been known, and whose grace has been plentiful on the people passing by or staying”, and also mentions “the saint, in whose premises God lavishes blessings”³¹. These comments seem to be direct references to Shālla, Abū l-Ḥasan’s sanctity, and the author’s previous experience there, particularly because *mawlā* (‘lord’) is a typical way of addressing a sultan. In other words, Ibn al-Khaṭīb returns to Shālla and stays there for the second time. Finally, after the Naṣrid sultan Muḥammad V recovers his throne in the Alhambra, Ibn al-Khaṭīb also leaves for Granada on 14 Rajab 763/9 May 1362³².

In short, Shālla had such a significant impact upon Ibn al-Khaṭīb that he decided to settle down there in Rajab 761/ May 1360. As an employee appointed by the sultan to Shālla, he was a caretaker and the pilgrims’ guide for a period of nearly two years. And given that he eye-witnessed most of the events taking place at the Marīnid shrine in this period, his writings are inevitably among the most important sources for the site. Unfortunately, he did not produce any systematic account of his experience in Morocco but only some miscellaneous autobiographical notes in his *Nuḫdat al-jirāb*, parts of which are now lost. However, he makes it clear that the lure of the sacred funerary complex at Shālla has persuaded him to stay and serve there, and his accounts illuminate at least two aspects of the *work* of Shālla that are nearly unknown from other sources.

PARADISE IN SHĀLLA

“Gardens of Eden, which [the faithful] will enter, beneath which rivers flow” [Qur’ān, 16.31]. This Qur’ānic verse is one of the typical descriptions of paradise, the abode that awaits the faithful, and the Qur’ān gives some further idea as to how one should imagine the hereafter. Paradise is formed by an all-encompassing garden or gardens, with a flowing spring [Qur’ān, 88.12; 55.50], and four rivers of water, milk, wine, and honey [Qur’ān, 47.15]. There are abundant fruit trees [Qur’ān, 47.15; 55.52; 55.54], palaces [Qur’ān, 25.10], and various pleasures which the faithful are forbidden to enjoy in their earthly lives. In order to arrive there, one must walk through the narrow passage (*ṣirāṭ*) that forms a bridge over hell and leads to the basin (*ḥawḍ*) supplied by one of the rivers of paradise³³.

30. Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫdat al-jirāb*, vol. 3, p. 87; Jreis Navarro. *Entre las dos orillas*, pp. 129-133.

31. “... *musta’īnan bi-llāhi wa-bi-barakati l-mawlā lladhī ‘urifat raḥmatuhū wa-ghamarat fī l-za’ni wa-l-iqāmati ni‘matuhū*”; “*al-walīyu lladhī manna llāhu bi-jiwārihi*”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫdat al-jirāb*, vol. 3, p. 87.

32. Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḫdat al-jirāb*, vol. 3, p. 145.

33. See Christian Lange. *Paradise and hell in Islamic traditions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 39-45, 182, and *passim*.

Undoubtedly, some Muslim patrons had in mind these Qur'ānic images when they commissioned artworks, including gardens, in the pre-modern Islamic world³⁴. Nonetheless, even if it is typical of Arabic literature to compare gardens with paradise, the mere assumption that all Islamic gardens have necessarily something to do with the hereafter is hardly a scholarly approach³⁵. Detached from the topic of simple gardens is that of funerary monuments whose garden settings might have meant to refer to the paradise in which the deceased wished to enter. One cannot, however, simply infer a paradisiac association in case of a funerary garden either, unless this association is supported by evidence. This problem is exemplified by the impressive mausoleum attributed to the Seljuq sultan Sanjar (511/1118-552/1157) at Merv (Turkmenistan). It has been proposed that this structure might have been set in a typical *chahār bāgh* (“four gardens” in Persian). The quadripartite layout of such gardens usually includes four waterways that could recall the four rivers of paradise³⁶. Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence for a coeval garden of any form around this mausoleum, as well as the textual sources are silent on this matter³⁷. Probably the earliest evidence for an Islamic mausoleum set in a garden with explicit paradisiac significance, as demonstrated by Dede Fairchild Ruggles, comes from the Great Mughals of India (932/1526-1274/1857), from monuments such as the Tomb of Akbar (completed by 1022/1613) or the Taj Mahal (completed by 1052/1643) in Agra³⁸. Nevertheless, earlier examples from the medieval Islamic world could have conveyed the same meaning, one just has to find evidence for that. This is exactly what one can learn about Shālla from Ibn al-Khaṭīb, as well as from some related features of the site.

Little attempt has been made to attest the paradisiac association of Shālla so far. Fairchild Ruggles has suggested that “the cemetery [of Shālla] may possibly

34. See *Images of paradise in Islamic art*. Ed. Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom. Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, 1992; Dede Fairchild Ruggles. *Islamic gardens and landscapes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, pp. 103-116.

35. For a thorough discussion of this question, see Terry Allen. *Imagining paradise in Islamic art*. Sebastopol: Solipsist Press, 2015 [http://www.sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/ip.html, accessed: 16 February 2017].

