It is altogether curious that so little scholarship has been devoted to the physical features of Mecca in early Islamic times. Except for the informative and detailed entries in the two editions of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, most writing on Mecca has been concerned either with its socioeconomic and religious-cultural setting at the time of the Revelation to Muhammad or, even more often, with the pilgrimage, its complex liturgical practices, its concomitant economic and other practical problems, and, especially in more recent times, the powerful moving emotional and spiritual experiences of the faithful on this holiest of journeys.

Yet, however fascinating and emotionally charged the practices and symbolic associations of the pilgrimage might be, they are only one part of the impact the holy city has on the pilgrim. The Ka'ba, the Masjid al-Haram, or Sacred Mosque, surrounding it, and the whole city of Mecca are today, as they were in the past, part of a common visual memory of the Muslim community, even if colored by the emotional make-up and sensitivities of each particular individual. Every Muslim has in common an awareness of its forms and spatial compositions.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, photographs and films have been available to serve as reminders of the holy city and of the events taking place in it. In earlier centuries people relied on printed, stenciled, drawn, and painted pictures rendered on paper, cloth, tile, stone, or any other available material for the images of Mecca that became the souvenirs or menemtos that were the permanent signs of a believer's association with the city of the qibla. These representations are, however, for the most part very conventional and stereotyped and, pending detailed investigation, contribute very little to an understanding of the holy city's physical character and evolution. They are pious images, not historical documents, and reflect a standard, toponymically accurate but visually simplified vision of a rectangle with the places of commemorative or liturgical importance clearly marked. The contrast between them and the complicated and frequently difficult to interpret sixth-century Byzantine phials from Jerusalem is striking. Furthermore, the Muslim images all belong to a time when the sanctuary had acquired more or less the shape it would keep until the momentous and irreversible transformations of recent decades, a shape fixed in its major features by the end of the ninth century. Even the principal monuments punctuating the holy place had been built by the fifteenth century, and such stylistic variations as occurred during reconstructions were rarely, if ever, recorded on images. They were not meant to be descriptions of places, but evocations of holiness, and they do not provide any sense of the range of emotion or reaction the faithful experienced as they reached the sanctuary, nor do they express the complex memories carried away by pilgrims afterward. There is nothing in these depictions that is comparable in range to Ibn Jubayr's rapturous but very precise description studded with Koranic quotations, Ibn Battuta's chatty but equally concrete account full of stories and minor human events, Ibn Khaldun's perfunctory statement with a long reference to the letters he received and the important people he met in Mecca, or Ibn al-Arabi's transformation of the holy place and of the pilgrimage into a stunning cosmological vision. But even these literary examples are relatively late (the earliest author, Ibn Jubayr, was born in 1145); they belong to essentially post-Fatimid centuries, when the Muslim world had fully developed a material culture of piety around Mecca and probably other religious sanctuaries as well.

What happened to the Meccan sanctuary between the Prophet's glorious and official return to it in 631 and the, properly speaking, medieval restructuring of the Muslim world from the eleventh century onward? Is it possible to imagine the attitudes of people during the formative centuries of Islam toward the shape, the physical form, of their holiest sanctuary? The investigation I am proposing, of which this essay is only a very preliminary step, has as its long-range objective an understanding of the interplay between specific building activities—the erection of a colonnade or of a
portico, the repaving of a court, the addition of some decoration—which can easily be documented through an inscription or a chronicle’s reference, and the practical, ideological, pietistic, and symbolic motivations and explanations attached to these activities. This type of investigation may allow us little by little to develop a profile of the synchronic and diachronic mental attitudes of Muslims and of the relationship between those attitudes and architecture. Because of its overwhelming importance to Muslims, the Haram in Mecca can serve as an exemplar for this sort of investigation, and whatever hypotheses or conclusions can be reached for Mecca should apply to other holy buildings and places as well.

There is no available archaeological record for the Haram, and none is likely to be forthcoming. We are therefore restricted to incidental references in chronicles, to the factual but, with a partial exception in the case of Maqdisi, remarkably sober descriptions in tenth-century geographies, and to the lengthy volume Kitāb Akhbar Makka (“Book of Information on Mecca”) by Abu al-Walid Muhammad b. ‘Abdallah b. ‘Ali al-Azraqi. The book was put together before 865 by a native of Mecca claiming descent from a Byzantine soldier who was taken prisoner during the Persian wars of the seventh century. It is primarily a text completed by a member of his family before 837, but, as preserved and edited, also includes references from as late as 922-23. It was probably revised by a pupil of al-Azraqi called al-Khuza‘i. Although there is some evidence that works on Mecca and on the Ka‘ba were written earlier, including one by Wahb ibn Munabbih in the early eighth century, none has survived. Azraqi’s mid-ninth-century work is therefore not only the earliest extant book on Mecca, but the earliest preserved example of a book devoted to a single city. An added peculiarity is that it does not deal at all with the city’s notables, as most Arabic literature on cities does, but with its buildings and their history. By its very nature, therefore, it establishes that Mecca’s physical character and evolution had primacy over the people who lived in it.

Several recent studies on early Muslim writers have begun to formulate methods for investigating written sources that will define the attitudes of their authors and explain the experiences and thoughts that lie behind a book’s content and structure. Such investigations can be of great value to the historian and interpreter of visual forms, but they also require complex and painstaking philological, linguistic, critical, and historical inquiries that are far removed from the art historian’s or archaeologist’s concerns and competence.

A brief description of al-Azraqi’s work will suggest the type of information that could be extracted from a literary and structural analysis of this kind. Structurally the book can be divided into four unequal parts: the first covers the Ka‘ba from the Creation to the Yemenis’ attempt to destroy the Ka‘ba late in the sixth century (pp. 1-84); the second, the “historical” Ka‘ba and the immediately surrounding holy spots (Maqam Ibrahim, Zemzem well) from the time of their reconstruction by the Qurayah before the Revelation to al-Azraqi’s time, with sections on the chronology, characteristics, and liturgical or daily uses of the holy places (pp. 84-301); the third, the Masjid al-Haram, i.e., the open space which surrounds the Ka‘ba and which is entirely a Muslim creation (pp. 301-445); and the fourth, the living quarters of the city and a few miscellaneous items (pp. 445-505).

Except for the last section, which is fairly straightforward and enumerative, each part consists of a large number of chapters, some as long as ten or fifteen pages, some as short as a paragraph or a few lines. Some are purely descriptive, either of a building or of a fragment of a building (e.g., the nails and the gutter of the Ka‘ba); some deal with an event (e.g., the Yemeni invasion) or with a sequence of events (e.g., the various pieces of cloth put on the Ka‘ba and the scents sprayed on it over several centuries), or with good or bad practices and obligations (e.g., on p. 316, the virtue of circumambulating the Ka‘ba in the rain). In other words, the book is neither an account in chronological sequence nor is it an orderly description of space. There is a constant interplay between specific moments, usually established quite precisely with names and dates when known, and equally specific places in the sanctuary. It is as though the understanding of something seen requires its connection with a historical or a mythical event, often drawn from the lives of Abraham or Hagar, which were connected with so many places in Mecca.

The same events are repeated several times, and while a coherent chronology can be derived from al-Azraqi’s account, establishing a sequence of events does not seem to be its main point. Only a careful structural analysis of many passages in al-Azraqi’s book and their collation with other historical or religious sources would reveal whether he was using events to explain anomalous as well as regular features and practices, or whether he was seeking to connect sacred and, later,
human and dynastic history with the physical features of the sanctuary.

Each of his chapters seems to answer a question: why are the nails of the Ka'ba gilt? What is, or was, inside the Ka'ba? Why is there a small dome over the Maqam Ibrahim? Can one catch one of the pigeons nestled in the courtyard? If this colonnade was built by order of the caliph al-Ma'mun, what was there earlier? Who is asking the questions, why he is doing so, and especially whether al-Azraqi was reflecting one, two, or more systematic interpretations of the holiest place in Islam are the questions we should ask, however. Once answers, even hypothetical ones, to them can be given, we will be closer than we now are to understanding early medieval Mecca through the eyes of those who lived there. Perhaps we can then better understand the architectural decisions made for its sanctuary.

Because its subject is so closely tied to a particular architectural ensemble, al-Azraqi's text is replete with architectural terms pertaining to a building's construction as well as its appearance. It is, therefore, a prime source for the architectural vocabulary of the ninth century, at least the one prevalent in the Arabian peninsula. It probably reflects the high Arabic of the central lands of the Fertile Crescent, but not necessarily the technical language being developed, also in Arabic, in eastern Iran. Three passages can be used to illustrate both the quality and the limitations of the information on vocabulary that al-Azraqi can provide.

The first passage is an account of the church allegedly built in San'a by Abraha, a more or less legendary Christian, probably Ethiopian, king who in the second half of the sixth century sought to conquer Mecca. The account is fictional, as are the main accounts of the castle of Ghumdan, also in San'a. Neither al-Azraqi nor his immediate sources had ever seen the church, or even its ruins—assuming it ever existed. Nevertheless, for reasons which are not entirely clear but which may well have involved the then prevalent mythology about Christian, probably Ethiopian, king who in the second half of the sixth century sought to conquer Mecca.

On a more technical level, this same passage provides a vocabulary for elements of construction—kibs (platform?), sūr, and ḥāqiq (two types of walls, probably to be differentiated as outer wall and partition), and daraj (steps)—and for materials and ways of building, including a very precise description of a closely fitted stone masonry (mujaqāq). It also makes several references to decoration—either in general, as with the word maqūš, or more specifically, as in the description of crosses decorated with mosaics and in a technique (?) known as balāq, which channels the light of the sun and of the moon inside the dome.

Although such descriptions of long-gone monuments must have been couched in terms that were understandable to a ninth-century reader, the same terms are used in literary accounts of ancient masterpieces, and only a comparative study of several such texts will permit the clear separation between literary clichés and contemporary facts. No such problem exists with those passages in al-Azraqi which deal with roughly contemporary constructions. There we can cull a wonderful example of a process of construction. When the caliph al-Mahdi decides to enlarge the mosque, he calls surveyors (muhandisūn) for advice; spears (rimāh) are used as markers; private properties are expropriated; a budget is fixed; materials such as columns are brought by boat from Syria; a flood during construction compels a modification of levels, for which surveyors are brought in again; some supports (aṣāfīn) are built with marble, and arcades are roofed with gilded and decorated wood; other supports are of stone. Al-Azraqi's description of the gates of the Haram is so precise as to have made it possible for Jonathan Bloom to propose a reconstruction for them, but such reconstructions are equally possible for colonnades, minarets, ceilings, cornices, inscriptions, ornaments, and even light fixtures. The whole sanctuary is broken down into its constituent elements, and these elements are then enumerated, measured, and described. But in order to make these reconstructions plausible in all details, the Meccan information must be related to monuments and descriptions from other places of con-
temporary building activities, and its vocabulary compared with whatever is known to have been in use elsewhere.

In addition to legendary accounts of the past and descriptions of contemporary practices and activities, al-Azraqi's account also contributes to our knowledge of architectural terminology and architectural and religious history when it deals with particularly complex features of the sanctuary in which old pre-Islamic practices had not entirely been transformed into a set Muslim liturgy. Such is the case of the Zemzem well and of the area around it, which so puzzled Gaufroy-Demombynes and in which the following curious sequence of constructions took place. Adjoining the well with its two basins was the majlis (usually meaning at this time a reception hall) of Ibn Abbas, whose family had some sort of control over the well. During the rule of the first Abbasid caliph, al-Saffah (749-54), the governor of Mecca put a dome (qubba) over the majlis. In the reign of al-Mansur (754-75), two shubbāk (literally openings or windows, but usually interpreted to mean wooden screens) were built around the well, and under al-Mahdi (775-81), a kanīsa (literally "church," interpreted as "petite loge" by Gaufroy-Demombynes) was built in the domed room. As a curiosity, al-Azraqi adds that it was built by a carpenter (whose name he gives) brought from Iraq by the Abbasid governor, and that this carpenter also made a roof and a door for the governor's house.

This passage has four terms with architectural connotations, of which only one—qubba—can be understood in its obvious and common meaning of dome. For two others, some alternative or secondary meaning must be found, and for the fourth, kanīsa, a meaning has to be invented. It is likely that in this account of structures that had been built a hundred years before al-Azraqi's time, our chronicler was quoting or repeating a terminology which no longer made sense, for, as we shall see, the whole setting of the sanctuary was changing rapidly in the second half of the eighth century. His expressions, the functions which would have been associated with them, and the forms they imply must therefore be replaced, if at all possible, in a very precise context of early Abbasid history.

The full elucidation of the issues raised by all the examples I have so far given would require considerable linguistic, philological, and historical investigation in many different sources. Alongside the broad structural problems raised earlier, whose solution would situate the perspective from which al-Azraqi wrote, such investigations would do more than identify a technical vocabulary of forms and functions; they would also provide what might be called the "analytical process" of a ninth-century observer, a unique process no doubt, but one whose perception and understanding can only be formulated within the verbal and conceptual competence of a time.

A final series of remarks derived from reading a section of al-Azraqi's text will clarify a further methodological point I am trying to make. There is a fascinating interplay in the Akhbar between events recalled by the chronicler and the visual perception of the sanctuary in his time, and it is this interplay which becomes the recorded history of the sanctuary. The section deals with the development of the mosque proper, that is, the area that eventually became the large open space around the initial and mostly pre-Islamic core of holy places. For it the following sequence can be reconstructed:

1. Under the righteous caliphs ʿUmar (634-44) and ʿUthman (644-56), a few houses adjoining the Kaʾba and the few holy spaces in its immediate vicinity were bought and razed, and a low wall or fence (jidār gasīr) was marked out (ahattā); there was no covered (musāqqaf) area anywhere.

2. When Ibn Zubayr ruled over Mecca (680-92), he acquired a few more houses and even parts of houses (including one belonging to an ancestor of al-Azraqi) and enlarged the sacred space, but without altering its simple character. Most of the account actually deals with the location of the old houses in the mosque of al-Azraqi's time; it also includes an obscure explanation of how to walk backwards from the corner with the Black Stone.

3. The Umayyads did not modify the size of the mosque, but they did transform its character. Both ʿAbd al-Malik (685-705) and al-Walid (705-15) are credited with beautification (kusma), and it is probable that we are dealing with a single activity which lasted many years. The outer walls were raised and a covered area was built, consisting probably of a portico with a wooden ceiling; the capitals or upper parts (ruʾūs) of the supports (asāfīn, piers or columns) were gilt. Al-Walid is remembered for having covered supports with marble, and soffits or spandrels (waqīj al-jayyân) with mosaics; he also built its crenellations and moldings, if this is the correct way of interpreting the word shurraṣfat. It is interesting to note that the verb used to mean "cover," as with marble, is azzara, which means to "veil" or to "cover with a piece of clothing." Elsewhere in the text,
the most common verb for "decorating a surface" is *albasa,* "to clothe."

4. Between 754 and 758, a major program of construction was ordered by the caliph al-Ma'mun. It was commemorated by a triumphal inscription on a newly built gate in black mosaic cubes on a gold background, and one of its two Koranic quotations (3:96) proclaims that "the first house appointed to Me was the one at Bakka" (i.e., the Ka'ba). It consisted of increases in area in whatever directions were available through the acquisition of houses; in extensive decoration; and in the building of formal gates and of a *manāra* (minaret), whatever was meant by that term at the time.

5. The caliph al-Mahdi (775-85) went on a pilgrimage in 776-77 and immediately undertook a major program of repairs and modifications of the usual sort. It is described in such detail by al-Azraqi that it should be possible to sketch out a full reconstruction, if not of the whole building, at least of the main units (gates, vaulted arcades, open spaces) which were its constituent parts. Four years later, in 780-81, al-Mahdi returned to Mecca and, having inspected the work done, saw that "the Ka'ba was on one side (fi shiqq) of the mosque; he did not like that and wished that it be in the middle (mutawassaja) of the mosque." He called in surveyors and architects, bought houses, fixed the wadi going through the mosque so that it would not flood as often as it was wont to do, had columns brought from Egypt and Syria, and altogether created a complete monument with the Ka'ba in the center, arcades around an open space, a minaret, and gates leading into various parts of the city. Al-Azraqi then proceeds to detailed descriptions of the architectural elements of the masjid, eventually providing a list of such changes or repairs as occurred between 781 and his own time, and discusses the rules, practices, and regulations affecting behavior in what is both the congregational mosque of a city and the sacred space around that unique holy place.

