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An Archaeological Inventory of Gravestones in Gaza Cemeteries

(AH 1230–1336/1814–1917 CE)

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Abstract

Gravestones have major significance in history and archaeology for being authentic historical documents that reveal many aspects of ancient societies pertaining to their population, races, religious culture, language, professions, trades, and many other aspects. Given that the heritage of Gaza has been subjected to destruction due to political conflict and negligence, the researcher embarked on several tours to take an inventory of gravestones in Gaza's cemeteries in reality, which are of great importance with respect to Gaza's eminent figures and their families during the end of the Ottoman era.

The total number of gravestones tallied in Gaza reached 139, dating back to the period between AH 1230/1814 CE and the British occupation of Palestine in AH 1336/1917 CE, which is the date of the most recent gravestones. On one of the highest hills of Bab al-Bahr (Gate of the Sea) and Al-Sheikh Shaban cemetery, 45 tombstones were found belonging to the following families: El-Husseini, Abu Khadra, Abu Shaban, Saq Allah, El-Bar'asi, Abu Assi, Murshid, El-Ja'farawi, El-Ghusain, Si-Salem, Al-Radwan, and others. In the Bin Marwan cemetery, 37 tombstones were discovered belonging to the following families: El-Nakhal, El-Shawwa, Wafa El-Alami, El-Bitar, El-Wahidi, El-Khaznadar, and others. In El-Tiflisi (Abu al-Kass) cemetery in the Shuja'iyya neighborhood, 18 tombstones were discovered belonging to the following families: Bseiso, Hathat, and sheikhs of El-Hasanat tribe, El-Sunna', El-Qadirat, and others. In Addiriyah and El-Tamrtashi cemetery, 9 tombstones were found belonging to the following families: El-Tamrtashi, Murad, El-Batsh, El-Jabali, and others; 3 tombstones belonging to Al-Ghusain family were found in the cemetery of Al-Ghusain school; and 2 tombstones belonging to Al-Husseini and El-Jaouni families were found in El-Mufti cemetery. In the cemetery of the Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius, 25 gravestones were found belonging to the following families: Zarifa, El-Tarzi, Farah, Qifa, El-Madbak, El-Sayegh, Musaad, Shuhaiber, El-Tawil, and El-Jildah.