36. Ruggles. *Islamic gardens*, p. 108.

37. A slightly later visitor to Merv, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229), mentions neither a garden nor paradise, and describes the mausoleum as being set in a building complex; Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī. *Muʿjam al-buldān*. Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1977, vol. 5, p. 114; cf. Christian Lange. *Paradise and hell*, p. 259. For this building, see Robert Hillenbrand. “The Seljuq monuments of Turkmenistan”. In *The Seljuqs. Politics, society and culture*. Ed. Christian Lange and Songul Mecit. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, pp. 285-303.

38. Ruggles. *Islamic gardens*, pp. 111-113. See also Wayne E. Begley. “The myth of the Taj Mahal and a new theory of its symbolic meaning”. *The Art Bulletin*, 61, 1 (1979), pp. 7-37; Lange. *Paradise and hell*, pp. 259-261.

have been planted with flowers and shrubs selected for beauty or scent”³⁹. Plausible as it might be, this point remains conjectural. However, although the garden visible in Shālla today was planted under the French protectorate of Morocco⁴⁰, the sources mention a garden or orchard at the site already in the fourteenth century. Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Numayrī (d. c. 782/1380), for instance, reports: “Attached to the new dome is the madrasa, situated in the direction of the blissful garden”⁴¹. This is a somewhat confusing statement, since by “new dome” he most likely means the mausoleum of Abū l-Ḥasan (Figure 2/G), which is not attached to the madrasa (O). Nonetheless, just a few lines below, al-Numayrī mentions that “the orchard (*bustān*) was created on the *qibla* side of [the madrasa]”⁴². It is clear that the garden (or orchard) was next to the madrasa, which —given the other buildings surrounding it— is only possible on its *qibla* side, a location coinciding with that of its modern reincarnation (Figure 2).

In addition, one should note that there is a passage parallel with the north-east wall of the funerary complex, leading to the garden today, and the barrier wall flanking this passage on its north-east side (left in Figure 6) seems to date from the Marīnid period. This means that not only was the garden roughly at the same location as today, but also that the passage leading there gives us a comparable experience today as in Marīnid times. Right at the end of this passage and near the east corner of the funerary complex the spring of Shālla breaks to the surface of the ground, from where it irrigates the garden (Figure 7). Apart from this outlet, the natural water source of Shālla was utilised for a complex underground water system already in Roman times. Tunnels connected the source located south-west of the complex with a repository basin, the *nymphaeum*, and the Roman bathhouse — structures that surround the Marīnid funerary complex. Then the probably early Islamic ablution basin (Figure 2/B), and later the basin of the Marīnid madrasa (O) and the two ablution buildings (V and Q) were incorporated into the subterranean water system. The spring near the east corner of the funerary complex seems to be a natural outlet, which would have irrigated the garden already in the Marīnid period.

39. Ruggles. *Islamic gardens*, pp. 105-106.

40. The modern garden was designed by Jules Borély, a French would-be archaeologist, who dug up the madrasa and some other structures; Antoine Pietrobelli. “Chella mystérieux ou l’archéologie d’un paysage”. *Horizons Maghrébins*, 45 (2001), pp. 116-129.

41. “*Wa-hiya muttaṣilatun bi-hādhihī l-qubbati l-jadīdati mujāwiratun minhā li-l-rawḍati l-sa’īdati madrasatun...*”; Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Numayrī. *Fayḍ al-‘ubāb wa-ifāḍat qidāḥ al-ādāb fī l-ḥaraka al-sa’īda ilā Qasanfīna wa-l-Zāb*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990, p. 199.

42. “*...Al-bustānu wa-uqīma bi-qiblatihā...*”; al-Numayrī. *Fayḍ al-‘ubāb*, p. 199. The only MS of this work is unfortunately fragmented, with major parts missing from this folio, but I have confirmed the editor’s reading by consulting the original MS; al-Khizāna al-Ḥasaniya, Rabat, MS 3267, p. 59.



Figure 6. Passage leading to the garden of Shālla, parallel with the north-east wall of the funerary complex. Photo by the author.

Turning now to what impression Shālla made upon its visitors, one ought to consider a poem by Ibn al-Khaṭīb, which he recited when he first visited the grave of Abū l-Ḥasan:

There is a garden with fragrance diffusing,
 birds singing and trees with branches weighed down [...]
 The rain pours on the place, and then
 the flowers come to life because of its blessings. [...]
 You (Abū l-Ḥasan) have placed it in the hands of God,
 and so divine decrees have become liable for its protection,
 You have replaced the transitory palace with an eternal
 dwelling place, beneath which its rivers flow⁴³.

43. *Rawḍun ta'arraja 'arfuhū wa-tarannamat/atyāruhū wa-tahaddalat ashjāruhū/[...]/wa-l-ghaythu yaqla'u thumma taḥyā ba'dahū/fti l-rawḍi 'an barakātihī azhāruhū/[...]/wa-tarakatāhū bi-yadi l-ilāhi wadī'atan fa-taḍammanat laka ḥafzahā aqdāruhā/'awwaḍta min dāri l-ghurūri bi-manzilin li-l-khuldi tajrī taḥtāhū anḥāruhū; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Raḡm al-ḥulal*, pp. 99-100.*



Figure 7. Outlet of the spring near the east corner of the funerary complex. Photo by the author.