This sequence of five changes is of considerable interest for many reasons. One is that nearly every other feature of Mecca, as remembered by al-Azraqi, was affected by roughly the same set of interventions: those made by the Prophet and his immediate successors; by Ibn Zubayr, the Meccan aristocrat who sought to establish his city as the center of Islam; by the Umayyads, primarily al-Walid; and by al-Mansur, and al-Mahdi, the second and third Abbasid caliphs (one of whom was also the founder of Baghdad). But this raises a question: why were so many major modifications made to the mosque over a period of not more than five generations? One explanation may simply be that the growth of Islam and the presumed increase in the number of pilgrims required an ever-larger space. That this was so can hardly be questioned. But, in addition to that, each of these interventions in the mosque and elsewhere also seems to have had a different motive behind it. The first caliphs merely wanted to maintain the status quo established by the Prophet and to accommodate the still barely elaborated rites of the pilgrimage. Ibn Zubayr had more complex ambitions, and he alone rebuilt the Ka'ba as it allegedly had been before the Quraysh rule over the city. A full investigation of his ideological and other motives is sorely needed. The Umayyads were remarkably inactive in Mecca. They did, of course, rebuild the Ka'ba as it had been in the Prophet's time, but the remainder of their work either involved ornamentation and is known only through statements smacking of literary clichés, which occur in many accounts of their buildings, or else it was downright blasphemous, as when one of their governors downgraded the Zemzem well in order to dig a well with sweeter water. It was the early Abbasids who first, under al-Mansur, officially proclaimed the unique holiness of the Ka'ba and built a full-fledged mosque around it, and then, under al-Mahdi, reached the aesthetic decision to make of it a true monument.

At this stage of scholarship, we can only speculate as to why it was al-Mansur and al-Mahdi who so deliberately formalized the sacred mosque and gave it a visual and compositional definition. Yet it is not an accident that the patron of Baghdad, with its palace complex in the center of an urban ring, also transformed the sanctuary of Mecca into a large space around a holy place. But it is curious that both al-Mansur and al-Mahdi had traveled to Jerusalem, had seen there a vast and only partially rebuilt esplanade with a stunning Umayyad monument in its psychological, if not actual, center, and made major contributions to its monuments. The building up of Mecca's sacred mosque into the shape it finally acquired can perhaps best be seen as the result of a new taste for centralized planning developed by the early Abbasids and of the very precise memory of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. This suggestion introduces yet another element in the visual as well as ideological contest or parallelism between the two holy cities in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Beyond this admittedly speculative possibility, the Abbasid formulation of Mecca as a shrine, almost a dynastic one in part, explains the official use of the Ka'ba by Harun al-Rashid when he put his political
testament there and by al-Ma'mun when he filled it with treasures from conquered Eastern potentates. It also explains the succession of repairs and additions made to the mosque throughout the ninth century, and, on a more practically pious level, the development of the Darb Zubayda, the great road for pilgrims from Iraq to Mecca. While describing what he saw, al-Azraqi reflected the formal ideology of Abbasid power and the incorporation of Mecca within it.

Thus from practical issues of architectural practice and vocabulary to speculation about the relationship between holy places and the growth of an Abbasid aesthetic, al-Azraqi's text offers a mine of information which has hardly been tapped and whose full exploitation requires a variety of investigations barely sketched out in these remarks. The uniqueness of Mecca led to a Harvard University method.'*' Its 'method' can be understood once the several discrete moments of its history can be both visually and ideologically isolated.

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NOTES

1. In the second edition the key article is "Ka'ba" by J. Jomier and A. Wensinck, but the article "Mekka" in the first edition contains considerable additional information.

2. The fundamental study is still that of M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Le Pélerinage à la Mekke (Paris, 1923); classic accounts of pre-contemporary times are C. Snouck Hurgronje, Het Mekkaansech Fest (Leiden, 1880), Muhammad L. al-Batanüni, al-Riḥla al-Hijāziyya (Cairo, 1329H), and Rifat Pasha, Miṣrūt al-Haramayn (Cairo, 1925). A particularly striking contemporary Muslim account is Abdel Magid Turki and Hadj Rabah Souami, Récits de pèlerinage à la Mekke (Paris, 1979); Malcolm X's experience of brotherhood during the pilgrimage is one of the most moving passages of his autobiography. It would be most desirable to have a good historical anthology of pilgrimage accounts.

3. There has never been, to my knowledge, any attempt to gather together a corpus of representations of Mecca in Islamic art. The most common examples are on Ottoman tiles, K. Erdmann, "Ka'bah-Fliesen," Ars Orientalis 3 (1959): 192-97, with bibliography to that year. The earliest example known to me, dated 498 (1098), is a small basalt plaque in the Baghdad museum, which had the accession number 5ṣm 1149 when I saw it in 1956. To my knowledge it is not published, and my notes of over a quarter of a century ago indicate that the dating inscription may not be contemporary with the object.


8. See the lengthy commentary on the appropriate passages in the Futuhat by C. A. Gilis, La Doctrine initiatique du pèlerinage (Paris, 1982).


10. On these remarkable writers in general, see André Miquel, La Géographie humaine du monde musulman, 3 vols. (Paris, 1967-80). Specific passages are: Ibn Rusteh, Les Atores précieux (Cairo, 1955), pp. 21-62, with historical, topographical, and pietistic notations, the latter taken from adab literature; Maqdisi, Aḥsan al-Taqāṣīm i Maʿrifat al-Qulūm (Descriptio Imperii Moslemici), ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1906), pp. 71 ff.; Ibn Haugqal, Configuration de la terre, trans. J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet (Paris, 1964), 1:26 ff. I am leaving aside the issue of the relationship between geographers and litterateurs like al-Jahiz, Ibn Qutayba, Ibn Abd Rabbih, and others, who do occasionally mention the Arabian sanctuary, because they set it within a frame of reference which is less immediately involved with the specifics of the sanctuary's form, but much more with its meaning in the consciousness of a man of culture. For the long-range objective of understanding the ethos of a period, however, these authors will also need investigation.

11. Edited by F. Wüstenfeld as vol. 1 of the Geschichte der Stadt Mekka (Leipzig, 1858; photo repr., Beirut, n.d.).


14. Maṣūdī has been studied by Ahmad M. H. Shboul, Al-Maṣūdī and His World (London, 1979), and by T. Khalidi, Islamic Historiography (Binghamton, 1975). For Bayhaqi, see Marilyn R. Waldman, Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative (Columbus, 1980). For al-Jurfani, see Kemal Abu Deeb, Al-jurfani's Theory of Poetic Imagery (Warminster, 1979).


20. I am less sure than Serjeant is that ʿiwan should be translated as "arched space" and maintain my earlier position (s.v. "Iwan" in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2d ed.) that in classical times the word referred to a function rather than to a form. Serjeant’s emendations of al-Azraqi’s text are all eminently reasonable, even if at times hypothetical.
22. Ibid., pp. 317-19; for another example of process, see p. 344.
26. Ibid., pp. 306 ff.
27. Cornice is also possible.
28. E. Combe et al., Répertoire chronologique d’épigraphie arabe (henceforth RCEA) 1 (Cairo, 1931), no. 40; Azraqi, Akhbar, pp. 311-12.
30. Some of these building activities have been recorded in inscriptions listed by Ibn Jubayr, RCEA, nos. 49 ff.
31. Azraqi, Akhbar, p. 234, for a curiously skeptical statement by Caliph ʿUmar about the real holiness of the Black Stone. Had he not seen the Prophet’s veneration for it, says ʿUmar, he would not have believed in it. For a model analysis of the formation of Muslim practices, see Klaus Lech, Geschichte des islamischen Kultur: I. Das Ramadan Fasten (Wiesbaden, 1979).
33. Azraqi, Akhbar, pp. 339-40; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, pp. 74-75 and p. 98, n. 3, for an interesting commentary of another Umayyad attempt at innovation based on Azraqi, p. 461.
34. I expect soon to return to the topic in a far more systematic way, but I had discussed some of the religious associations common to both places in "The Umayyad Dome of Rock," Ars Orientalis 3 (1957); there are many more.
Beneath the Qubbat al-Sakhra, in the southern wall of the cavern in the rock, is embedded what Creswell believed to be the "earliest extant mihrab in Islam" (plate 1), contemporary with the Dome of the Rock and ascribed to its founder, 'Abd al-Malik. Creswell presents two arguments for presuming a late-seventh-century date: one is the "curious line ornament" carved on the face of the arch and the rectangular frame which "recalls the decoration on a milestone of 'Abd al-Malik" now in the Louvre; the other is the shahada inscribed across the base of the arch in "archaic Kufic characters" combined with the "equally archaic inscription" outside the molding that frames the mihrab. When Creswell wrote these remarks, major parts of the inscription were barely visible under a coat of plaster. When they were uncovered in the course of the restoration work that was completed in 1964, they were in such a poor state of preservation that deciphering them has so far proved impossible.

Creswell's view that the mihrab is probably of early Umayyad origin was accepted by Klaus Brisch who, in his comments published in 1973 in the Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, compared the cresting at the top of the mihrab with the type of crenellation common in later Umayyad architecture. He cited a well-known dirhem of 'Abd al-Malik, which depicts the earliest extant visual representation of a mihrab and was believed by Brisch to be a "würdige Parallele," once the Umayyad date of the mihrab was fully established.

The view that the flat carving of the mihrab niche perfectly agrees with its early date and, as suggested by Creswell, precedes the more common concave shape first introduced by al-Walid I in the mosques of Medina and Damascus, is also shared by Géza Fehérvári, who sees the mihrab in the cave of the Dome of the Rock as the earliest extant example of an Islamic prayer niche. Here I will challenge this view by showing the mihrab in a different artistic and historic light and suggesting it is probably of later date.

The mihrab is carved from white marble and measures 1.30 m by 0.83 m, including its outer inscribed border, which in Creswell's time was hardly visible. Its pointed arch rests upon two approximately semicircular lobes, giving it a somewhat unusual trefoil-arch form. Beneath these lobes the archivolt descends vertically, extends as an architrave, and continues to form a rectangular frame. This continuity of archivolt, architrave, and frame is emphasized by a continuous scroll. The ornament is not very carefully drawn, but it clearly consists of fleshy half-palmettes connected by a winding stem that is formed by elongating one of the palmette petals. With the exception of two bosses—one in each of the lower lobes—the interior of the arch is plain, but the spandrels are filled with bosses, arrowheads, and teardrops. The upper structure is surmounted by a projecting band of pearls and crenellations and rests on a pair of attached colonnettes with nearly bell-shaped capitals. A lintel-like tie beam with the shahada engraved on its face separates the arch from the intercolumnar space. The latter is again undecorated except for a black disk with a large rosette inserted in its upper center. The attached colonnettes are flanked by a row of alternating rosettes and lozenges.

The prayer niche as a whole has no known parallels either in extant mihrabs or in architectural decoration, but it does display ornamentation for which sufficient examples can be found elsewhere to suggest an approximate date and provenance. The first unusual feature of the mihrab to strike the eye is the form of its arch. Its pointed and stilted upper section is much too large for the pair of lobes on which it rests. The effect is a disproportion further emphasized by the vertical extension of the archivolt. One will look in vain for any
parallel to this odd arch in the architectural decoration contemporary with the Dome of the Rock or even before it. The earliest extant examples so far found date from the second half of the ninth century and come from Mesopotamia or, in one case, from Egypt.

The first of these early examples is a small stone slab with the design of a mihrab which Herzfeld found in an antechamber of the Jamī' al-ʿUmariyya in Mosul (plate 2). In contrast with the mihrab in the Dome of the Rock, the upper pointed and the two approximately semicircular lobes of its arch form a well-balanced trefoil. Other unfortunately less well preserved and therefore more ambiguous examples occur in the curtain wall of the Qasr al-ʿAshiq at Samarra and the Baghdad Gate at Raqqa. An Egyptian tombstone with the design of an arched head in the form of a central keel-like arch and two hemispherical loops, which was erected for a certain Bashir ibn ʿIsa al-Khawlanī in 245 (860) (plate 3), seems to suggest that in mid-ninth-century Egypt this form of arch was not yet common. The closest parallel we have can be seen on two panels on the inner flanks of the towers of the Bab Zuwayla in Cairo (plate 4), which date from 485 (1092), each composed of a pointed arch that springs on either side from a small semicircular arch standing on a quarter-circle corbel. These blind niches are almost certainly later than the Jerusalem mihrab, but their resemblance to it may not be accidental.

The flat surfaces of archivolt and framing border bear a carved scroll design which Creswell defined as a
"curious line ornament" and compared with the decoration on a milestone from the time of 'Abd al-Malik (plate 5). On the mihrab, however, the ornament is conceived as an undulating stem which is formed of half-palmettes, only two of whose petals curve out; the third is extended to form the stalk. Although the drawing is clumsy and the spacing not correctly calculated, the artist clearly intended to adapt the design from the top of the pointed arch to the rectangular corners of the frame where the scrolls were to meet. On the milestone, in contrast, the scrolls are drawn in the classical fashion: a single undulating line from which hooks sprout at regular intervals. They resemble the scrolls on the archivolts of one of the eighth-century wooden panels from the Aqsa Mosque (plate 6) rather than those on the mihrab; the latter are much closer to the arabesque and stylistically are more sophisticated. They are reminiscent of the stucco frieze that runs around some of the arched openings above the piers in the mosque of Ibn Tulun. Even closer parallels to the Jerusalem scrolls are found on Egyptian tombstones; examples are a stone erected for Ja'fara bint Ahmad b. Ibrahim al-Hawtaki dated 245 (859-60), and another in the name of Lunnah dated 248 (862).

It could be argued that the scroll ornament on the Jerusalem mihrab is too common and too conservative a design to be used as a stylistic indicator for dating a monument. But no such objection can possibly be made with regard to the bosses, teardrops, and arrowheads that decorate the spandrels. These motifs are rare in...
Islamic architecture and architectural decoration: with the possible exception of a so-far unpublished, undated, and extremely primitive mihrab design in the city wall of Diyarbakr, which has bosses in its spandrels similar to those on the Jerusalem mihrab, we have found only one example that closely resembles our monument. It is the upper part of the stucco mihrab in the qibla wall of the mosque of Ibn Tulun (plate 7) which it is generally agreed is contemporary with the foundation of the mosque. Not only are its spandrels decorated with great raised bosses (which incidentally were erroneously regarded by Creswell as the earliest existing examples of this treatment), but the Cairene artist also made use of large teardrops to fill the triangular space at either side of the arch. Another striking parallel to the Jerusalem mihrab is found in the small button-like bosses which in both instances fill the upper corners of the rectangular frame. In the Dome of the Rock mihrab, this motif is repeated in the lower corners of the frame; in the Cairo mihrab the rectangular space has a molded border which makes the space too narrow to allow for ornamentation.

It seems unlikely that the similarities between the Jerusalem and the Cairo mihrab are merely coincidental, and therefore they suggest a Tulunid terminus post quem for our mihrab as well. The stylistic parallels have bearing on more than its date, however; they connect the Dome of the Rock mihrab with a decoration which, in Egypt at least, can be traced back to a local pre-Islamic tradition: the use of bosses and concentric rings to fill spandrels and pediments, or even as a major design motif. It is common on sixth- and seventh-century Coptic tombstones with architectural decorations (plate 8). Later, on ninth-century woodcarvings (plate 9) similar bosses form such a recurrent motif that one is tempted to attribute them to the same local tradition.

One of the characteristic features of the Jerusalem mihrab is the continuous line formed by its archivolt, its architrave, and its upper frame. Real or blind niches, in which a continuous band outlines the arched section of the niche and sets it apart, occur again in ninth-century Egyptian and Mesopotamian art. The closest parallel is the mihrab of Ibn Tulun with its pair of moldings (plate 7) that follow the pointed and stilted arch, turn at right angles above the capitals, and then turn at right angles


Plate 9. Egypt. Wooden panel with decorative bosses. (Photo: E. Baer; courtesy Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo.)
again to form the outer rectangular frame. A presumably Tulunid mihrab in the Great Mosque at Damascus,20 and a tombstone with the design of a mihrab from the cemetery of ‘Ayn Sira dated 274 (887)21 use a similar composition.

The lower part of the mihrab has two significant features. The first and more important are the capitals (plate 10). Formed out of concentric rings topped with a

![Plate 10. Jerusalem. Mihrab in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock (detail of plate 1).](Image)

pair of half-palmettes, they resemble the so-called bell- or clock-shaped capitals found in the mihrab of the throne-room mosque in the Jausaq al-Khaqani in Samarra22 and on a late-eighth- or early-ninth-century tombstone in the Jamii’ al-ṢUmariyyya in Mosul.23 Even earlier examples of capitals with bulbous bodies can be found. The capitals on five of the wooden panels of the Alqāṣ Mosque (plate 6),24 attributable to the middle or second half of the eighth century, are examples. Composed as they are of two symmetrically placed, facing acanthus leaves topped by additional volutes to support the architrave, these capitals still belong to the Byzantine tradition. As Georges Marçais correctly observed, they represent “a simplified deformation of the Corinthian capital” and serve neither as a parallel nor as an immediate prototype for the capitals of the Jerusalem mihrab. Capitals that closely resemble our Jerusalem examples seem to have been developed at a much later date, and probably do not appear before the Fatimid period. The earliest known dated example is a small, no longer extant mihrab of 393 (1003), which Creswell found on the roof of the al-Hakim mosque and assigned to that building.25 Other extremely close parallels are found on a series of Fatimid wooden mihrabs from about the end of the tenth to the second half of the twelfth century (plates 11 and 12). The often twisted columns end with bulbous capitals and bases. Like the Jerusalem capitals they have concentric circles on their

![Plate 11. Cairo. Wooden mihrab, Fatimid period. From J. David-Weill, Les Bois à épigraphes jusqu'à l'époque mamelouk.](Image)

flattened surface and are topped by two or three leaves.26

I have suggested that the concentric circles and bosses on the upper section of the Jerusalem mihrab derive from funerary stelai and follow an Egyptian tradition going back at least to sixth- or seventh-century Coptic art. Somewhat later, seventh-to-eighth-century stelai often show another element that recurs on our mihrab, namely a rosette which, like the black disk, is centered between the colonnettes and below a horizontal architectural element. In one group, exemplified by a fragmentary stele in the Victoria and Albert Museum (plate 13)27 and a group of stelai in Cairo,28 the rosette
occupies the circular top of an ankh (plate 14); in others it completely fills the space between the attached columns. Often set into a large relief disk or the center of a roundel, most of the rosettes have a geometric simplicity remarkably like that of the rosette on the black disk in Jerusalem.

The resemblance between this black rosette of the Jerusalem mihrab and rosettes carved on Coptic gravestones certainly does not prove that the black stone belongs to the original work of the mihrab. There can be no doubt, however, that at least throughout the first centuries of the Islamic era rosettes were applied in blind niches and on Coptic stelai in much the same way. Carved between a pair of attached columns they appear, for instance, in two of the wooden panels of the Aqsa Mosque (plate 15) and on several of the ninth-century marble panels of the mihrab in the Great Mosque of Qayrawan, both of which hark back to the Coptic-Hellenistic tradition.

Creswell argued that the archaic Kufic character of the inscriptions suggests an Umayyad, late-seventh-century date for the whole mihrab. As for the shahada (plate 10), two details in my opinion postpone its proposed date by at least two hundred years. The first is the arched ligature that can clearly be seen between the letters lam and ha in the first and last word “Allah.” A brief check of Umayyad and early Abbasid epigraphy indicates that up to the middle or second half of the
ninth century horizontal ligatures do not descend below
the line. The earliest examples I have found of that
practice occur on Egyptian tombstones dated 243
(857)—which thereby appear to provide a terminus post
guem for this particular type of ligature—and it did not
become common practice until the tenth or eleventh
century.32 The other data supporting a later date are the
triangular, slightly bifurcated finials or ‘‘swallow-tails’’
at the end of the hastae, which are still clearly visible in
the second writing of ‘‘Allah.’’ In Egyptian and Palesti-
nian epigraphy this feature, too, does not occur before
the tenth century. Excellent parallels are provided in a
number of mid-tenth-century epitaphs, such as a tomb-
stone from 346 (957) and another fragmentary example
dated 357 (968), both in the Department of Antiquities
in Jerusalem.33 Still more closely related to the style of
the shahada is the inscription on a marble tombstone
from 372 (983) (plate 16) now in the Aqsa Museum.34
As in the case of the shahada, the letters appear to have
been engraved rather than chiseled and worked with an
instrument that was not appropriate for the purpose.

Monuments.

Plate 15. Jerusalem. Aqsa Mosque. Wooden panel (W16). (Photo: E.
Baer.)

We do not know how often the mihrab was moved.
According to the Egyptian architects responsible for the
most recent restorations, the outer inscription was
already mutilated when in the late fifties they embedded
the mihrab in its present position. Its poor condition
makes reading impossible, but the careless carving of
some sections of the visible inscription seems to suggest
that part of the inscription is not contemporary with the
mihrab. Extreme caution must therefore be exercised in
using the epigraphic style of this framing band as
evidence for the mihrab’s date or origin. The less-
mutilated sections of the inscription reveal two in-
teresting details, however (plate 17). One is that the
tails of some of the short letters are carried to the top of the inscription; letters like ra, ya, and nun at the end of the word display this curved-up tail. The other is that round or closed letters like waw, mim, ja, and qaf have a pear-shaped, slightly pointed head.

Epigraphic evidence for the appearance of these two features leads to the same group of tombstones from ninth-century Egypt mentioned earlier and to one particular artist—a certain al-Makki—who signed his name on two other marble tombstones. One of them was for a person who died on Jumada II 243 (September-October 857) and the other for someone who died on Sha‘ban 243 (December 857). 33 Whether the rising tails of the letters, their pointed heads, and arched ligatures were invented by this artist is of course impossible to say; but his tombstones at least provide a terminus post quem for these epigraphic features in Egypt and Syria. They also imply that the inscription on the Jerusalem mihrab can hardly antedate the late ninth century, and if it is contemporary with the rest of the carving on the mihrab, it cannot be dated before the second half of the ninth, if not to the tenth, century. By that time, that is to say in the Ikhshidid or early Fatimid period, these features had become much more common (plate 18). 36

The characteristic details of the mihrab in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock suggest two conclusions. First, the date cannot be earlier than the second half of the ninth century, and features like the disk-shaped capitals
and the curiously stilted trefoil arch point even more securely to the tenth or eleventh century. Second, there can be little doubt about the Abbasid influence from the art of Mesopotamia on the artistic character of the mihrab, but at the same time other parallels point to artistic connections with Egypt. The latter become even more plausible when one considers that the mihrab belongs to the category of completely flat—as opposed to concave—prayer niches. Egyptian monuments from the Tulunid to the early Fatimid period give the impression that this form of mihrab was fashionable in the years under consideration. There are three extant flat Tulunid mihrabs—two in Cairo in the mosque of Ibn Tulun, and one in the Great Mosque in Damascus—and a series of Tulunid tombstones in the form of a flat niche in the Cairo Museum. The Fatimid mihrab of al-Afdal in the mosque of Ibn Tulun is rendered in the form of a blind niche, and numerous wooden mihrabs from the late tenth to the late eleventh century, which allegedly were found in Shi'a tombs at Fustat, also show this typical feature.

Since we know so little about the circumstances under which the mihrab was installed, it would be presumptuous to attempt further to sharpen the proposed data. But one can say that if the mihrab was originally meant to serve as a prayer niche in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock, it had a raison d'être only when the cave was actually used for this purpose, and no precise information as to when this custom was introduced is available. Throughout the first centuries prayers were almost certainly held in the Aqsa Mosque; the first mention of the cave as a gathering place for prayer comes from Ibn al-Faqih, who wrote it in 902-3.

Second, it is possible that the actual sponsor of the mihrab was a member of the Ikhshidid or Fatimid dynasty. The Ikhshidids were not great patrons of art. We know next to nothing about their architectural activities outside Cairo, and not a single Ikhshidid monument is preserved. Yet these governors were pious Muslims and deeply devoted to Jerusalem. It was presumably the sanctity of that city which induced them to erect their family tomb outside the northeast corner of the Noble Sanctuary, at the site where in 350 (961-62) 'Ali ibn Ikhshid and Kafur had ordered restorations of the city wall. As recently as the nineteenth century, the coffin of the deceased was carried in the funeral procession across the Haram area, making one station at the Aqsa Mosque and another at the Dome of the Rock. This custom is probably very ancient, and the Ikhshidids possibly adhered to it; if so, the mihrab was no doubt intended for these or similar funerals held at the Noble Sanctuary.
As S. D. Goitein pointed out, these and other tenth-century burials in Jerusalem imply that at that time "a new turn in the concepts about the holy character of Jerusalem must have taken place, and the belief that it would be the scene of the Last Judgement and the gate to Paradise must have gained ground." The custom of praying in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock dates from the beginning of the same century. This, along with other evidence, helps to confirm our stylistic analysis and to strengthen the proposed tenth-to-eleventh-century date for the mihrab.

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### NOTES


2. At a visit to the Cairo office of the architect S. Shawarbi and his assistants, I was also assured that the back of the mihrab, which is now embedded in the wall, was completely plain and, contrary to what a colleague had told me, bore no inscription.


6. The dimensions are given as 1.37 m x 0.76 m in Creswell's publication. The 0.7 m difference in height is presumably the result of the restoration, which embedded a larger section of the base in the ground.

7. Creswell apparently ignored this disk as being a later addition.

8. In the summer of 1980 Fehérvári referred to an unpublished mihrab which closely resembles this one. He will publish it in a forthcoming article.


10. Creswell, *EMA*, 2:261 and fig. 258, pl. 116c, dated by Creswell A.D. 878-82. The walls of the Baghdad Gate at Raqqâ (ibid., pl. 2e) are attributed by Creswell to 155 (772), that is to say nearly a century earlier, to the reign of al-Mansur; Herzfeld attributed this gate to Harun al-Rashid and the early years of the ninth century (Creswell, *EMA*, p. 45).


13. Creswell, *EMA*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 100 and fig. 35.


16. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, vol. 2, no. 2721/37, pl. 25; cf. ibid., pl. 39. For a similar design on the architrave of a tenth-century wooden, early Fatimid mihrab, see J. David-Weill, *Les Bois à épigraphes jusqu'à l'époque mamelouk* (Cairo, 1931), pp. 72-73 and pl. 10 (also on cover).

17. Frequently reproduced; see, for instance, Creswell, *EMA*, 2:348-49 and pl. 122. For a better reproduction, see Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler, *Kunst des Islam*, no. 131. The rest of this mihrab is attributed to Lajin who in 1296 executed a number of works in this mosque.

18. See, for instance, sixth- and seventh-century stelai from Erment, Upper Egypt, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, nos. 08.246 and 18.5.5, published by M. Cramer in *Archäologische und Epigraphische Klassifikation kopfischer Denkmäler* (Wiesbaden, 1937), pp. 15 and pl. 16, figs. 28-29. For a series of stelai with similar decoration, see Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, pls. 9, 8444; 10, 8453; 2, 8414, and many more.

19. Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, no. 11594. See also woodcarvings from Fustat, published by Edmund Pauty, *Les Bois sculptés jusqu'à l'époque appuyebide* (Cairo, 1931), pl. 7, no. 4626; pl. 8, no. 4625 (both of unknown origin); pl. 9, no. 6858/1; pl. 10, no. 2297; 2296; 4714; 2300 (all from Fustat).


21. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, 4:26, no. 1260 and pl. 8, erected for a certain Fadl ibn 'Abbas. The form of this arch differs from the previous examples, however, in that the inner outline is pointed and horseshoe shaped; the outer one is scalloped. For a Mesopotamian example, unfortunately also only partly preserved, see Herzfeld, *Wandenschmuck*, pl. 62. The extension of the archivolt as architrave is fairly common in Syrian architecture. Early examples are the probably eighth-century wooden beams with arched decoration from the Aqsa Mosque. In none of the examples, however, do we find an upper frame (for these panels, see above, n. 14).


23. Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 2:283-85, fig. 274. This tombstone shares two other elements with the Jerusalem mihrab: the inscribed tie beam and the archivolt extended into the upper frame.
26. David-Weill, *Bois à épigraphes*, pl. 10, nos. 4802, 8937, 4801, 8464, and pp. 56-57, said to have been found in Fustat; cf. Aly Bey Bahgat and A. Gabriel, *Fouilles d'al-Foustat* (Cairo, 1921), pl. 26. For another eleventh-century wooden panel in the shape of an arched mihrab, see *Exhibition of Islamic Art in Egypt*, 969-1517, April, 1969, Ministry of Culture U.A.R. 1969, no. 210 and pl. 37 (Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, no. 14445, also found in Fustat). For similar capitals in Coptic art, cf. wooden screen of Abu Saifain, in Edmund Pauty, *Bois sculptés des églises coptes* (époque fatimide) (Cairo, 1930), pp. 34-35, pls. 34 and 35, 1. Two tombstones with a flat mihrab found by Herzfeld in the tomb chamber of the Shaykh Fathi Mosque in Mosul represent a Mesopotamian parallel to this development. The tombstones are undated, but Herzfeld’s attribution to c. 1087-92 seems to accord with the style of the Kufic inscriptions. See Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archéologique Reise*, 2:280-82, figs. 272-73. The supporting leaves of these capitals are much longer than those on the Jerusalem mihrab.
27. Beckwith, *Coptic Sculpture*, pp. 29; 56, no. 130, pl. 130, from Erment, Upper Egypt, seventh-eighth century.
29. Ibid., pl. 35, no. 8399, from Damanhour. See also Cramer, *Archäologische und Epigraphische Klassifikation*, pl. 1, fig. 1; Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 10.176.28, said to be from Kufi, c. eighth century.
31. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, vol. 2, no. 469 and pl. 12; no. 1271; cf. ibid. no. 462, pl. 10. For the Samarra mihrab, see Creswell, *EMA*, vol. 2, pl. 121 d.
33. For the development of the decorative apexes in Kufic epigraphy, see for instance A. Grohmann, "The Origin and Early Development of Floriated Kufic," *Arts Orientalis* 2 (1957): 183-213. My particular thanks to Dr. Moshe Sharon who drew my attention to the Jerusalem tombstones and kindly lent me his photographs.
35. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, 2:32, pl. 10, no. 462; and ibid., pp. 35-36, pl. 12, no. 1271. For other examples, see ibid, p. 65, no. 526, pl. 19, 9541, dated 244 (858-59), and p. 155, no. 8353, pl. 42, dated 249 (863).
36. Dated 357 (968); Jerusalem, Department of Antiquities, no. M 97. For Fatimid examples, see, for instance, the catalogue, *The Arts of Islam* (London, 1976), no. 478, the border of a tenth-century marble cenotaph. According to Flury, a tendency to carry the short letters up to the top of the inscription band is evident toward the end of the tenth century in various Muslim districts.
38. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, pl. 26, no. 2953; pl. 35, no. 8589; pl. 30, no. 33380/5; 9129; pl. 43, no. 8093.
40. David-Weill, *Bois à épigraphes*, pl. 10; *Exhibition of Islamic Art in Egypt*, 1969, no. 210, pl. 221 and fig. 37.
43. Ibid., p. 14, n. 5.
The Fatimid caliphs who ruled Egypt from 969 to 1171 are justly famed for their generous patronage of architecture and the arts and for their lavish ceremonies. Almost immediately after they moved from North Africa, where they had ruled for half a century, to Egypt, where they founded their new capital of al-Qahira, men and women of the Fatimid court began to finance major buildings. The arts of Egypt, most notably textiles and ceramics, flourished. While something of their character was anticipated in the artistic production of Tulunid Egypt, nothing known from that period quite prepares us for the splendid creativity that drew upon the traditions not only of Egypt but also of the entire medieval Mediterranean world.

What inspired this sudden efflorescence? Was it essentially an Egyptian or a dynastic development? Is it attributable to general economic prosperity or solely to dynastic patronage? To what extent do its sources lie in North Africa? Virtually everyone who has studied the art of the Fatimids has asked these questions, but the extremely fragmentary evidence for Fatimid patronage—the remnants of a few buildings, some textiles and coins, and an ivory box—before their move to Egypt makes their answers difficult to find. Nevertheless the evidence for a coherent explanation can be extracted, if not from these few artistic remains, then from the texts that provide accounts of the dynasty’s early years.¹

The foundation of the Fatimid caliphate in the early tenth century in what is now Tunisia was the result of a fortuitous convergence of events in Syria and North Africa. From Salamiyya in Syria, a man claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and his son-in-law ʿAli ibn Abu Talib directed a vast but secret organization to convince the world that he was the sole legitimate heir to the Prophet. His first victory came in North Africa, where the Aghlabid amirate was maintaining tenuous control for the Abbasids over a rebellious, largely Berber population. Ten years of propagandizing and military ventures transformed the dream of a Fatimid state into a reality: on 29 Rabiʿ II 297 (26 January 910) one ʿUbayd Allah assumed the protocolary title amīr al-muʾminin (“Commander of the Believers”) and the regnal name of al-māḥdi (“the Right Guide”) and, accompanied by his son and his chief missionary, rode into Raqqada, the Aghlabid capital, where he assumed his role as the just ruler on earth.² Barely sixty years later, after decades of conflict and slow consolidation of power, ʿUbayd Allah’s great-grandson, al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah, rode triumphantly through Fustat, the capital of Egypt, and established his dynastic seat there on 7 Ramadan 362 (21 June 972).

The differences between ʿUbayd Allah’s occupation of the Aghlabid capital in North Africa and his great-grandson’s triumphal procession into the capital in Egypt are startling. ʿUbayd Allah simply rode into town accompanied by his chief missionary and his son; al-Muʿizz was the center of an elaborate theatrical spectacle mounted and performed under the direction of his general, Jawhar. Met at the western desert by all the notables of Egypt, the ruler paraded through Giza, across the Nile by bridge, and through Fustat to al-Qahira, where Jawhar had prepared a magnificent palace for him in which he held court.³

The precision and elaborateness of the procession indicate not only the importance attributed to it, but also the Fatimids’ ability to mount such a spectacle. The founding of a new capital in Egypt and its inaugural festivities also testify to an extraordinary development in the dynasty’s awareness of the power of visual symbols, such as constructions, coins, banners, and parades, for maintaining the caliph’s personal and dynastic prestige and for manipulating popular support.