There are a number of interesting concepts in these few lines, including that God takes care of the garden. The sultan Abū Sālim also says in one of his letters to Ibn al-Khaṭīb: “May God pour the rain of his mercy and of his tenderness [on the tomb]!”⁴⁴. The image of “trees with branches weighed down” is likely to allude to the descriptions of the fruit trees of paradise in the Qur’ān, and especially to the verse “the fruits of the two gardens [hanging] near” [Qur’ān, 55.54]. Even more relevant to the present subject is the expression “beneath which its rivers flow” in the poem, which is a recurrent Islamic way of describing paradise. It appears dozens of times in the Qur’ān, one of which has been quoted above: “Gardens of Eden, which [the faithful] will enter, beneath which rivers flow” [Qur’ān, 16.31]. Here Ibn al-Khaṭīb borrows the Qur’ānic expression, and yet the context of this line in the poem makes it clear that he talks not about paradise, but about Shālla and its garden.

44. “...*wa-saqāhū ghuyūtha raḥmatihī wa-ḥinānihī*”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḡādat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, p. 87.

One may argue that the association between paradise and an Islamic garden is no more than a poetic trope routinely applied in Arabic literature as an expression of beauty. However, not only does Ibn al-Khaṭīb describe his personal perception of Shālla, but his poem also fits some of the physical features of the site: the Marīnids established their funerary complex and garden above the pre-existing water tunnels. That is, ‘rivers’ literally flowed beneath the funerary complex and its garden, just as below the Qur’ānic paradise. In addition, the layout of the passage next to the madrasa (Figure 6), with the spring and the garden at its end (Figure 7), coincides with the Islamic notion of the passage (*ṣirāṭ*) leading to the basin (*hawḍ*), from which the faithful can first taste the water of paradise. These features might well have influenced the visitors’ experience at the Marīnid shrine, and thus enhanced its paradisiac association. Then the visitor, already impressed by the buildings and the garden, could also read the inscriptions on the buildings —although only a few of them survive today, those are relevant here. Amid some Qur’ānic verses on God’s mercy and the afterlife, one finds the above-quoted verse about the gardens of Eden, beneath which rivers flow [Qur’ān, 16.31]. This verse is carved on the *qibla* wall of the mausoleum of Abū l-Ḥasan, behind which one can see the garden today, right where it was located already in the fourteenth century (Figure 3).

Ibn al-Khaṭīb recited the above-quoted poem at the grave of Abū l-Ḥasan at Shālla, expressing his actual feelings about the venue of the pious deceased, the royal shrine with its garden that he construed as a representation of paradise. Since Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s interpretation apparently derived from features of the site, such as the underground ‘rivers’ and the inscriptions on the buildings, the poem seems to have expressed his cognitive perception rather than some generic tropes. And since we know that Ibn al-Khaṭīb worked at Shālla instructing other visitors, it is safe to assume that he was not alone in his paradisiac interpretation of the Marīnid shrine and its setting.

THE KA‘BA IN SHĀLLA

The Mosque of the Ḥarām in Mecca is the holiest place of Islam, in the centre of which the Ka‘ba is located. This sanctuary, also known as the Ancient House, forms a rectangle c. 11 m x 12 m. Its four corners are called Yemeni Corner (c. to the south-west), Syrian Corner (c. to the north-west), ‘Irāqī Corner (c. to the north-east), and Black Stone Corner (c. to the south-east). The door of the Ka‘ba opens on its east wall c. 2 m from the Black Stone Corner, and the piece of wall between the door and the corner is called the Multazam (‘to which people cleave’). The Ka‘ba is robed in the Kiswa, traditionally made of black brocade embroidered with gold threads, and replaced annually. There is a semi-circular

wall named Ḥaṭīm or Ḥijr, c. 90 cm tall, opposite the north wall of the building. The first sanctuary is believed to have been built by the prophet Abraham (Ibrāhīm), whose wife, Hagar (Hājar), and son, Ishmael (Ismā'īl), are said to be buried in between the Ḥaṭīm and the Ka'ba. In front of its east wall a small domed building, the Maqām Ibrāhīm, marks the spot where Abraham allegedly stood. Behind that, c. 20 m from the Ka'ba, is the sacred spring called Zamzam, which God miraculously generated for Hagar and Ishmael when they were about to die of thirst⁴⁵.

Mecca is the focus of the annual Islamic pilgrimage, the *hajj*. A number of specific rites, said to have derived from the tradition of the prophet Muḥammad, are connected with the Ka'ba and its surroundings. The seven-fold circumambulation (*tawāf*) of the Ka'ba includes kissing and touching the Black Stone corner and touching the Yemeni Corner, followed by cleaving to the Multazam and drinking from the Zamzam⁴⁶. The Meccan pilgrimage is at the same time a visit to paradise, since, according to the Islamic tradition, Mecca is located there. In particular, the place between the Maqām Ibrāhīm and the Black Stone corner of the Ka'ba is reportedly “a garden among the gardens of paradise”. The Yemeni Corner is said to be one of the gates of paradise, and the Zamzam allegedly stems from one of the subterranean rivers of paradise⁴⁷.

Local analogues of the Ka'ba were set up in many places of the medieval Islamic world. According to sources —some of which go back to the Umayyad period— the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (built in 72/691-692) was erected as an alternative pilgrimage site intended to replace the one in Mecca⁴⁸. The Abbasid caliph al-Mu'taṣim (218/833-227/842) built a *ka'ba* at Samarra where his soldiers could practice the rites of the *hajj*, and this building might well have been the one known today as ‘Qubbat al-Ṣulaybiya’⁴⁹. The short-lived *imām* of the Qarmaṭī Shī'ī sect, Abū l-Faḍl al-Majūsī (d. 319/931), is said to have been circumambula-

45. Arent J. Wensinck and Jacques Jomier. “Ka'ba”. In *EF*. vol. 4, pp. 317-322; O'Meara. *The Kaaba*.

46. O'Meara. *The Kaaba*.

47. Lange. *Paradise and hell*, pp. 267-274.

48. Amikam Elad. “Why did 'Abd al-Malik build the dome of the rock? A re-examination of the Muslim sources”. In *Bayt al-Maqdis: 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem* (Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX). Ed. Jeremy Johns. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 241-308; *idem*. *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic worship. Holy places, ceremonies, pilgrimage*. Leiden: Brill, 1995, pp. 157-159; Lange. *Paradise and hell*, pp. 247-249. Although this question remains to be debated, for the purpose of the present argument, it is undeniable that some of the earliest sources mention this function of the Dome of the Rock.

49. Alastair Northedge. *The historical topography of Samarra*. London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 2007, pp. 230-233.

ted by his followers⁵⁰, just as *ṣūfī* leaders were occasionally considered as living *ka'bas*⁵¹. Some rites of the *hajj* were also performed —or at least conceived— in royal palaces, including the Fāṭimid ones of al-Mahdīya (completed by 308/921) and Cairo (after 362/973), and possibly also in the Norman Cappella Palatina in Palermo (c. 1140)⁵². Similar tendencies can be seen in popular culture: for instance, two fourteenth-century jurists, Ibn Taymīya (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya (d. 751/1350), condemn the imitation of *hajj* rituals when visiting tombs⁵³. In Edirne (Turkey), the so-called Eski Camii, built in the early fifteenth-century, incorporates a black stone in its *qibla* wall, which had allegedly come from the Ka'ba⁵⁴.

With regard to the eastern Islamic world, the tomb of Yūsuf al-Hamadānī (d. 535/1141) in Merv (Turkmenistan) was considered as “the Ka'ba of Khurāsān”⁵⁵. The Quwwat al-Islām Mosque at Delhi is described as “the second al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr” (the celestial Ka'ba) in two of its inscriptions from the early fourteenth century⁵⁶. The tomb of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ṭughluq (720/1320-725/1325) in the same city was decorated with pieces of the Kiswa⁵⁷. The Tīmūrid ruler Ḥusayn Bāyqarā

50. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhahabī. *Tārīkh al-Islām*. Ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1992, vol. 25, p. 15.

51. See Jocelyn Hendrickson. “Prohibiting the pilgrimage. Politics and fiction in mālikī *fatwās*”. *Islamic Law and Society*, 23 (2016), pp. 162-164; Tamás Iványi. “On circumambulation in Chellah and elsewhere. Popular traditions, legal prohibitions”. *The Arabist. Budapest Studies in Arabic*, 37 (2016), pp. 72-77; O'Meara. *The Kaaba*, passim.

52. Abū Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā ibn al-Tuwayr. *Nuḥḥat al-muqḥlatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn*. Ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992, pp. 208-209; Jonathan M. Bloom. *Arts of the City Victorious. Islamic art and architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt*. Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 2007, pp. 31-32; Jeremy Johns. “The Norman kings of Sicily and the Fatimid Caliphate”. *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 15 (1993), pp. 152-153; *idem*. “Arabic inscriptions in the Cappella Palatina. Performativity, audience, legibility and illegibility.” In *Viewing inscriptions in the late antique and medieval world*. Ed. Antony Eastmond. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 130-132.

53. Taqīy al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymīya. *Majmū'at al-fatāwā*. Ed. 'Āmir al-Jazzār, and Anwar al-Bāz, al-Manṣūra: Dār al-Wafā', 2005, vol. 27, pp. 48, 55, 63-65, and passim; Abū 'Abdallāh ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya. *Ighāthat al-lahfān fī masāyid al-Shayṭān*. Ed. Muḥammad 'Abdallāh Shams, Mecca: Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, 1432AH, vol. 1, p. 220. See also Iványi. “On circumambulation in Chellah”, pp. 88-89.

54. *Hikāye-i tabib Beşir Çelebi ve Tarih-i Edirne isimli yazma eser*. In *Doğumunun 65. yılında Prof. Dr. Tuncer Baykara'ya armağan tarih yazıyları*. Ed. M. Akif Erdoğan. Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2006. 185-189; Gülru Necipoğlu. *The age of Sinan. Architectural culture in the Ottoman Empire*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005, p. 241.

55. *The tadhkiratu 'sh-shu'arā (Memoirs of the poets)*. Ed./tr. Edward G. Browne. Leiden: Brill, 1901, p. 95.