Although such forms and practices became a hallmark of the Fatimids, they were certainly not unique to them but already commonly practiced among contemporary rulers, both Muslim and Christian. Tracing the development of their use through the period of Fatimid rule in North Africa does, however,
demonstrate how these devices were consciously adopted and developed to further some specific aims of the caliphate. Just as the Fatimid policy that led to such notable success in 969 was the result of the sixty years of experience in the Maghrib, so the use of visual symbols as represented by al-Mu‘izz’s entry into Egypt was the result of experimentation and the lessons learned from it in those same years.

The textual accounts for the earliest period confirm the evidence: al-Maqrizi states that when ʿUbayd Allah’s chief missionary, Abu ʿAbd Allah seized power from the last Aghlabid amir in 909, he is said to have had coins struck bearing the legends “the proof of God has arrived” on the obverse and “the enemies of God are dispersed” on the reverse.1 Conserved in the Musée du Bardo in Tunis is a gold dinar minted in Qayrawan in 297 (910) that bears precisely these legends.2 It is a typical Aghlabid type of dinar, except that the legends occupy the space which would normally have held the ruler’s name. Since the ruler had not yet been revealed, these two appropriate phrases filled the void. According to Muhammad ibn Hammud, similarly appropriate slogans were also inscribed on banners, weapons, trappings, and seals.3 Unfortunately, none of these has survived.

Having seized control, Abu ʿAbd Allah left Qayrawan to rescue ʿUbayd Allah, who had reached Sijilmasa after an arduous and dangerous journey from Syria, only to be imprisoned along with his son Abu'l-Qasim by the local Midrarite amir.4 Having freed them, Abu ʿAbd Allah is then said—by Jaʿfar, chamberlain to ʿUbayd Allah—to have organized a review of the troops in which ʿUbayd Allah sat on a throne while his supporters were presented to him in order of their rank.5 The ceremonial aspects of this scene can only be fanciful anachronism, Marius Canard concluded, for they reflect conditions that prevailed in the 970’s when Jaʿfar wrote his description, rather than those of 909, when the event was supposed to have occurred.6

Before ʿUbayd Allah arrived in North Africa, Abu ʿAbd Allah is said to have worn “coarse and poorly garments”;10 after it, both of them as well as the heir-apparent Abu'l-Qasim were described by Ahmad ibn ʿIdhari, among others, as wearing garments of fine silk and linen fabrics with matching turbans.11 ʿUbayd Allah rode into Raqqada in triumph wearing dark silk clothes with a matching turban. Riding behind him, Abu'l-Qasim wore a similar ensemble in orange silk. Abu ʿAbd Allah wore mulberry-colored clothes, a linen tunic, a turban, and an “ishtandarani” scarf.12 Some sources speak disparagingly of ʿUbayd Allah’s fondness for luxurious garments, but it surely signified more than mere self-indulgence:13 rich textiles have traditionally stood for wealth and prestige.

When ʿUbayd Allah assumed the regnal name al-Mahdi he ordered his name mentioned in the khutba and inscribed on coins, which were standard vehicles for the symbolic expression of sovereignty.14 He then ordered that the names of all patrons be removed from “mosques, cisterns, forts, and bridges” and replaced with his own.15 The erasure and subsequent relabeling of monumental inscriptions recall the case of the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmun who tampered with the foundation inscription of the Dome of the Rock.16 It is hard to imagine that either ruler believed that such a change would cause the public to forget the name of the original builder.17 Rather, the act was a symbolic prise de possession, ensuring to the new claimant the symbolic advantages of citation, that is, the benefits from any baraka the building might have. Nearly a century and a half later the scene was replayed when al-Muʿizz ibn Badis anamathematized the Fatimids and removed their names from inscriptions on coins, flags, standards, and buildings.18

In 912 al-Mahdi decided to leave Qayrawan and set up his own dynastic seat. In so doing he declared his intention of making North Africa more than a temporary stopping place on the march to conquer the world. Al-Mahdiyya, as the new capital would be called, was to be the source of all the forces of the new dominion. The site selected was a peninsula between Susa and Sfax, whose strategic advantages were enhanced by double land walls ordered in 916 (fig. 1).19 It also had the advantage of being far enough away from the hostile Sun-
ni atmosphere of Qayrawan, but not so far as to be out of its commercial sphere. After al-Mahdiyya was built, Qayrawan did not immediately lose its commercial preeminence, but eventually the new capital surpassed it as the commercial center in a dominion which already spread across Africa and over the sea to Sicily.

Practical concerns are also evident in the types of buildings erected in al-Mahdiyya. The official inauguration of the new capital was pushed forward to Shawwal 308 (20 February 921) as a result of heavy rains in the old capital at Qayrawan; al-Mahdi, his son, and members of the court were forced to move into their residences even though the buildings were not yet finished. The mosque was probably completed soon after, and al-Maqrizi mentions a musalla built just outside the city walls. By 922 naval expeditions had already returned to al-Mahdiyya from the Calabrian coast, so presumably port facilities—such as the dockyard mentioned in the texts—existed by then. In May 945, merchants left al-Mahdiyya’s shops and markets in fear of the Kharijite rebel Abu Yazid, but by the time Ibn Hawqal visited the same place only four years later there were “many palaces, houses, fine baths, and khans.” Thus, despite the depredations of Abu Yazid, within two decades of its founding al-Mahdiyya was a functioning and prosperous city.

The meager archaeological evidence makes it difficult to reconstruct the original appearance of the city. Various scholars have attempted to identify the palace of Abu’l-Qasim and the dockyard; Lézine tried to reconstruct the city gate, now known as the Saqifa al-Kahla (“Dark Vestibule”) which was extensively remodeled in the sixteenth century. Only the Great Mosque, rebuilt on the model of its original Fatimid plan in the 1960’s, stands as a direct successor to its early Fatimid prototype. Remains of an entrance-complex to a building exhibiting features of “tenth-century construction techniques” have been excavated at al-Mahdiyya and have been tentatively identified as the entrance to the palace of Abu’l-Qasim mentioned in the texts (fig. 2). Lucien Govin found a similar entrance complex at a building which he identified as the palace of Ziri at Ashir (fig. 3). According to al-Nuwayri (d. 1333), it was built in 324 (935) by “a builder who surpassed all others in Iriqiya.” Abu’l-Qasim is said to have given Ziri permission to build the palace, making the proposed identification all the more attractive. However, none of the earlier sources (e.g., Ibn Hawqal, al-Bakri, and Ibn Hammad) either tell the same story or give the same date; therefore the identification should be treated cautiously, especially since the foundations unearthed at al-Mahdiyya do not conform to the arrangements reported by al-Bakri. The desire to identify the ruins with a historical personage has obscured the fact that the quality of its construction and decoration are not in any way out of the ordinary. While these ruins may be the remnants of the entrance to a large private residence, there is no reason to assume that Abu’l-Qasim lived there when he succeeded his father as al-Qasim.

The mosque is the only substantial monument remaining from the Fatimid period in Tunisia (fig. 4 and plate 1). The T plan, the doubling of supports in the central aisle, and the arcades surrounding the court were all clearly inspired by the Great Mosque of Qayrawan (fig. 5). The most remarkable feature of Qayrawan’s mosque—the massive minaret opposite the mihrab—was not copied at al-Mahdiyya, however; instead, projecting corner bastions flank a central pro-
jecting portal. Given the strong role played by the Qayrawan mosque as a model for all other features of the mosque at al-Mahdiyya, it is indeed odd that its massive minaret was not included.  

The portal consists of a projecting stone block containing a large central arched opening flanked by two stories of shallow niches (plate 1). Its form is reminiscent of, and no doubt inspired by, late-antique triumphal arches, some of which can still be seen in the Tunisian countryside (plate 2). For that reason, Lézine claimed that the "triumphal" character of the portal was in keeping with the Fatimid passion for ceremonies, and he proposed a plan for the whole site that could provide a fitting stage for them (fig. 6). Although the portal's formal debt to triumphal arches cannot be denied, Lézine's interpretation is nonetheless unwarranted: there is no evidence that Fatimid ceremonial was well developed at this early date. The formal arrangement of the façade derives from monuments such as the ribat at Susa (plate 3), where a projecting portal is flanked by corner bastions. At Susa one of the bastions supports a tower, but apparently no such tower or towers existed at al-Mahdiyya. Fatimid mosques did not usually have minarets, but they often did have monumentalized portals. Since it has been suggested that the monumental portal at the Aqmar mosque (519/1125) had a particular Isma'ili significance, and since an unbroken line connects this mosque with that in al-Mahdiyya, it is not unwarranted to see the connection here.

The mosque at al-Mahdiyya is on one level a logical product of local forms and techniques of construction. The peculiar location of the mosque precluded a slavish imitation of the mosque at Qayrawan and may have suggested the replacement of Qayrawan's lateral entrances with ones opposite the mihrab. Whatever the reason was for replacing a minaret with a portal, the mosque of al-Mahdiyya itself exerted a powerful influence on the forms of later Fatimid mosques.

Al-Mahdi regarded his city as more than a practical complex of walls, port, mosque, and palace. For him it was the tangible symbol of the new era he was ushering in on earth. A poem composed in 308 (921) for al-
Mahdi to celebrate his arrival in his new home expresses this clearly:

Congratulations, O magnanimous prince,
For your arrival on which time smiles.
You have established a camp in a hospitable land
Which the glorious envoys have secured for you.
If indeed the sanctuary and its precincts are exalted,
Its ossuary shrines are equally exalted.
A residence has arisen in the land of the West,
Praying and lasting in it will be acceptable.
It is al-Mahdiyya, the sacred, the protected,
Just as the sacred places are in Tihama.
As if your footprints make it
The Maqam Ibrahim when there is no station [maqām].
As the pilgrim kisses the Corner,
We kiss the court of your palace.
If indeed Time and Dominion grow old,
Their foundations are but rubble when tested.
O Mahdi, Dominion is itself a servant to you,
Served by Time itself.
The world is yours and your progeny’s wherever you are,
In it all of you will always be imams.\(^\text{32}\)
The founding of al-Mahdiyya was only one necessary step toward the realization of Fatimid aspirations in the east. Although the poet undeniably refers to al-Mahdiyya as a "camp" (raḥil), the metaphor on which the whole poem is built compares it in ideologica1, if not formal, terms with the sanctuary and exalted precincts of Mecca. Al-Mahdiyya, just as Mecca, had been established by the intervention of the Divine. From the beginning, dominion over and recognition in Mecca were high on the Fatimid list of priorities, on account both of the city's significance as the Fatimid ancestral home and of its enormous symbolic value in the world at large. Neither could be achieved, however, until Egypt was conquered. The Qarmatians, the Fatimids' erstwhile Isma'ili allies and supporters, first reached Mecca in 930 and held the Islamic world hostage when they made off with the Black Stone—the poet's "sacred corner"—as a tangible sign of the end of an era of Islam.\(^38\) Just as the Qarmatians symbolically ushered out one old order, the Fatimids symbolically ushered in a new one. Al-Mahdiyya represented that dominion and time were in the service of the rightful imams who heralded the new age.

Unfortunately for the Fatimids, it was far easier to write poetry in praise of the new era than it was to bring it about. Abu'l-Qasim’s three attempts to conquer Egypt—as heir-apparent in 914-15 and 919-21 and as imam in 935—were all unsuccessful, though one of them might account for the renovations and constructions at Ajdabiya in Libya that are thought to be Fatimid. Al-Bakri asserts that the mosque there was built by Abu'l-Qasim.\(^39\) Ibn Hawqal noted an "elegant mosque," al-Bakri an "octagonal minaret of admirable workmanship,"\(^40\) but the excavated remains hardly justify either remark. The mosque at Ajdabiya follows the plan of al-Mahdiyya at two-thirds scale and a significantly lower level of quality.\(^41\) The "fortress-palace" recently excavated at Ajdabiya may also belong
to this period, although it could equally well have been built to accommodate al-Mu‘izz when he made his way to Egypt in 972. Al-Mahdi died in 934, but Abu’l-Qasim concealed his death for an entire year, fearing that the change of leadership might provide the occasion for some challenge to Fatimid rule. As heir-apparent he had already been entrusted with significant power by al-Mahdi, so he probably had no problem maintaining and even increasing it, and as caliph his policies had the same goal. The chronicles of his reign ignore his successes in maintaining and expanding Fatimid power, however, preferring to describe the disasters of Abu Yazid’s revolt, which occupied the last two years of his life. Only fragmentary information remains to provide the barest outline of his court’s activities. His biographers have left us with the cryptic assessment that throughout his reign he “never ascended a throne, never rode while hunting, never prayed at a funeral except once, and only once prayed at the ‘Id al-Fitr.”

Ibn ‘Idhari adds that “during his reign, he never used a muzalla”—a type of parasol held by a courtier over the head of the ruler. Ibn Hammad says that he used one as amir during the reign of his father. This reference to the muzalla is of considerable significance for the development of Fatimid court ceremonial, since later in the Fatimid period in Egypt it became one of the insignia of the ruler’s office. Does Ibn ‘Idhari’s statement that Abu’l-Qasim never used one either as heir-apparent or as the caliph al-Qa'im imply that the imam did not choose to adopt a practice already customary in al-Mahdi’s reign, or that the practice had not yet been introduced? Apart from Ibn Hammad, there is no evidence that Abu’l-Qasim—either before or after acceding to the imamate—ever used a muzalla. If one disregards hostile and anachronistic accounts of the early Fatimid period, Fatimid court life, such as it was, appears to have been fairly simple and flexible, while use of a muzalla indicates a rather elaborate ceremony and static social hierarchy. Thus his biographers’ assessments seem to be saying that he continued the relatively modest practices of his predecessor. That could not in any case have included the use of the muzalla, because it was not yet known to the Fatimids.

Al-Qa'im’s poem addressed to the people of Egypt uses an entirely different imagery:

Do you not see me seeking comfort for the night journey?
So I established by the order of God, as it should be.
I have been patient, and patience leads to success
Perhaps the intelligent person will be hasty, and therefore he made mistakes and missed the mark
Until God wanted to strengthen his faith.
So I established by the order of God, as the muhtasib does.
And I called the call of one who is certain about the generous God to the peoples of the West:
He who believes in Him will never fail.
They came quickly to join a noble and generous one
descended from Arabs, paying him allegiance.
I have come on the horses of God to your land
And the face of death has appeared to me from behind the screen.
I sent more ambling noble horses
Led by men like lions.
Their banner is my grandfather’s, their call my father’s
And their belief is mine, near and far.
Praise be to God! You know what occurred:
I won with the striking, devastating, victorious arrow.
That is my character— as long as I live— and yours.
There it is, a war raging like a blaze.

Here the victorious warrior (or so he would have us believe) has established the law of God (a play of words on his own name, al-Qa'im bi-amr Allah/gumtu bi-amr allah) by curing the sick (i.e., those who have not yet rallied to the Fatimid cause) of their misguided allegiance. It is an image that depends on the charisma of the ruler himself, not on the paraphernalia of his entourage.

In spite of his martial self-portrayal, al-Qa'im did not disdain all of the traditional signs of wealth, such as rich fabrics. During his reign, he promoted a certain Jawdhar, a eunuch who had entered his father’s service, to be director of the treasuries of textiles and clothing as well as of the general treasury. Jawdhar’s autobiography, which is the most valuable primary source for this period, records that al-Qa'im, like his father, accumulated and bestowed rich fabrics on favored courtiers. Al-Qa'im does not appear to have been an innovator of court practices. When the sources state that he never used a muzalla or ascended a throne or minbar, they are distinguishing him, not from his father, but from his son Isma'il, the imam al-Mansur, in whose time exactly these practices were introduced.

Al-Qa'im died in 946, during the worst crisis yet of the Fatimid state. Isma'il prudently concealed the death of his father, just as his father had done before him, so long as Abu Yazid threatened the very gates of the capital itself. The visual and verbal symbols of
authority—coinage, weapons, banners, and the khutba—were left unchanged. Nevertheless, al-Maqrizi tells us that when Isma'il went into battle against Abu Yazid in 946, the muzalla was carried over his head "like a standard." In name, Isma'il was still only heir-apparent, but it is perfectly plausible to imagine him introducing the muzalla for prestige, to bolster the power he so desperately needed.

Following the final defeat of Abu Yazid in 948, Isma'il announced the death of his father and returned to the capital in triumph. He was met in Qayrawan by the notables mounted on fine horses and carrying drums and flags, and then in al-Mahdiyya where, pleased by a fine reception, Isma'il offered Jawdhar robes of honor. The triumphal return, celebrated in the caliph's choice of regnal name, al-mansur ("the Victorious One"), was only the first in a series of shifts in the Fatimids' use of visual symbols that document a concerted effort to give the dynasty a new image.