56. James P. Page. *An historical memoir on the Qutb. Delhi*. Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1926, pp. 36, 38.

57. *The futuhat-i-Firuz Shahi*. Ed. Azra Alavi. Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 2009, p. 30; Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy. “The tomb of Ghiyāth al-Dīn at Tughluqabad: Pisé architecture of Afghanistan translated into stone in Delhi”. In *Cairo to Kabul. Afghan and Islamic*

(873/1469-911/1506) promoted the newly recovered grave attributed to the *imām*-caliph 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) at Mazar-i Sharif (Afghanistan) as a pilgrimage site alternative to Mecca⁵⁸. The mausoleum of Aḥmad al-Yasawī (d. 562/1166) in Turkestan (Kazakhstan) was described in 915/1509 as “the Ka‘ba of Turkestan”, and some rites of the *hajj* including the circumambulation were performed there⁵⁹. The so-called Masjid-i Shāh in Mashhad (Iran) was, according to its mid-fifteenth-century inscriptions, an analogue of the Ka‘ba⁶⁰, and later the Ṣafavid shāh 'Abbās I (995/1587-1038/1629) intended to replace Mecca and the Ka‘ba with Mashhad and the shrine of *imām* 'Alī l-Riḍā (d. 203/818) as the pilgrims' *hajj* destination⁶¹. These examples, among numerous others, testify that many places envied the popularity and sanctity of Mecca in the pre-modern Islamic world. As demonstrated below, Shālla was one of such places.

Before turning to this aspect of Shālla, it should first be discussed briefly how the Marīnid burial site developed into a funerary complex and a centre of pilgrimage. It began after Abū l-Ḥasan established the first known mausoleum over the grave of his father, Abū Sa'īd (710/1310-731/1331). In Ibn al-Khaṭīb's words, Abū l-Ḥasan

stopped at the protected place on the sacred river,
and conceived a mausoleum fitting its environment,
a place of reverence with enormous sanctity,
and he envisioned to make its visitors satisfied⁶².

This very short summary of Abū l-Ḥasan's initial patronage agrees with what we know from the more detailed account of the sultan's private secretary, Ibn Marzūq al-Tilimsānī (d. 781/1379), about the earliest Marīnid building known to have been erected in Shālla:

studies presented to Ralph H. Pinder-Wilson. Ed. Warwick Ball and Leonard Harrow. London: Melisende, 2002, p. 212.

58. Maria E. Subtelny. *Timurids in transition. Turko-Persian politics and acculturation in medieval Iran*. Leiden: Brill, 2007, pp. 212-214.

59. *Idem*, p. 194.

60. Lisa Golombek and Donald Newton Wilber. *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 336.

61. Charles Melville. “Shah Abbas and the pilgrimage to Mashhad”. In *Safavid Persia. The history and politics of an Islamic society*. Ed. Charles Melville. London: I. B. Tauris, 1996, pp. 215-217.

62. 'Araja 'alā l-wādī l-muqaddasi wa-l-ḥimā/wa-aqṣada ḍarīḥan lā yukhību jiwārahū/wa-maqāma birrin 'azumat ḥurmātuhū/wa-khtāla fī khal' i l-riḍā zuwwārahū; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Raḡm al-ḥulal*, p. 98.

[Abū l-Ḥasan] transferred [Abū Sa‘īd’s corpse] to the burial place of his ancestors — may God be contented with them— in Shālla in front of the fortified [city of] Salā, which is a place well-known for its blessing and intended for that⁶³.

[Abū l-Ḥasan] established [his father’s] honoured mausoleum, allocated many salaries, and organised Qur’ān-readings over his grave, day and night, without stopping. Whosoever seeks refuge at his tomb, and whosoever fears or is in need of something, their fear extinguishes, and their need and request become fulfilled there⁶⁴.

Out of respect towards [his father], [Abū l-Ḥasan] established visitation at [Abū Sa‘īd’s] honoured tomb, and I (Ibn Marzūq) have visited it several times with him, and repeatedly took journeys to visit the place in his company⁶⁵.

Prior to the death of Abū Sa‘īd, no primary source mentions any building activity at Shālla in the Marīnid period, but then Ibn Marzūq leaves no doubt that Abū l-Ḥasan founded a mausoleum for his father, whose corpse he had transferred to Shālla. Not only did the sultan encourage people to visit the dynastic shrine, and, for that reason, trumpeted its sacredness and blessings, but he himself also visited it repeatedly. The activities initiated by Abū l-Ḥasan were retained under Abū ‘Inān, who organised ceremonial funerals in the complex. He first buried his mother, Shams al-Ḍuḥā, in 750/1349 in Abū l-Ḥasan’s mausoleum, and her epitaph mentions that “people came to be present at her funeral from among the nobles of the east as well as the west”⁶⁶. Similarly, Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Numayrī reports on the funeral of al-Ḥurra al-Mu‘azzama, the daughter of Abū l-Ḥasan, that masses of people were coming from Fez to Shālla for paying respect to the deceased in 755/1354⁶⁷.

Abū l-Ḥasan and Abū ‘Inān certainly boosted the popularity of Shālla by their official visitations and the ceremonial funerals, and thus established the main function of the site. Then, after Abū ‘Inān’s death in 759/1358, although the direct

63. *Naqalahū ilā mawḍi‘i madfani aslāfihi — raḍiya llāhu ‘anhum— bi-Shāllata min zāhiri Salā l-muḥawwaḡati, wa-huwa mawḍi‘un ma‘rūfun bi-l-barakati [wa-]jmaqsūdun li-dhālika*”; Muḥammad ibn Marzūq al-Tilimsānī. *Al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-ḥasan fī ma‘āthir wa-maḥāsin mawlānā Abī l-Ḥasan*. Ed. María J. Viguera. Algiers: al-Sharika al-Waṭanīya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 1981, p. 124. It is noteworthy that Ibn Marzūq describes Shālla as being located at Salā, which conforms with what I have noted about Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s use of ‘Salā’.

64. *...qiyāmuhū bi-ḍarīḥihī l-mukrami wa-ijrā‘uhū ‘alayhī l-jarāyāti l-kathīrata wa-tartībuhū l-qurrā‘a li-l-qirā‘ati ‘alā qabrihī laylan wa-nahāran lā yafturūna. wa-man laja‘a li-qabrihī min khā‘ifin aw ṭālibi ḥājatīn umīna khawfuhū wa-quḍiyat ḥājatuhū wa-ṭalabatuhū*; Ibn Marzūq. *Al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ*, p. 247.

65. *Wa-min birrihī bi-hī ta‘āhuduhū qabrahū l-mukrama bi-l-ziyārati, fa-zurnāhū ma‘hū marrātin, wa-a‘malnā l-rihlata ṣaḥbatahū li-ziyāratihī karrātin*; Ibn Marzūq. *Al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ*, p. 247.

66. “*Wa-man wafada li-ḥuḍūri dafnīhā min a‘yāni l-Mashriqi wa-l-Maghribī*”; see *Maroc médiéval*, no. 310.

67. Al-Numayrī. *Fayḍ al-‘ubāb*, p. 197. The year is not mentioned in the text, but some of the described events can be dated to 755/1354.

royal patronage of architecture and the official visitations ceased, one can infer from the writings of Ibn al-Khaṭīb that the activities continued, and that the popularity of Shālla was maintained for a while. Most detailed is Ibn al-Khaṭīb's report on the feast of *Laylat al-Qadr* or the Night of Destiny, which is the 27th night of Ramaḍān in the Islamic calendar. The significance of the date is that the revelation of the Qur'ān allegedly began that night when the prophet Muḥammad received the first *sūra* or chapter of the Book from God. Shālla had its own annual feast that day, on which Ibn al-Khaṭīb reports as follows:

Darkness spread on the 27th night [of Ramaḍān], one of the feast days of Shālla, when people arrive, pitch tents, and crowd the markets, and the uncanonical taxes are waived. The banquet took place at the mausoleum [complex] for the notables and the group leaders. Then the people gathered for the habitual almsgiving, lambs' necks were cut, and containers (?) of oil were piled up. Communities of confectioners were invited, and there were many fires [for cooking]. The singers were led to the hall, which was prepared for the music event next to that⁶⁸.

This account on a pilgrimage banquet at Shālla suggests, once again, a significant number of visitors at the site. There were several other annual feasts in Shālla, and we know from the *ṣūfi* scholar Ibn 'Abbād al-Rundī (d. 792/1390) that the markets of Shālla, held twice a year, were reputedly popular around this time⁶⁹.

Following the description of the banquet, Ibn al-Khaṭīb continues with a poem recited in Shālla, that hints at how the visitors conceived the place: "It satisfies me to adopt myself to [Shālla]; so that its Zamzam is my tears, and my body is its Ḥaṭīm"⁷⁰. Given that both the Zamzam and the Ḥaṭīm are parts of the Ka'ba and its surroundings, this is an unmistakable reference to the holiest place of Islam⁷¹.

68. *Wa-aḥallat laylatu sab'a wa-'ishrīna ihdā mawāsīmī Shāllata l-mukhtaṣṣati bi-stijlābi l-umami wa-takhyīmi l-khiyami wa-ḥtifāli l-aswāqi wa-raf'i l-maghārīmi wa-l-walīmati li-ahli l-khayri wa-ūlā l-hay'āti bi-l-ḍarīhi fa-ḥtafala mu'tādu l-iḥ'āmi wa-furriqat ghalāsimu l-bahmi wa-uhīlat qanāqishu l-samni wa-studi'at aṣnāfu l-ḥalwā'i wa-stukthira mina l-wuqūdi wa-stud'īya ilā l-ḥwāni liṣqahā l-mu'addi li-dhālika l-mughannūna..."; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḥḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, pp. 122–123.*

69. Abū 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abbād al-Rundī. *Al-Rasā'il al-kubrā al-musammā nuzhat al-nāzir al-muta'ammil wa-qayd al-sā'ir al-musta'jil*. Ed. Muḥammad ibn 'Azzāz. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2011, p. 248. In one of his letters, the author mentions a decrease in the popularity of the markets at Shālla. He lived in Salé twice: first from c. 1359 for a few years, and then after 1370, and he wrote his letters during his second sojourn; Paul Nwiya. "Ibn 'Abbād". In *EF*. vol. 3, pp. 670-671. This means that he must have witnessed the heyday of the markets of Shālla around 1360, and their decay in the early 1370s.