Al-Mansur was not content merely with replacing his father's name on the coinage with his own; he made a much more distinctive change. The single circular band containing Koranic verses that had formed the border became two during his father's reign (some Umayyad and Abbasid coins also exhibit this feature), but al-Mansur removed the text from the inner band of the border, leaving a blank ring to surround the central legends on both the obverse and reverse sides (plates 4 and 5). Coins with this new design were first struck in


Dhu'l-Qa'da 336 (May 948), only two months after his victorious return, Al-Mansur must have been confident that his dynasty's position was secure to effect such a change so quickly in the normally conservative realm of coinage. With some variation in the number and content of the circular bands, the arrangement introduced by al-Mansur—the field dominated by the borders—remained characteristic of virtually all Fatimid coins ever after. This new type of dinar is probably the one Jawdhar calls the mansuri. The caliph sent the first thousand struck to Jawdhar, now freed and third in rank in the state. In the accompanying letter, al-Mansur wrote that Jawdhar should accept this money as a benediction, for "no riches are purer than the money which I offer." The gift was not only tangible wealth but, what was more important, a symbol of the esteem in which the ruler held Jawdhar.

When al-Mansur freed the eunuch Jawdhar he ordered Jawdhar's name to be added to the tiraz embroidered in gold thread on textiles for clothing and carpets. The caliph himself specified what the inscription band should say. It read in part, "made under the supervision of Jawdhar, mawla of the Commander of the Believers, in al-Mahdiyya the pleasant." Jawdhar clearly stated that the tiraz "was to honor and to augment [the caliph's] importance. ... He enjoyed the products of his slaves, often exclaiming as we watched over them, 'Their works are splendid gardens!'... He amassed the most precious things to be found in his realm and the finest treasures of every kind and sort, including books of eso- and esoteric wisdom."

Al-Mansur's reign marks the beginning of a concerted policy of gift-giving as well as collecting. In return for the money, horses, camels, and other
animals received in tribute from his subjects, according to Ibn Hammad, during the Abu Yazid crisis Isma'il provided his supporters with food and clothing; to Maksin ibn Sa'id and Ziri ibn Manad he sent goods, cloth, gold, silver, curios, and treasures "in order to captivate their souls." Another gift to Ziri consisted of robes of honor, perfumes, and "kingly curios (muṣafāt al-mulukīyya) of incalculable price and indescribable beauty." The ruler, having presented the gifts, gave Ziri and his clan noble horses whose saddles and bridles were heavy with gold and silver. Ibn Hammad states that al-Mansur used these gifts to buy the loyalty of the Zirids.

In 947 al-Mansur ordered yet another new capital built a short distance southwest of Qayrawan, this one to be called al-Mansuriyya. Ibn Hawqal identified its site with that of the camp from which Isma'il effected his final defeat over Abu Yazid, its name referring not only to the builder but also to the victory he won from there. The site has been only partially excavated, and apart from a few summary notes only some of the glass objects have been adequately published. One must therefore still rely on the literary sources, with a warning that they may refer to a later time.

The capital was used by the Fatimids between 949 and 972, and after their departure the Zirid amirs continued to rule from there and to add new constructions until the eleventh century. One of the earliest accounts, that of the late-tenth-century geographer al-Maqdisi, refers to it by its local name Sabra, rather than the official al-Mansuriyya, and tells us:

The Fatimid built it when he first ruled the land. Its name derives from the patience [ṣabr] of his army. It is circular like a drinking-cup. Its equal does not exist. The sultan’s [sic] house is in its center, just as in the City of Peace [Baghdad]. There is running water there. In its middle are solid buildings and fine markets. The sultan’s mosque is there. The thickness of [the city’s] walls is twelve cubits; they are separated from the buildings. Between it and [Qayrawan] there is a road on which people go back and forth on Egyptian donkeys. Its gates are: Bab al-Futuh, Bab Zuwayla, Bab Wadi al-Qassar, all of which are made of iron. Another wall is daubed with mud.

According to al-Bakri, it was al-Mu'izz who transferred the markets to al-Mansuriyya, and the city had five, not three, gates: Bab al-Qibli, or the Southern Gate; Bab al-Sharqi, or the Eastern Gate; Bab Zuwayla; Bab Kutama; and Bab al-Futuh, the Gate of Conquests, through which the ruler marched out to battle with his troops. Ibn Hammad names four gates: Bab al-Qibli on the south, Bab Zuwayla on the east, Bab Kutama on the north, and Bab al-Futuh on the west; he also remarks that the last was used for expeditions to war. Whether there were three, four, or five gates, they were probably all cardinally oriented. Their names indicate either directions or tribes (e.g., Zuwayla and Kutama), or are symbolic (Bab al-Futuh). Only the last appears to have been reserved for some specific function (fig. 7).

Ibn Hammad described the palaces (quṣūr) built there as "lofty and splendid structures having marvelous plantings and tamed waters," with such names as al-Iwan, Majlis al-Kultur (the Camphor Audience Hall), Hajarat al-Taj (the Chamber of the Diadem), Majlis al-Rayhan (the Fragrant Audience Hall), Hajarat al-Felda (the Silver Chamber), and Khawarnaq. Although the palaces at al-Mahdiyya had reception halls (majlis), the sources provide no such imaginative names for them. Jawedhar refers once to al-Mahdi’s palace at al-Mahdiyya as al-bāb al-tāhir ("the pure portal"), but all other instances of that phrase date from the reigns of al-Mansur or al-Mu'izz. It is likely, therefore, that such fanciful names for buildings were first introduced during al-Mansur’s reign.

Aerial reconnaissance of the site of Sabra/Mansuriyya has brought to light a huge, roughly circular artificial enclosure containing the remains of a number of circular and rectangular basins. To interpret them in the absence of excavations, one has to turn to a contemporary description of a palace, perhaps Khawarnaq, found in a poem by Ali ibn Muhammad al-Iyadi, court poet to both al-Mansur and al-Mu'izz.
Now that glory has become great and the great one rules over the stars, a porticoed pavilion spreads. He built a dome for the dominion in the midst of a garden which is a delight to the eye. In well-laid-out squares, whose courtyards are green, whose birds are eloquent. Surrounding an enormous palace among palaces, as if you could see the very sea gushing in its corners. It has a pool for water filling its vast space across which eyes race and flit. The rivulets which gush into it lie like polished swords on the ground. In the midst of its waters an audience hall stands like Khawarnaq amidst the Euphrates’ flood. As if the purity of its waters—and its beauty—were as smooth as glass of azure hue. If night unrolls the figure of its stars over it, you would see blacks burned by fire. And if the sun grazes it, it appears like a beautiful bejeweled sword on the diadem of al-Mu’izz. The secluded balconies around it were virgins wearing girdled gowns. The foam dissolves on the face of its waters as does the rain on parched soil.78

This huge basin fed by multiple water channels was clearly meant to be the focus of the palace; it was also an engineering feat of no mean scale, for to maintain it, Ibn Hammad said, the “wild waters” of intermittent streams had to be captured, permanent sources of water discovered, and all brought to Qayrawan by aqueduct. In this respect, Fatimid projects in and around Qayrawan continued the Ifriqiyan systems long established in Aghlabid practice.79 The building and maintenance of large pools of water for pleasure and the extensive irrigation systems necessary to maintain a garden on the arid Qayrawan plain suggest that the ruler had limitless financial resources.

The most famous of these constructions in Qayrawan are undoubtedly the Aghlabid basins near Bab Tunis, but they are only two of the hundreds which the rulers of Ifriqiya built both for public and private use.80 The waterworks at al-Mansur’s new capital were descended from standard Aghlabid practice, which itself was just one example of a pan-Islamic association between palaces and pools that had been typical of all palaces in Iran and the Mediterranean region since pre-Islamic times.81 It continued under the Fatimids’ successors in North Africa, notably at the Qal’a of the Banu Hammad, where, according to the texts, the so-called Dar al-Bahr (House of the Pool) was used for model nautical battles.82 Gardens were part of the Islamic palatine vocabulary, in part because they involved a lavish use of water, and water was very expensive. But the garden was also of course a common metaphor in the Islamic world for paradise, underscored in the passage quoted from al-Iyadi by the choice of the word janna, which can mean both paradise and garden. As a verbal image it is often used in the Koran with the same double meaning and—more to the point here—in Isma’ili theology as well.83

The use of water and gardens puts the palace of al-Mansur squarely in an established Islamic type encountered also in the Aghlabid palaces outside Qayrawan. Al-Mansur, however, was not content with either local or general associations; he wanted al-Mansuriyya to refer specifically both in form and idea to particular great palaces of the Islamic and pre-Islamic past. Al-Maqrizi wrote that al-Mansur was to be compared with Abu Ja’far al-Mansur, the Abbasid caliph (754-775), for “both of them faced the disruption of the state, the threat of war, and the loss of the caliphate. But the wind of victory blew on them, and order was restored to them so that no conflict remained.”84 This observation would be of no more than passing interest, were there not ample evidence to show that the Fatimid caliph al-Mansur compared himself to his Abbasid predecessor. The physical arrangement of the new capital draws its inspiration directly from al-Mansur’s round plan for Baghdad in its shape, number and orientation of gates, the intervalium separating the outer walls from the buildings, and the palace and mosque in the center (figs. 7 and 8).

Ibn Hammad compared the ruined al-Mansuriyya to the ruins of al-Iwan and Ghumdan—the former a great Sasanian palace, the latter a magnificent palace of pre-Islamic Yemen—to express the impermanence of earthly glories. Al-Mu’izz, however, saw it quite differently: for him al-Iwan conjured up splendid associations, and he so named his son’s palace.85 Al-Iyadi’s image of the majlis standing like Khawarnaq refers to the magnificent Lakhmid palace which the Abbasids subsequently enlarged,86 but the use of the name for one of the palaces at al-Mansuriyya suggests that the image was current and more than a mere literary conceit.

The differences between al-Mansuriyya and the old capital at al-Mahdiyya are enormous. Al-Mahdiyya had the practical aspect of a fortress and retreat; al-Mansuriyya was designed for the luxurious pleasures of a prince. Al-Mahdiyya was a public manifestation of the righteousness of the new order; al-Mansuriyya—if ordinary people had had access to it at all—would have appeared as a manifestation of the prince’s power.
through the conspicuous display of the limitless resources he had available to devote to his private pleasures. No longer does the caliph see himself solely as the rightful imam, heir to the spiritual and temporal authority of the Prophet. Now he has announced himself heir as well to all of the royal traditions of ages past. He is certainly equal, and probably superior, to all the kings of this world.

This attitude is well illustrated by an episode in 952-53, when the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos sent a monk as ambassador to the court of al-Mansur bearing precious gifts. The purpose of the embassy was to consolidate a truce in Sicily after a severe Byzantine defeat. According to one chronicler, the envoy was struck by the majesty of the sovereign and the pomp with which he surrounded himself, finding it unequaled even in his own land. Al-Mansur, wishing to send appropriate gifts to the emperor in return, wrote to Jawdhar (now in charge of the treasury) asking him to collect together gifts that would be even finer and of greater value than those he had received from Constantine:

I know how much you desire that there not be a beautiful thing in this world except that it be ours and in our treasuries, and I imagine that this leads you to be miserly and refuse to send things to the Christians as you have been ordered to do. Do not be this way, for the treasures of the world remain in the world, and we accumulate them only to rival our enemies in splendor, show the nobility of our sentiments, the greatness of our soul, and the generosity of our hearts in the gift of things of which one is envious and about which everyone is selfish.

Al-Mansur’s pious confirmation of the transitory nature of worldly wealth does not conceal his shrewd understanding of its value as evidence to the world that the Fatimid imam had great and noble qualities. Whereas the propaganda of his predecessors had been couched in religious and philosophical terms, al-Mansur expanded his public-relations vocabulary to include symbols—coins, gifts, buildings, and spectacle—to reaffirm and enhance the position he occupied. This tactic was by no means his invention; he simply adopted notions of kingship reaching back into the pre-Islamic past.

Al-Mansur’s use of splendor and largess is another example of the suppleness with which Fatimid propaganda adapted itself to varying lands and conditions. As a dissident political and social movement, pre-Fatimid Isma'ilism concentrated on an easily concealable propaganda of words and ideas, both because of the nature of the message and because of the nature of the imam’s power. The Fatimids now had a temporal realm that had to deal with a heterogeneous population, a significant part of which might never rally to their support. Perhaps they would acquiesce to the popular propaganda of a powerful caliph, heir to the temporal powers of the great kings of history.

Al-Mansur died on 29 Shawwal 341 (19 March 953) after a reign of only six years. His son Ma‘addi succeeded him as imam after concealing his death for forty days: at ‘Id al-Nahr, the feast of the sacrifices, on 10 Dhu’l-Hijja, he announced his succession to the imamate in the khurba. Al-Mu‘izz li-Din Allah (“the Strengthenener of God’s Religion”), as the new imam styled himself, prayed in his inaugural appearance that he and his people would be allowed to visit the tomb of the Prophet in Medina, to mount his minbar, to visit his house, to accomplish the pilgrimage to Mecca, and “to stand with banners unfurled at the illustrious sacred places.” From outward appearances the dynasty was no closer to this end, but al-Mansur’s legacy of an enhanced image and real power transformed Fatimid dreams into reality.

Al-Mu‘izz’s first task was to consolidate and extend his own power. He began by subduing a Kharijite
rebelling in the Zab and, in May-June 958, sent
General Jawhār to stem Umayyad activities in the
western Maghrib. Within the first six years of his reign,
all of the Maghrib except Ceuta and Tangiers recog-
nized Fatimid suzerainty.

Al-Mu'tizz's works at al-Mansuriyya continued the
pattern established by his father: he added palaces,
markets and workshops from Qayrawan, and undertook water projects to supply the capital's needs. According to al-Bakrī, he had the remains of the abandoned Aghlabīd capital at Raqqada razed and the lands plowed over so that only its gardens remained. The population of Qayrawan, led by the Malikite ulema, continued hostile to the court at its doorstep; the feeling was undoubtedly mutual. It is in this climate of mutual antagonism that we should understand al-
Bakrī's report of the popular objections to al-Mu'tizz's attempt to "correct" the qibla of the Great Mosque of
Qayrawan. At first deaf to all protests, al-Mu'tizz desisted only after various miraculous happenings con-
vinced him to leave the revered qibla as it was, despite its "inaccuracy."

The court at al-Mansuriyya also continued the
ceremonial practices of al-Mansur: gifts were ex-
changed, fine textiles were produced in the court
workshops, and court life flourished. The Byzantine
embassy of 957 brought the tribute the emperor had
agreed to pay for maintaining his hold over Calabria, as
dressed in gold and silver inlaid with jewels, brocades, silk, nard, and other precious articles "which
the Byzantines have." The tribute was not always so
luxurious: Allah al-Nasibī, the prefect of Barqa,
presented Jawhār with twenty pack animals in return for Jawhār's gift of ten camels. Jawhār, loath to ac-
cept the gift, asked al-Mu'tizz what to do. The imām
replied that gifts are a sign of God's favor; generosity is
a natural quality which has nobility of heart and
magnanimity at its source.

Tirraz factories producing reed mats and inscribed
prayer rugs as well as articles of clothing continued to
flourish under al-Mu'tizz. In 965 al-Mu'tizz ordered
Jawhār to have a prayer rug made. The weavers in-
cluded in it not only the text the caliph wished to have,
but also the usual reference to Jawhār: "from among
the works made under the supervision of Jawhār,
client of the Commander of the Believers." When
Jawhār saw his name embroidered in gold thread he
was mortified, supposing that the caliph might think
him guilty of self-aggrandizement. The caliph,
however, praised the rug as being of "extreme beauty
and perfect manufacture," and paid no attention to the
inscription.

One of the most interesting products of the Fatimid
workshops of this period must have been a map of the
world woven of blue tustārī gurqūbī silk on which the
climates, mountains, seas, cities, rivers, and roads of
the earth were shown. Included was a clear representa-
tion of Mecca and Medina. Every feature on it was
identified in gold, silver, or silk writing. Across the bot-
tom, the legend read, "Among the things ordered by
al-Mu'tizz li-Din Allah, longing for the Sanctuary of
God [Mecca], and proclaiming the landmarks of His
messenger, in the year 353 [964]." It is reported to
have cost twenty-two thousand dinars to make.

The earliest extant textile embroidered with al-
Mu'tizz's name is dated 355 (966) but is of Egyptian
manufacture. An ivory casket now in Madrid, made
for al-Mu'tizz by a certain A...d[?] al-Khurasani in al-
Mansuriyya, probably dates from about the same time
(plate 14). The inscriptions on both of these pieces
reflect the current political situation, for both quote
Koran 61:13, which asks God's aid for early victory.
Since this phrase does not appear on textiles made after
the Fatimids conquered Egypt, both objects must date
from before the conquest.

Court life continued to flourish under al-Mu'tizz.
The author of the Kitāb al-Dhakhā'ir wa'l-Tuhaf reports
that in 351 (962) al-Mu'tizz celebrated the circumcisions
of his three sons 'Abd Allah, Nizar, and 'Aqīd by offer-
ing free circumcisions to all male children in his
realm. The splendor of the circumcision ceremony
surpassed even his father's extravagant display when
his sons had been circumcised eleven years earlier.
Over ten thousand dinars worth of robes of honor and
cloth were sent to Sicily to celebrate the event, and
similar amounts were dispatched to the other provinces
as well. It was said that over twelve thousand youths
were circumcised in a single day. Such lavishly
celebrations were an acceptably pious form of conspicuous
consumption. The Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (908-32)
spent six hundred thousand dinars on the circumcision
of his five sons, while the circumcision of the future
caliph al-Mu'tazz cost his father eighty-six million
dirhams.