70. "Wa-yuqni'unī annī bihī mutakayyifun, fa-Zamzamuhū dam'ī wa-jismī Ḥaṭīmuhū"; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḥḍat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, p. 123.

71. The assumed connection between the spring of Shālla and the Zamzam reappears in the biography of Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Maṣṣūr al-Yazīdī (d. 1004/1595), whose tomb at Shālla is still

In addition, this suggests that the visitors could achieve a symbolic unification with Shālla, which is notably the same as what pilgrims would do at the Ḥaṭīm of the Ka‘ba⁷². Ibn al-Khaṭīb says elsewhere about Shālla that “the domes of sovereignty have been robed in the curtains of the noble Ka‘ba, and the dresses of the Ancient House have cloaked the garments of the *imāms*”⁷³. That is, pieces of the Kiswa are said to have been hung at the royal mausolea of Shālla. The same author mentions in one of his letters to Abū Sālim that “your lord (Abū l-Ḥasan), oh my lord (Abū Sālim), is the *qibla* of my face”⁷⁴. This note fits the layout of the funerary complex as the mausoleum of Abū l-Ḥasan (Figure 2/G) is situated on the *qibla* side of the mosque (A), so that the people would pray towards the tomb. And this sentence again associates the funerary complex with the Ka‘ba, that is, the real *qibla*.

The link between Mecca and Shālla is corroborated by the rites performed at the latter site. Ibn al-Khaṭīb says in a poem that “[Shālla’s] pilgrimage rites (*manāsik*) are always followed, its corner is touched/and its appearance makes people shed tears”⁷⁵. The Arabic term *manāsik* means specifically the pilgrimage rites of the *hajj*, nevertheless Ibn al-Khaṭīb applies this term to Shālla, thereby suggesting that the pilgrims of Shālla imitated those in Mecca, especially because he adds that they touched a corner. Absorbing blessing by touching a sacred spot is not uncommon in Islamic culture; it was practiced, for instance, at the tomb of Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130) in Tīnmāl in the Atlas Mountains⁷⁶. But touching the *corner* of a building is a specific rite that pilgrims do during the *ṭawāf*, the circumambulation around the Ka‘ba, particularly at its Black Stone and the Yemeni Corners. It is therefore inferable that some of the rites performed at Shālla derived from those of the Meccan pilgrimage.

known today by the name of “al-Ḥasan imām”; see Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥājj al-Ifrānī. *Ṣafwat man intashara min akhbār ṣulahā’ al-qarn al-ḥādī al-‘ashara*. Ed. ‘Abd al-Majīd Khayālī. Casablanca: Markaz al-Turāth al-Thaqāfī al-Maghribī, 2004, pp. 67 (note n° 5), p. 104.

72. O’Meara. *The Kaaba*. As O’Meara demonstrates, the Ḥaṭīm is a part of the Ka‘ba through which the pilgrims could unify with the building.

73. “*Wa-l-mulku qad kusiya bi-astāri l-Ka‘bati l-sharīfati qibābuhū; wa-l-baytu l-‘atīqu qad alḥafati l-malāḥifa l-imāmīyata athwābuhū*”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḥdat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, pp. 91-92.

74. “*Fa-mawlāka yā-mawlāya qiblatu wajhī*”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nuḥdat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, p. 101.

75. “*Tuqḍā manāsikuhū wa-yumsaku ruknuhū/abadan wa-tuqdhifu li-l-dumū’i jihāruhū*”; Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Raḥm al-ḥulal*, p. 98.

76. This rite is attested by a letter written in the name of the Almohad caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min (524/1130-558/1163) in 552/1157; *Majmū’ rasā’il Muwahḥidīya min inshā’ kutūb al-dawla al-mu‘minīya*. Ed. Évariste Lévi-Provençal. Rabat: al-Maṭba‘a al-Iqṭisādīya, 1941, n° 17, p. 86; see also Pascal Buresi. “Les cultes rendus à la tombe du Mahdī Ibn Tūmart à Tīnmāl”. In *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, janvier–mars 2008*. Paris: De Boccard, 2010, p. 416.

The historical circumstances provide ample explanation for the phenomenon presented above. Jocelyn Hendrickson has recently demonstrated that jurists of the Mālikī school of law, the one followed by the Marīnids, from time to time discouraged or even prohibited performing the *hajj* to Mecca. Such religious opinions were arguably fuelled by rulers who were keen to keep their people within their territory⁷⁷. Undertaking the *hajj* was precarious during the early Marīnid times for the inimical relations with the Zayyānids (633/1236-963/1556) of Tlemcen. Thus the initial phase of turning Shālla into a pilgrimage site after 731/1331 coincides with the period when people could have hardly reached Mecca from Morocco. This situation, however, changed significantly after the Marīnid conquest of Tlemcen in 737/1337. Sources describe this event as the key to reopen the *hajj* route, as well as to resume diplomatic relations between the Marīnids and the Mamlūks of Cairo (648/1250-923/1517). Indeed, the daughter of Abū l-Ḥasan went on pilgrimage in 738/1338, and returned home with lavish gifts from the Mamlūk sultan, including pieces of the Kiswa of the Ka'ba⁷⁸. Hence when Ibn al-Khaṭīb says about Shālla that “the domes of sovereignty have been robbed in the curtains of the noble Ka'ba”, it is likely that he is describing an actual practice at the site.