Considering the later Fatimid development of the
veneration of saints, it is surprising that the caliph
frowned upon funeral lamentations. Abu 'Abd Allah
(ībn al-Qā'im al-Mu'tizz's paternal uncle) wrote asking
for permission to make funeral lamentations (al-bukā' wa'l-naww) on the occasion of the death of his son (al-
Mu'izz's cousin). The caliph refused, saying that such a display was inappropriate for a man of his rank; it was suitable only for slaves and eunuchs. According to Qadi al-Nu'man, al-Mansur had forbidden al-Mu'izz to weep at his death, because Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth imam, had also prohibited it. Undoubtedly, such unseemly behavior was fit only for women.

This did not mean, however, that death was without ceremony. Jawdhar, fearing that the end was near, asked al-Mu'izz for one of his garments to use as a shroud, in order to gain its blessing. The caliph sent him eleven garments in response, at least two from the wardrobes of each of his predecessors. The list of garments sent is testimony to the variety and sumptuousness of caliphal dress.

The ruler well knew that some might disapprove of his devotion to the pleasure of this world. Al-Maqrizi preserves an unusual episode where al-Mu'izz, at home in al-Mansuriyya one wintery day in 962, summoned the Kutama elders so that they might see how simply he lived. Dressed in plain garments, he sat in a large square majlis spread with felt rugs. Before him were books, letters, and an inkwell. "O my brothers," he said, "I awoke this morning to the wintery cold, and I said to the mother of my sons (who is where she can hear my words), 'Don't you suppose that our brothers assume that we would spend a day like today in eating and drinking, surrounded by cloth-of-gold, brocade, silks, furs, wine, and song, just like the greats of the world?' Then I realized that I should send for you ... so that you could see the way I live when I am alone." The caliph then exhorted the elders to lead noble and abstemious lives.

Al-Mu'izz feared that the programed splendor of the court might backfire and alienate the Kutama, the Fatimids' staunchest allies. Were this to happen, al-Mu'izz's carefully laid plans to expand his realm would be for naught. Al-Mu'izz gave this display of rhetoric in unusually austere surroundings to guarantee the continued support of the Berber troops in the venture he was about to begin.

This performance was just one act in the extraordinary drama al-Mu'izz staged to build and expand upon his very real military achievements in the western Maghrib. In 959-60 through agents in the Hijaz, al-Mu'izz settled a feud in Mecca between the Banu Hasan and the Banu Ja'far in which scores of clan members had already been killed. By secretly paying the blood money, al-Mu'izz satisfied both sides' demands; more important, he ensured that he would be recognized as suzerain of the holy cities once Egypt fell.

Even the works of the foremost literary figures of the period were aimed at furthering the Fatimid cause. The poet Muhammad ibn Hani al-Andalusi was born in Spain, grew up in a pro-Fatimid atmosphere, and escaped Umayyad persecution when al-Mu'izz's armies were in northern Morocco. Ibn Hani was first a courtier to the Banu Hamdun of Masila, the Fatimid client-state founded during the reign of al-Mahdi; then he joined the Fatimid court at al-Mansuriyya before the Banu Hamdun allied themselves with the Zanata and pro-Umayyad factions. Ibn Hani was not only the greatest Maghribi poet—"like al-Mutanabbi in the East," in the words of Ibn Khaldun—but was also the greatest panegyrist and literary propagandist of the Fatimid court. The geographer Abu'l-Qasim ibn Hawqal, though perhaps not quite "a spy in the service of the Fatimids," as Reinhard Dozy believed, was certainly a Fatimid sympathizer. This is amply demonstrated by his comments on Umayyad Spain and Kalbid Sicily, and explains his passages on Nubia and the history of North Africa.

The Fatimids believed themselves surrounded by three major enemies: the Umayyads of Spain, the Abbasids, and the Byzantines. The propaganda written by Ibn Hani and Ibn Hawqal attacked where they thought them most vulnerable. The Umayyads were chastised for cowardice, ostentatious luxury, questionable genealogy, and ineptitude. The Abbasids, the weakest and most distant of the Fatimid adversaries, were seen as debauched people unworthy to rule, effeminate, indifferent to the Byzantine advances in Syria they were unable to check, and an old, decrepit dynasty which should make room for new blood. The propaganda against the Byzantines, which was written primarily for internal consumption and self-congratulation, created an image of the infidel ever-defeated by the might of Fatimid land and sea power.

Fatimid propaganda and diplomacy resulted in a series of convergent attacks against Egypt, the Byzantine fleet, the Qarmatians in Palestine, and Berber tribes near Alexandria. After 966, an official Fatimid delegation was sent to Egypt inviting the amir Kafur to recognize Fatimid suzerainty. The embassy was given an amiable reception, but nothing more. At the same time, al-Mu'izz ordered the digging of wells along the route to Egypt and a fortress (qasr) to be built at every stage. In the following year al-Mu'izz and Nicephoras Phocas concluded a treaty which temporari-
ly eliminated any Byzantine threat to Fatimid plans. On 20 Jumada I 357 (23 April 968), Kafur died, leaving Egypt open for conquest. The news reached al-Mu'izz in all-Mansuriyya a month later.

Al-Mu'izz made final preparations for the expedition that same year, collecting money from the state treasury and readying the troops. General Jawhar left Ifriqiya on 14 Rabi' I 358 (5 February 969); by the middle of Ramadan of the same year a messenger had returned to al-Mu'izz with the glad tidings that Egypt had fallen to the Fatimids. Ibn Hani, ready on the spot, recited a qasida which began:

The Abbasids are saying, "Has Egypt been conquered?"
So say to them, "The matter has been decided!"
Jawhar has already passed Alexandria:
The heralds have announced it, and victory is his!

The audience at al-Mansuriyya would have appreciated this description of the inept Abbasids stupefied by the events taking place before their very eyes.

One of Jawhar's first acts in Egypt was to strike coins in the new ruler's name. He sent a sack of them to al-Mu'izz in al-Mansuriyya as a symbol of the conquest. Since these coins, of which a few samples survive, differ from the Ifriqiyan coinage of the same year only in the mint mark, the dies must have been prepared in advance, showing that this was no spontaneous gesture.

Al-Mu'izz, hearing that his faithful retainer Jawdhar was near death, sent him some of this "blessed coinage, struck in our name in Egypt by the grace of God." "I hope," the caliph said, "that God will prolong his life so that he may make the pilgrimage with us and that we may give him dinars struck in Baghdad. For God will realize our hopes."

Once again, al-Mu'izz made his dynasty's two goals quite clear: universal recognition that the Fatimids were the sole legitimate heirs of the Prophet, and a physical and spiritual return to their ancestral home in Mecca, thereby fulfilling the obligation of pilgrimage. The map which al-Mu'izz ordered five years earlier was not merely a beautiful object with which to decorate the palace; it was a map for the war room of the Fatimid state. Among all the images of mountains, seas, rivers, roads, and cities, Mecca and Medina stood out as the ultimate destinations. Thus Jawhar's conquest of Egypt was only one of many steps in the right direction.

To that end, outside of Fustat Jawhar built a fortified campground (gasr) as a base of operations for further forays east. Its original enclosure walls were repeatedly modified in the following months against an expected Qarmatian attack, which finally materialized in December 971. In the previous year, the holy cities in Arabia had quickly surrendered to the Fatimids, evidence of the potency of Fatimid propaganda. Jawhar's army, however, met stronger resistance in Palestine and Syria, where Fatimid expansion halted. This temporary setback may have moved al-Mu'izz to take his court to Egypt in order better to supervise the campaigns. He wrote Jawhar of his decision, and Jawhar began building a residence (qasr) suitable for the ruler.

Al-Mu'izz finally arrived in Egypt on 7 Ramadan 362 (21 June 972), four years and a few weeks after Jawhar, leaving Ifriqiya in the hands of his trusted amirs. The camp, now graced with a palace, was renamed al-Qāhira ("the Victorious"), probably out of wishful thinking. Arriving from Alexandria, where he had been met by notables presented according to rank, al-Mu'izz was again greeted in Giza by notables, this time from Fustat, who accompanied him and his procession—including the coffins of his ancestors—across the Nile by bridge into Fustat, which had been decorated especially for the procession. The parade halted when it reached the new palace, and al-Mu'izz fell prostrate in prayer, thanking God for his safe arrival. In the following days he held court in the palace, sitting on a golden throne (sarir) that Jawhar had prepared for him.

This spectacle, a far cry from al-Mahdi's modest entry into Qayrawan sixty-odd years earlier, was the culmination of the policy instituted by al-Mansur and developed by him and his son. Faced with the threat from Abu Yazid, al-Mansur turned a near debacle into a public-relations triumph through a combination of military prowess and shrewd propaganda. In contrast, his two predecessors seem to have been relatively indifferent to the powers of persuasion that propaganda could wield.

The career of Jawdhar, trusted servant of all four Fatimid imams, clearly illustrates the change. Under the first two rulers, when prestige was indicated simply and traditionally through recognition in the khutba, inscription on coins, and the bestowal of textiles on favored individuals, Jawdhar was named to head the only treasury other than the general fund, that is, the royal collection of textiles and clothing. In al-Mansur's reign, however, Jawdhar was put in charge of a new department that marked a change: the royal treasury became a source of political gift-giving. In addition to
textiles, animals, or simple payments of money, for the first time we hear that the ruler offered "kingly" curios and treasures to win the Berbers' loyalty. When the Byzantine embassy of 952 brought al-Mansur precious gifts, Jawdhar was instructed to reciprocate with royal treasure, although we learn that he was reluctant to part with the precious goods that al-Mansur had collected. He did not understand, as his ruler did, that power lay not in accumulating treasure, but in dispensing largess with flair.

Jawdhar's conservative bent appears again in the incident with al-Mu'izz over the tiraz: Jawdhar wanted the wording in the inscription to be correct, while al-Mu'izz appears not to have cared at all. He was much more concerned about his public image, as can be seen by the calculation involved in his demonstration of the simple life before the Kutama elders.

Parallel developments are apparent in architecture, which is particularly striking considering the paucity of the information left behind about it. Al-Mahdiyya was built for a practical reason: it was a secure base from which to conquer the world. While poetically it might be compared to Mecca, visually its closest referents were local architectural forms, purged when necessary of such recent impious innovations as the minaret. Al-Mansuriyya was built for a practical reason: it was a secure base from which to conquer the world. While poetically it might be compared to Mecca, visually its closest referents were local architectural forms, purged when necessary of such recent impious innovations as the minaret. Al-Mahdiyya was built on a far grander scale, recalling Baghdad and the great palaces of the Islamic and Arab past as well as the nearer splendors of Raqqada, the Aghlabid capital to which it was heir. When al-Mu'izz ordered Raqqada plowed under, it was as a most forceful prise de possession, and not for want of additional arable land.

The half-century of Fatimid rule in North Africa had a significance far greater than a simple political prelude to Fatimid rule in Egypt. Al-Mansur introduced his dynasty to modes of propagandizing which had long been common to the kings and emperors of the Mediterranean world. The Fatimids' genius lay in their being such quick learners: grasping the lessons in North Africa, they went on to surpass all their teachers in founding a most dazzling court in Egypt. While Fatimid art has often been considered the great secular revival of medieval Egyptian art, it should also always be understood as another cog in the great propaganda machine the Fatimids put in motion to conquer not only the lands but the minds of the world.

18. Ibn 'Idhari, Bayan al-Mughrib 1:277. A defaced inscription, dated 378 (988-89) from the Great Mosque of Sfax, may be evidence of these anti-Fatimid, anti-Shiite measures, for all offending phrases have been chiseled off. See Georges Marçais and Lucien Golvin, La Grande Mosquée de Sfax (Tunis, 1960), p. 16, and Lucien Golvin, Essai sur l'architecture religieuse musulmane (Paris, 1970-79) 3:164-65, and also p. 154 for a similar case at the Zaytuna mosque in Tunis.

19. Ibn 'Idhari, Bayan al-Mughrib 1:174 puts the completion of the walls in Rabii' I 304; al-Maqrizi states that they were begun in Dhul-Qa'da 303, that is, only four months before (see al-Maqrizi, Khitat 1:351).


21. For the mosque, see Alexandre Lézine, Mahdija: Recherches d'archéologie islamique (Paris, 1965), pp. 65 ff; for the musalla, see al-Maqrizi, Khitat 1:351, line 13.


24. Ibid.


26. For the Saqifa, see Lézine, Mahdija, pp. 24-38; for the mosque, pp. 65 ff.

27. Marçais, Architecutre musulmane, pp. 78-79 and fig. 39; Lézine, "Notes d'archéologie," pp. 82 ff.


29. Lézine conveniently supposed that al-Bakri (Mughrib, p. 30; trans. pp. 67-78) confused directions when writing about the palace but not when discussing other buildings.

30. The Great Mosque of Sfax was also a copy of a mosque in Qayrawan, but it had a minaret modeled on that of Qayrawan; see Golvin, Essai sur l'architecture, 3:162-71.


32. Lézine, "Notes d'archéologie."

33. The bastions, once thought to have been tower bases, as at the mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo, are now known to have been cisterns, for the nature of the site precluded digging cisterns under the court (see Lézine, Mahdija, p. 95).


35. Williams, "Cult of 'Alid Saints, pt. I."


38. EP, s.v. "Karmati."


43. Al-Maqrizi, Itti'az 1:72.

44. Al-Maqrizi, Itti'az 1:86, and al-Maqrizi, Khitat 1:208 are virtually identical; a similar passage appears in Ibn 'Idhari, Bayan al-Mughrib, 1:208; however, in the Khitat the word sarir ("throne") is replaced by minbar ("pulpit.").


47. Al-Maqrizi, Itti'az, 1:82. Abu'l-Abbas Ahmad al-Qalqashandi, Subh al-A'sha fi Sin`a' , 14 vols. (Cairo, 1913-19), gives a description of the musalla as it appeared in his own (i.e., Mamluk) time; unfortunately, it is not relevant for a period five centuries earlier. See also Canard, "Cérémonial fatimite," p. 389, n. 3, where, however, he confuse the musalla with the shamsa.


50. Fatimid expeditions to Sicily and southern Italy in 925-26 and 928-29 are reported to have returned with spoils including silk, brocade, goods, and jewels (Ibn 'Idhari, Bayan al-Mughrib, 1:190, 193). A textile industry in North Africa had not yet been developed; there is scanty evidence for textiles of North African origin before the tenth century. See R. B. Sergeant, Islamic Textiles (Beirut, 1972), pp. 10 and 177. Jawdhar was given robes of brocade, goods, and jewels (Ibn 'Idhari, Bayan al-Mughrib, pp. 45-46; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 51).
52. Al-Maqrizi, Itīfāq 1:82.
53. The accounts of the reception are varied: al-Maqrizi, Itīfāq 1:86, reports that al-Mansur returned to al-Mahdiyya; Ibn Hammad, Akhbar, pp. 36-37; trans. pp. 57-58, reports that he returned to Qayrawan only to depart again to fight Abu Yazid's son. He then returned once more to Qayrawan and eventually to al-Mahdiyya.
55. Al-Jawdhari, Akhbar, pp. 52-53; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 76.
56. See, for example, Farrugia de Candia, "Monnaies fatimites," no. 19 (pl. 1) dated A.H. 333.
58. Lane-Poole, Catalogue of Oriental Coins, vol. 4, pls. 1-2; exceptions appear to be a few coins from the reigns of al-Hakim and al-Mu'izz, e.g., nos. 104 and 157.
59. Al-Jawdhari, Sirat, p. 60; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 88. Actually, the text refers to quarter-dinars.
60. Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, pp. 74-75 and n. 96.
61. Al-Jawdhari, Sirat, p. 52; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 75. Tiraz were not only the products made by the workshops of al-Mahdiyya. Sometime before 946, al-Mansur had written to Jawdhar to order gilded torches and swords with sheaths of al-Mu'izz's reign (cf. Al-Jawdhari, Sirat, pp. 47; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 67). Al-Mu'izz's name and titles are preserved in the name of the workshops of al-Mahdiyya.
62. Al-Jawdhari, Sirat, pp. 52-53; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, pp. 76-77.
63. Ibn Hammad, despite his anti-Fatimid bias, is especially well informed on the events concerning the Abu Yazid affair. He mentions two separate gifts in 335 (946-47) to Isma'il, one of noble horses, pure-bred camels, and regular horses (among other items) from the Kutama chiefs and another from ʿAli ibn Hamdun, the governor of Masila, of 25 horses, 25 najib camels, 4 other camels, and a magnificent civet (Akhbar, pp. 25-26; trans., p. 43). In 946 Jawdhar sent Isma'il a gift of ten thousand dinars (al-Jawdhari, Sirat, p. 47; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 67).
64. Ibn Hammad, Akhbar, p. 27; trans. p. 46.
65. Ibn Hammad, Akhbar, p. 29; trans. p. 48. While this interpretation may well be true, once again it indicates the author's desire to denigrate the Fatimids wherever possible.
66. Ibn Hawqal, Surat al-Ard 1:72; trans. 1:69. This, however, does not appear to be true.
68. Ibn ʿIdhari, Bayan al-Muḥfrīḥ, 1:219, gives the date 336 (947-48), then cites al-Bakri, Muḥfrīḥ, p. 25; trans. p. 58, which itself gives 337 (948-49). Ibn Hawqal, Surat al-Ard, 1:72; trans., 1:69, the earliest authority, says that the caliph moved in at the end of Shawwāl 337 (April 949). Allowing that the city was built in the shortest possible time, it seems fair to assume that the plan was conceived at least a year before. To my knowledge, the earliest dinar struck there is dated 338 (949-50) (Farrugia de Candia, "Monnaies fatimites," no. 28).
69. Ibn Hammud, Akhbar, p. 24, trans., p. 41, says that al-Mu'izzīz built a palace called al-Iwan for his son. For Zirid constructions at the site, see Idris, Berbérie orientale, p. 426.
70. Al-Maqrizi, Ahsan al-Taqasam, p. 266.
73. Ibid.
74. Al-Jawdhari, Sirat, p. 42; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 60. There is no textual evidence whatsoever for the dar al-amma that Lézine postulated at al-Mahdiyya (cf. Lézine, "Notes d'archéologie").
75. Al-Jawdhari, Sirat, p. 48, where the "pure" is undoubtedly an epithet attached to those of pure Fatimid lineage, common in later inscriptions.
76. Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, pp. 84, 90, 100, 104, and 127.
78. ʿAbd al-Wahhab, Mujammal, p. 97. While this poem was probably composed during al-Mu'izzīz's reign (cf. line 10), the building described could very well be of al-Mansur's time.
82. Lucien Golvin, Le Magrib central à l'époque des Zirides (Paris, 1957), p. 188.
83. Grabar, Alhambra, pp. 120-22. In Fatimid times, the mosque was likened to janna, because it was there that one developed and practiced the qualities of the inmates of Paradise (see Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," pp. 121-23).
84. Al-Maqrizi, Itīfāq, 1:91.
86. EP, s.v. "Khawarnak."
88. Al-Jawdhari, Sirat, p. 61; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 89.
90. Al-Maqrizi, Itīfāq 1:88. Al-Maqrizi accepts a reign of eight years, although "some say seven years and ten days."
91. It was given in two parts separated by a break in which the khatib sat on the last step of the minbar; see al-Jawdhari, Sirat, p. 76; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, pp. 111 ff. and 144, n. 222.
92. Al-Jawdhari, Sirat, p. 85; Canard, Vie de Jawdhar, p. 121.
95. Al-Bakri, Muḥfrīḥ, p. 27; trans., p. 63.
Qayrawan is approximately 25° too far to the south of east, but its placement was revealed to 'Uqba ibn Nafi' under equally miraculous circumstances (see Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 1:61).

98. S. M. Stern, ""An Embassy of the Byzantine Emperor to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'tizz,"" *Byzantion* 20 (1950): 244. The account is taken from the unpublished *Kitāb al-Majālis wa'l-Musayarat* [Book of audiences and voyages] by the Qadi al-Nu'man, the foremost theologian of the early Fatimid court.


102. Al-Maqrizi, *Kitāb* 1:417. It was discovered in the treasury of rugs and furnishings during the looting of 1068-69. See Etienne Combe et al., *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (Cairo, 1931-75) [hereafter RCEA] 4:186, no. 1564 with bibliography.

103. RCEA 5, no. 1622. A linen cloth with a red silk inscription reading: "In the name of the King, the Merciful and Compassionate God: Assistance from God and nigh victory to the servant and friend of God, Ma'add Abu Tamim, the Imam al-Mu'tizz li-Din Allah, Commander of the Believers. May God's blessings be upon him. In the year 355 [966]."

If correctly read, the invocation is a very unusual variant of the bimillah. The phrase, "'Nusr min Allah wa-fath garib'" (Koran 61:13), refers to the campaign to conquer Egypt which was about to begin in earnest. The date A.H. 355 confirms al-Maqrizi's statement that al-Mu'tizz's name was written on the tiraz in Tinnis, Damietta, al-Qays, and Bahnasa before he actually ruled Egypt (see *Itti'az*, 1:230).

104. The casket is known as the "'Arqueta de Carrion de los Condes," and is in the National Archaeological Museum of Madrid. The inscription (RCEA 5:89, no. 1811, listed s.a. 359) reads: "In the name of the Merciful and Compassionate God: Assistance from God and nigh victory to the servant and friend of God, Ma'add Abu [sic] Tamim, the Imam al-Mu'tizz li-Din Allah, Commander of the Believers. May God's blessings be upon him, his fine ancestors, and his pure descent. This is from the things which he ordered at al-Mansuriyya the pleasant. The work of A...d al-Khurasani." Aside from an error in spelling, the central portion of this inscription is the same as RCEA 1622 (above, n. 103). The inclusion of the caliph's ancestors and his descent in the *tastiqa* becomes a characteristic feature of Fatimid inscriptions, although the exact wording has yet to evolve into its definitive form.

The casket is listed in the RCEA under A.H. 359, but in fact dates from before the conquest of Egypt. Koran 61:13 does not always appear in textiles of the period. In contrast to the example given in n. 103, another linen fragment with red silk embroidery (RCEA 5:191 no. 1637a) omits any introductory phrase between the bimillah and the imam's personal name Ma'add. The evidence is not conclusive, however, since tiraz inscriptions are often abbreviated for lack of space or out of carelessness.

105. For example, RCEA 5:91, no. 1814: a linen fragment dated 359 (969-70), which has a very different message, asking God's benediction on His prophet Muhammad and the People of the House, or descendants of 'Ali.


107. Ibn Hammad (*Akbhar*, p. 39; trans., p. 60) reported that al-Mansur had his sons circumcised in A.H. 340 along with a thousand children of Qayrawan, to whom he distributed new clothes and expense money. Adam Mez (*The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh and D.S. Margoliouth [Patna, 1937], p. 428) quotes the *Kitāb al-Uyun wa'l-Hadâq* IV Berl. 252a, which says that 10,000 children were circumcised, 500 to 1,300 each day for a period of seventeen days. Each child received, according to his rank and position, from less than 10 dirhams to 100 dinars. The total cost was 200,000 dinars: "Such expenditure and extravagance had never been experienced before."


112. Al-Jawdhari, *Sivat*, pp. 80-81; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, pp. 211-12 and n. 465. The list reads like an inventory of the variety of robes and textiles used by the caliphs: From al-Mu'tizz, a lined garment of cloth from Marv with a tunic beneath it; from al-Mahdi, a lined garment of a solid-colored cloth with a tunic; two tunics from al-Qa'im as well as trousers, a turban, and a belt; and a robe of cloth from Marv and a tunic from al-Mansur.

The caliph sent the following message along with the garments: "Conserve these garments until the time of which you spoke [i.e., his death], after which God will have prolonged your life so that you will join us in the pilgrimage to the sacred house of God [Mecca] and the visit to the grave of our ancestor Muhammad [at Medina], so that this will be a joy to your eyes by the grace of God to His friends, God willing."

Previously, the caliph had sent Jawdhar a pair of slippers or leggings (rânâ) originally worn by al-Mansur. Jawdhar was to wear them, "recognizing God's blessing and felicity in them." Al-Jawdhari, *Sivat*, pp. 112-13; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 169.


116. Canard, ""Impérialisme des Fatimides."""
129. Lane-Poole, Catalogue of Muhammadan Coins, 4:9-10, nos. 24-28 (al-Mansuriyya 343-355), and no. 29 (pl. 1: Miṣr 358). Such a coin, with its magnificent inscription in three bands around a blank center, must have been a remarkable sight to Egyptians accustomed to the standard Abbasid coinage. Al-Maqrizi calls this coin al-sikkat al-ḥamra? (''the red coinage'') in Itti'az 1:115. His transcription of the legend on it tallies exactly with Lane-Poole, Catalogue of Muhammadan Coins, no. 29, except that al-Maqrizi read it from the center to the edge.


132. Al-Maqrizi, Itti'az 1:133.


THE CULT OF ‘ALID SAINTS IN THE FATIMID MONUMENTS OF CAIRO
PART II: THE MAUSOLEA

The tombs and shrines of the Fatimid period in Cairo represent the earliest and largest related group of funerary monuments surviving from the first six centuries in Islam. Most of them have epigraphic or textual citations linking them with ‘Alid saints. They were built or restored between 1122 and 1154, the years between the vizierate of Ma’mun al-Bata’ihi (1121-25) and the arrival of the head of al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib in Cairo. This was a period of both crisis and turmoil for the Fatimid government, whose spiritual credibility and political authority had been undermined by two succession crises (1094 and 1130) and by two periods of assassination (1121 and 1130).

This paper will argue that the appearance of these mausolea represented the architectural manifestation of an officially sponsored cult of ‘Alid martyrs and saints that was used to generate support and loyalty for the Isma’ili Imam Caliph who claimed descent from the Prophet through his grandson al-Husayn. The beginnings of this policy under Badr al-Jamali (vizier from 1074 to 1094), who discovered the head of al-Husayn at Ascalon in 1090, and Ma’mun al-Bata’ihi, who built the mosque of al-Aqmar in 1125, were traced in the first part of this study (‘‘The Mosque of al-Aqmar,’’ Muqarnas, volume 1). Its culmination was marked by the reinterment of the head of al-Husayn at al-Qahira in 1154 within the palace area of al-Qahira. That event also represented the merging of two separate funerary traditions: that of the court in a private shrine within the palace, and that of the local population in constructions located in the Qarafa al-Kubra, the great popular cemetery east of Fustat.

Al-Qahira, the royal city founded in 969, was at first accessible only to the household of the caliph, his troops, court, merchants, and purveyors, and others on official business. It was a walled enclosure of roughly one square kilometer, several kilometers to the northeast of the then flourishing and populous quarters of Fustat al-‘Askar and al-Qata‘i, the commercial and manufacturing area of Misr, in which most of the Sunni and local population lived and worked.

The Fatimid caliphs in Cairo, following the sunna of the Prophet, were buried in their residences, apparently also the custom of the Fatimids in North Africa.1 When al-Mu’tizz entered al-Qahira in 972, he brought with him the bodies of his predecessors—‘Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi (the founder of the dynasty), al-Qa‘im, his grandfather, and al-Mansur, his father—which he reburied in a tomb constructed in the interior of the Eastern Palace. Eventually he, too, was buried there, and in time the tomb also received the mortal remains of eight of his successors, their wives, and their children. This funerary chapel was known as the turbat al-za‘farān, or ‘‘tomb of saffron,’’ a name deriving from the custom of anointing the tombs with that substance. No description remains of this tomb; al-Maqrizi mentions only that the incumbent caliphs called on their ancestral graves there whenever they left or entered the palace, as well as on Fridays, the ‘Id al-Fitr, and other state holidays.2

The custom of house burial in Egypt was not confined to the Fatimid caliphs. The story of Sayyida Nafisa seems to have been characteristic of the early stages of the cult of saints. She was the daughter of al-Hasan b. Zayd b. al-Hasan b. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, and among the first of the ‘Alid families who left the Hijaz in the early years of the ninth century to resettle in Fustat. She was a woman renowned for her piety and to whom miracles were attributed. When Imam Shafi‘i, the Sunni legist and founder of one of the four schools of Sunni Islam, who used to exchange hadiths with her, died in 820 his body was taken to her house so that she might recite prayers over it.3 At her own death in 824, the people of Fustat begged her husband, Ishaq ibn Ja‘far al-Sadiq, not to take her body back to Medina, but to bury it in Fustat because of her baraka (blessing or
grace from God). She was buried in her house in a grave reportedly dug by her own hands. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Khallikan says: "The spot on which her house stood is now occupied by her mausoleum. ... This tomb has a great reputation, experience having shown that prayers said near it are answered." In Islam, the earliest instance of a cemetery is that of Baqi' al-Gharqad at Medina. The first person to be buried in it was 'Uthman ibn Maz' un, a Companion of the Prophet, who died in 626. Eventually members of the Prophet's family, his descendants, and other Muslim notables were buried there, and it became an honor to be granted a final resting place among the ahl al-bayt, the Companions of the Prophet and friends of God. A similar development must have taken place around the tomb of Sayyida Nafisa, as inhabitants of Fustat and al-Askar sought a final resting place near her grave and the graves of other SAlids nearby, and this was one of the reasons behind the development and expansion of the Qarafa, the great public cemetery that lay in the desert to the south and east of the inhabited areas.

In their description of the various sites in the Qarafa, the literary sources refer constantly to their "holiness," to their "ability to answer prayers," and "to the baraka which they give to the people who visit them." For example, in 1083 Abu'l-Husayn Muhammad ibn Jubayr remarks of the Qarafa that "this is also one of the wonders of the world for the tombs [mashāhid] it contains of prophets, of the kindred of Muhammad, of his Companions, of the followers of the Companions, of learned men and ascetics, and of saintly men renowned for their miracles and of wonderful report." Ibn Battuta, in 1327, reports:

At [old] Cairo, too, is [the cemetery of] al-Qarafa, a place of vast repute for blessed power, whose special virtue is affirmed in a tradition related by al-Qurtubi among others, for it is a part of the mount of al-Muqattam, of which God has promised that it shall be one of the gardens of Paradise. These people build in the Qarafa beautiful domed pavilions [qubab] and surround them by walls so that they look like houses, and they construct chambers in them and hire the services of Qur'an readers, who recite night and day. The people go out every Thursday evening to spend the night there with their children and womenfolk and make a circuit of the famous sanctuaries.

The accounts depict the central position of the Qarafa in the lives of the common people. The various tomb complexes and their dependencies emerge as both a religious and a social meeting place. The traditional Islamic practices of ziyyārat al-qubūr (the visitation of burial places) and reliance on intercessory prayers appear well established by the early tenth century. Visiting the dead was a form of piety especially attractive to women, because it made up for their absence at the formal, exclusively male, communal mosque prayers and because it constituted an approved form of outing in an otherwise restricted and well-supervised life. This popular cult of the dead, however, was at variance with royal and official Fatimid procedures, according to which the veneration of the caliphal ancestors was strictly a family and court cult and one in which therefore most of the Fatimids' new Egyptian subjects—who in any case did not give unreserved allegiance to Isma'ili teaching—would not have been allowed to participate.

MAUSOLEA BUILT AROUND 1122

Mashhad of Umm Kulthum. The mashhad of Umm Kulthum (1122; plate 1) is located in that area of the Qarafa reserved by 'Anbasa, the last Arab governor of Egypt (851-56), for the ahl al-bayt and descendants of 'Ali. In it are buried the al-Tabataba family, prominent Ashraf descended from al-Hasan. It was a representative of this family, who as naqib, or chief, of the 'Alid families living in Fustat, received the Fatimid imam al-Mu'izz when he arrived in the city founded by his victorious general Jawhar. Ibn Khallikan says that the tomb of Abu Muhammad ibn al-Tabataba "was in high repute for the fulfillment of prayers offered up at it." The mashhad is marked by a marble plaque on the qibla wall to the right of the mihrab, which gives the date of Umm Kulthum's death as 4 Shawwal 254 (26 September 868). All the sources agree that she was the daughter of al-Qasim b. Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq b. Muhammad al-Baqir b. 'Ali Zayn al-Abidin b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, buried among the Ashraf of the house of 'Ali in the Qarafa. Muhammad ibn al-Zayyat adds that hers was a large mashhad, against which the mashhad of Zaynab abutted, and that a number of the Ashraf were buried in it. The most interesting information is supplied by Ibn Muyassar: "In the year 516 [1122] Ma'mun [al-Bata'ihi] ordered his agent (wakil) Shaykh Abu'l-Barakat Muhammad ibn 'Uthman to direct his steps toward the seven majids which were between the mountain and the Qarafa, the first of which was the mashhad of Sayyida Zaynab and the last of which was the mashhad of Kulthum. He restored their buildings and repaired what was ruined
Creswell has proposed that the original ground plan of the mashhad was a square; its central portion was covered by a dome; and it was set off on three of its sides by an ambulatory.\textsuperscript{18} The two side niches would thus have been mihrabs at the end of each of the side aisles.