With the pilgrimage route to Mecca now re-opened, the Marīnid sultans apparently would have rather seen their subjects staying in their realm. Therefore, they established several buildings at the formerly modest burial site in order to make it become a pilgrimage centre, and also referred to and adopted rites from the holiest place of Islam. Similarly, the official royal celebrations of the *mawlid*, the birthday of the prophet Muḥammad, reached great splendour under Abū l-Ḥasan⁷⁹. The *mawlid* was not only a way of demonstrating the sultan's piety, but,

77. Hendrickson. “Prohibiting the pilgrimage”, pp. 161-238. One such jurist was the fourteenth-century Andalusī Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Maḥsūd, as mentioned by Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Wansharīsī. *Al-Mi'yār al-mu'rib wa-l-jāmi' al-mughrib 'an fatāwī ahl Ifrīqiya wa-l-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*. Ed. Muḥammad Ḥajjī, Aḥmad al-Sharqāwī Iqbāl and Muḥammad al-'Arā'ishī. Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiya, 1981-1983, vol. 1, p. 432.

78. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn. *Kitāb al-'ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada' wa-l-khabar fī ayyām al-'Arab wa-l-'ajam wa-l-Barbar wa-man 'āsharahu min dhawī al-sultān al-akbar*. Cairo and Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī and Dār al-Kitāb al-Libnānī, 1999, vol. 13, pp. 467-471; Shams al-Dīn al-Shujā'ī. *Tārīkh al-malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī wa-awlādih*. Ed. Barbara Schäfer. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977, pp. 29-30; Ṭaqīy al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī. *Al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*. Ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Atā. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiya, vol. 3, pp. 242-243. See also Marius Canard. “Les relations entre les Mérinides et les Mamelouks au XIVe siècle”. *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales* (Algiers), (1939-1941), pp. 41-81; Doris Behrens-Abouseif. *Practicing diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate. Gifts and material culture in the medieval Islamic world*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2016, pp. 52-57.

79. Ibn Marzūq. *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ*. pp. 152-154. See also Ibn al-Khaṭīb. *Nufūdat al-jirāb*, vol. 2, p. 84, with a mention of celebrating the *mawlid* at Shālla.

as James Brown convincingly argues, also one of the means by which the Marīnids “translated the sanctity of the holy sites of the Hijaz and the authority of the intellectual centres of the east to the Islamic west.” Indeed, as Brown continues, “the *mawlid*, with its attendant poetry and descriptions of the Prophet’s biography and character, was particularly resonant as a kind of compensation for the difficulty of visiting the actual sites of his life⁸⁰. In this context, anchoring the Marīnid funerary complex as an analogue of the Ka‘ba was both desirable in order to enhance the cult at the dynastic shrine, as well as logical for the political interest of discouraging people from the risky journey to Mecca. Some of Shālla’s visitors, as one can tell from the accounts of Ibn al-Khaṭīb, understood the references to the Ka‘ba and the *hajj*, and acted accordingly.

CONCLUSIONS

The written sources for Marīnid Shālla leave no doubt that it was a pre-eminent pilgrimage site, especially between 731/1331 and 763/1362. Ibn al-Khaṭīb is one of the authors who do not spare ink when they can praise the sanctity of the site, and he demonstrates that it was not completely deprived of royal patronage after Abu ‘Inān’s death in 759/1358. The facts that Ibn al-Khaṭīb lived mainly there between 761/1360 and 763/1362 and received a salary from the Marīnid court mean that the sultans were far from being averse to maintaining the dynastic shrine. Even ceremonies such as the feast of ‘the Night of Destiny’ suggest royal patronage. The question is why people regarded Shālla as a sacred place, on which Ibn al-Khaṭīb reveals two aspects of the royal funerary complex: it was perceived, by some of its visitors, as an analogue of the Ka‘ba as well as of paradise, at least during this short period. Nonetheless, we have seen that Mecca is believed to belong to, or to be part of, paradise, and, indeed, these two associations are interrelated at Shālla as well. The imitation of the sanctuary of the Ka‘ba and the rites of the *hajj* could also have served to emphasise the paradisiac imagery of the Marīnid funerary complex and its garden. In that manner, these two perceptions of Shālla would have merged together and contributed significantly to its main ‘work’, namely, suggesting to the visitors that it was a sacred place, and, thereby, that the pious Marīnid sultans deserved reverence both in life and in death.

80. James Brown. “‘Azafid Ceuta, *mawlid al-nabī* and the development of Marīnid strategies of legitimation”. In *The articulation of power in medieval Iberia and the Maghrib*. Ed. Amira K. Bennis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, The British Academy, 2014, p. 140.

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