**Mashhad of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib.** The mashhad of al-Qasim, called Abu Tayyib in the *Index to Mohammedan Monuments in Cairo*, was also built in 1122. It is situated just in front of the mashhad of his daughter Umm Kulthum. Today all that survives of it is a square room and three niches that were once mihrabs, now visible in the qibla wall of the tomb compound, or hawsh. Creswell plausibly suggested that the plan was originally one of a domed chamber with an ambulatory on three sides and a mihrab in each aisle, similar to the plan he proposed for the mashhad of Umm Kulthum.\textsuperscript{19}

Of the literary sources that mention al-Qasim Abu Tayyib, Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Harawi includes the graves (*qubūr*) of Qasim b. Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq and of his sons 'Abd Allah (d. 875), and Yahya (d. 877), among those of the Ashraf.\textsuperscript{20} Ibn Zayyat adds that he was one of the guardians of the people for the hadiths of the Prophet, that he had a hawsh, and that his children were buried there. It is relevant to note that al-Qasim’s father Muhammad al-Dibaj, during the course of a revolt in Mecca in 815, had taken the title of Commander of the Believers. He was the first 'Alid after al-Husayn ibn 'Ali to receive the oath of allegiance from the people of Medina, but he ended by abdicating and publicly confessing his error, and was banished from the Hijaz. After the failure of his father’s uprising, al-Qasim, accompanied by his daughter Umm Kulthum and his sons, came to live in Egypt.\textsuperscript{21} Actually, the cenotaphs of al-Qasim’s sons, ‘Abd Allah and Yahya, are now to be found in the mausoleum known as Yahya al-Shabih, erected about 1150 in the hawsh of the mashhad of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib.

A mihrab, the plaster cast of which is now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, was found about four meters from the mausoleum of Yahya al-Shabih,\textsuperscript{22} in the compound of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib’s family. An analysis of the mihrab’s decoration reveals that stylistically it belongs to the tenth century, but that the fluting along the conch was added later.\textsuperscript{23} An inscription once framed the mihrab’s arch; the flutes were added at the expense of the inscription, but traces of it remain. The ribbing of the conch and the fluted edge closely parallel those in the mihrab of Umm Kulthum,

among them, and he placed in each mashhad a marble plaque with its name and the date of the restoration.\textsuperscript{17}

Nothing remains of this mashhad now except its very beautiful and unusual stucco mihrab. A fluted shell hood of ten ribs emanating from a raised spiral boss occupies the semi-dome above the concave recess. Two rows of eight-pointed stars and hexagons outlined by pearled borders fill the recess, five stars to a row; each star contains either the name “Muhammad” or the words “and ‘Ali”; the top row begins and ends with “and ‘Ali,” and the second with “Muhammad.” ‘Ali’s name had appeared previously in the roundel at the apex of the dome of the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali, but this is the first surviving instance of its appearance as a part of the decorative scheme of a mihrab, and it is particularly interesting because al-Ma'mun’s mihrab in the Aqmar mosque has not survived. In the qibla wall, separated from the main mihrab, are two plain niches.
so it seems likely that this mihrab belonged to one of the edifices al-Ma’mun ordered restored.

Mausoleum of Muhammad al-Ja’fari. The mausoleum of Muhammad al-Ja’fari (plate 2), built about 1122, is located in the general vicinity of the mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa. Although it is not mentioned in any of the sources, it is supposed that Muhammad al-Ja’fari was a son of Ja’far al-Sadiq b. Muhammad al-Baqir b. ‘Ali Zayn al-Abidin b. al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib. The mausoleum is a small, cubical building. It has a dome with a keel-arched profile resting on a transition zone with alternate trefoil squinches and similar trefoil-arched windows. Outside, the west side of the tomb abuts a preexisting enclosing wall, whose cresting consists of a series of inverted Y’s, the stems of which have a little cap.

Inside, the mausoleum is unadorned except for a few words of a Koranic inscription still visible in the south corner and on the north wall, which once circled the mausoleum just below the transition zone (plate 3). It is from Koran 7:54: “Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days—then sat Himself upon the Throne, covering the day with the night it pursues urgently—and the sun, and the moon, and the stars subservient, by His command. Verily, His are the creation and the command. Blessed be God, the Lord of All Being. Call on your Lord, humble and secretly. He loves not transgressors.” No decoration has survived on the mihrab; it is today a plain double-arched niche in the south wall.

Plate 2. Mausolea of Muhammad al-Ja’fari (plain dome) and Sayyida ʿAtika (fluted dome). General view.

Plate 3. Mausoleum of Muhammad al-Ja’fari. South corner, fragment of Koranic inscription.

Mausoleum of Sayyida ʿAtika. The mausoleum of Sayyida ʿAtika, built about 1122, is also not mentioned in any of the sources, and its attribution is uncertain. P. Ravaisse ascribed it to ʿAtika, an aunt of the Prophet; in the tomb itself a modern printed sign identifies ʿAtika as a Meccan lady of great beauty, married successively to ʿAbd Allah ibn Abi Bakr, ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab, Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwam, and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, the governor of Egypt during the caliphate of ʿAli ibn Abi Talib. All these men were killed, and when Caliph ʿAli wished to marry her, she said, “I think too much of you for you to be slain; for the people say, ‘whoever loves martyrdom should marry ʿAtika.’”

Its form is that of a small, square edicule, with a dome of a keel-arched profile and ribbed on the outside. Inside, the sixteen flutes converge in a flat central circle
which bears no traces of an inscription. The dome rests on a transition zone of trefoil squinches alternating with trilobed windows. Except for the ribbed dome the building is very similar to that of Muhammad al-Ja'fari. When the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe restored this mausoleum in 1915-19, it discovered that its northern wall was actually part of the forecourt belonging to the mausoleum of Muhammad al-Ja'fari. Today part of the ancient cresting can still be seen embedded in its western and northern walls.

The band of Koranic inscription, which begins in the corner of the west wall under the transition zone, is 2:255-56 (the Throne Verse):

God—there is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting, Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave? He knows what is before them and what is after them, and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills. His throne comprises the heavens and earth, the preserving of them appresses Him not; He is the All-high, the All-glorious. No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever believes in God and the Prophet, he is of the People of his House.

The Throne Verse is not an unusual quotation to find in an oratory, whether Sunni or Shi'i; in fact it appears in the earliest Muslim monument, the Dome of the Rock. For a Shi'i, however, the mention of “those who intercede with Him by His leave” would have meant the Prophet and the People of his House.

Of the double-arched mihrab only the decoration of the upper half remains (plate 4). A blind cresting of interlacing spheres and triangular caps crowns it; next a pearl border separates the cresting from the spandrel of the first arch which contains two bosses, each set off by pearl borders, the interiors of which have not survived. Vegetal forms fill the area between the bosses; another pearl border frames the outer arch of the niche, on which there are a few words from Koran 15:47: “We shall strip away all rancor that is in their breasts; as brothers they shall be upon couches set face to face.” Originally this inscription started in the right-hand corner of the qibla wall, ran over the arch of the mihrab, and finished in the left-hand corner.

Behind the tomb of ʻAtika on the north wall is a little niche that suggests the remains of an earlier mausoleum; perhaps a complex of tombs once existed there of which only these two have survived. The shrine of ʻAtika obviously postdates its neighbor, but not by much. Stylistic comparisons suggest 1120-25, and Ibn Muyassar’s date of 516 (1122) is borne out by the part of verse 15:47 around the mihrab: “as brothers they shall be on couches set face to face.” The verse clearly had special significance in the light of the Nizari schism and succession controversy, which was the crucial political issue of the period, but especially so in 1122, just after the vizier al-Afdal had been assassinated by Nizari emissaries.

All these tombs of 1122 honor ʻabd al-bayt who are descendants of Ja'far al-Sadiq: a son, Muhammad; a grandson, al-Qasim; and al-Qasim’s three children (Umm Kulthum, ʻAbd Allah, and Yahya). There is no explanation in the sources as to why the vizier al-Ma'mun selected these specific individuals, but al-Qasim and his children emigrated from the Hijaz after the unsuccessful uprising of his father Muhammad al-Dibaj, and were among the first ʻAlid families to resettle in Egypt. The mihrab from the hawsh of the al-Qasim family indicates that there might also be another relative. These account possibly for four of al-Ma'mun’s 1122 restorations. The tomb of Sayyida ʻAtika, by being juxtaposed with that of Muhammad al-Ja'fari and with its epigraphic allusions, might account for a fifth. Rather than a Meccan lady or the aunt of the Prophet, she may have been a descendant or connection of the family of Ja'far al-Sadiq. The mausoleum of Zaynab, mentioned as abutting on that of Umm
Kulthum, is hard to identify. There is in Cairo a shrine to Sayyida Zaynab which today exists only in its restored nineteenth-century form near the mosque of Ibn Tulun. In it there reposes the cenotaph of Zaynab bint Yahya al-Mutawwaq (the brother of Sayyida Nafisa), who faithfully served her paternal aunt for forty years, and in whose arms Nafisa is said to have died.34

It continues with "and God's greetings and abundant blessings upon our lord Muhammad, Seal of the Prophets, and upon his good and pure family in the month of Dhu'l-Qa'da in the year 527" (September 1133).39 The Koranic verses would have had great significance for a Shi'i. The seven days of creation are mentioned. According to the Isma'ili's, these days prefigure prophetic cycles: Muhammad had been the sixth major prophet, and the seventh "day" was at hand, with the triumph of Isma'iliism. The mystical number seven was of great importance to the Isma'ili's, and this was another reason why they were called Seveners. "The sun, the moon, and the stars" are also allusions to Muhammad, Fatima, and al-Hasan and al-Husayn who existed as light before the creation of the world.40

Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days—Then sat Himself upon the Throne, covering the day with the night it pursues urgently—and the sun, and the moon, and the stars subservient, by His command. Verily, His are the creation and the command. Blessed be God, the Lord of all Being. Call on your Lord, humbly and secretly; He loves not transgressors. Do no corruption in the land, after it has been set right; and call on Him fearfully, eagerly—Surely the mercy of God is nigh to the good-doers.

MAUSOLEA BUILT BETWEEN 1133 AND 1153

Mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. The mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya (1133) is situated in the same general enclosure as the tombs of Sayyida 'Atika and Muhammad al-Ja'fari. Although it is one of the largest and most impressive of the surviving mashhads, for some reason only two of the sources give it even a passing mention: al-Harawi includes the mashhad of Ruqayya, daughter of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, among those he places near the mosque of Ibn Tulun; Ibn al-Zayyat, in writing of the grave of Sayyida al-Sharifa Maryam, says it was built by Caliph al-Hafiz, "the same one who built the mashhad of Ruqayya, that is the mashhad of al-ru'yā [the vision]."35

Little is known of this Ruqayya except that she was 'Ali's daughter, though not by Fatima, and was reportedly buried in Damascus.40 That a shrine should have been built for her in Cairo in response to a dream or a vision was for that particular time not so extraordinary. Supernatural interventions were not uncommon motives for the religious constructions of Islam, and in the Fatimid period we have already cited the example of Badr al-Jamali's discovery of the head of al-Husayn.41 In the twelfth century, and especially in the reign of al-Hafiz, the founding of saints' tombs was apparently justified by miraculous discoveries of relics or by visions.

The Mashhad of the Light built over the grave of Sayyida al-Sharifa Maryam, a descendant of the Tabataba, is a case in point. It was so named because people had seen a pillar of light rising to the sky from that place, and when this miracle was reported to al-Hafiz, he ordered the spot to be excavated. A tablet recounting the saint's genealogy was uncovered over the grave. Al-Hafiz then had the mashhad built and covered with a dome. It soon became noted for answering prayers.38

The shrine of Ruqayya is securely dated by an inscription, painted under the ribs of the dome, which begins with Koran 7:54-56:
The main mihrab (plate 7) in the central bay is a handsome example of late Fatimid stucco work. Sixteen ribs radiate from a central boss (plate 8), in which the name "‘Ali" is surrounded six times by the name "Muhammad." This is again significant, for Muhammad is the Prophet in whom all the prophets are contained, and is the "seal" of the prophets. On the seventh day, it would be the seed of ‘Ali, the imam who is in all the imams, who would bring the reign of God on earth, when he would "seat himself upon the throne."142

The sixteen ribs terminate in an arch with a fluted edge laid against two rows of flat niches. The apex of the arch meets a band of ribbon-like design; two empty bosses are in its spandrels. Above, a band of Koranic inscription, a fragment of 33:33, reads, "O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination." Analogies to the elements of this
The two bosses in the spandrels have been defaced. The main boss has the name “Allah” from which radiate the eight ribs with U-shaped endings that provide the arch around the whole. A Koranic inscription band, starting and ending in the corners of the bay, frames the whole. On the mihrab in the right bay is 25:10, “Blessed be He who, if He will, shall assign to thee better than that—gardens underneath which rivers flow, and He shall assign to thee palaces.” On the mihrab in the left bay is 11:14, “And perform the prayer at the two ends of the day and of the night; surely the good deeds will drive away the evil deeds. That is a remembrance unto the mindful.” These references to righteous deeds and their rewards are explained by the dome’s inscription, which affirms God’s majesty and His gift of the Family of the Prophet as intercessors and examples for mankind.

Two more mihrabs outside the shrine on either side of the entrance (plate 10) in the narthex are similar to
the two lesser interior mihrabs, except that their
cresting is of interlacing angular and round shapes
resembling the cornice of the main mihrab and that of
Sayyida 'Atika. The right mihrab, just below the
cresting, begins with a fragment of Koran 28:31,
"Draw near and fear not, for surely thou art in secur-
ity," and ends with the last part of 26:99: "Serve thy
God, until the Certainty comes to thee." On the left
mihrab the Koranic citation is 5:55, "Your friend is on-
ly God, and His Messenger, and the believers who per-
form the prayer and pay the alms, and bow them
down." Both Shi'i and Sunni commentators take this
verse as one of the Koranic proofs of 'Ali's right to the
Imamate of the Muslim community, since it was re-
vealed to the Prophet while 'Ali was in prayer.44

A tiny fragment of decoration survives on the outside
face of the building. That, combined with the remains
of wall abutments on the façade, led A. Patricolo, one
of the architects in charge of restoring the shrine
in 1915-19 for the Comité de Conservation des
Monuments de l'Art Arabe, to argue that the plan of
the shrine originally included a courtyard.45 If it did,
then its general plan would resemble that of the
mashhad of Badr al-Jamali.

Under the dome is a splendid cenotaph whose
inscriptions shed further light on the period and the
architectural context of this mashhad:

[Side 2, after the bismillah and Koran 112] "Say: 'He is
God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge, Who has not
begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to Him is
not any one.'" This is the tomb of Sayyida Ruqayya,
dughter of the Commander of the Believers 'Ali ibn Abi
Talib, God's blessings be upon him and upon all the
imams who are his descendants and God bless our Lord
Muhammad, Seal of the Prophets [33:33]: "O People of
the House, God only desires to put away from you
abomination and with cleansing to cleanse you."
[44:51-54]: "Surely the God-fearing shall be in a station
secure among gardens and fountains, robed in silk and
brocade, set face to face. Even so; and we shall espouse
them to wide-eyed houris." [Side 3, 113:1-3]: "Say: '1
take refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak from the evil of
what He has created, from the evil of darkness when it
gathers, from the evil of women who blow on knots.'"
The building of this blessed tomb was ordered by the noble
[female] personage, the Amiriyya, whose agent was the
Qadi Maknun, servant of al-Hafiz, by the hand of the ex-
cellent Abu Turab Haydara ibn Abi'l-Fath; may God have
mercy upon him, in the year 533 [1138-39]. [11:73]: "The
mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, O People of
the House!" [7:54]: "Surely your Lord is God, who
created the heavens and the earth in six days—Then sat
Himself upon the Throne, covering the day with the night
it pursues urgently—and the sun, and the moon, and the
stars."46

The lady of this inscription, the widow of al-Amir, al-
Maqrizi tells us, "was a woman of piety, generosity,
virtue, and full of the fear of God. She used to send to
members of the Prophet's family for prayers."47 He
then tells the following anecdote:

Among the monuments of the Qarafa there is a small foun-
tain and minaret, and it is known as the Masjid of Mercy
[al-rahma]. Abu Turab al-Suwwal, who was the agent
[wakil] of the personage who built the mosque of al-
Andalus, and its ribat, and the mosque of Ruqayya, was in
charge of building it. ... And it was to this place that Abu
Turab brought the son of al-Amir in a basket of reeds in
which were dishes of cooked leeks and onions and carrots,
and the baby in swaddling clothes was on the bottom with
the food above him, and he brought him to the cemetery
and the wet nurse suckled him in this mosque, and he con-
cealed the matter from al-Hafiz until the baby grew up and
began to be called Kufayfa, "little basket." Later, after
the death of Abu Turab, the boy was slandered to al-Hafiz
by Abu ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Jawhari, and he took the child
and opened his veins, and he died. Then al-Jawhari went
to Damietta where he died in the year 528 [1134].48

The Imam of the Period and the Age would thus have
been for many the infant son and legitimate heir, al-
Tayyib, without whom there is no intercessor for the
faithful believers, and who was believed to have been
murdered by al-Hafiz. The Tayyibi Isma'ili, or
Bohras, usually state that the boy, the true imam, was
smuggled out of Egypt to Yemen, and al-Hafiz, who
had no legitimacy, was allowed to rule the collapsing
Egyptian state. The reminder that it is God who creates
and disposes and the mention of wicked women
(perhaps jealous ladies of the palace who would let
mischief occur to the child) take on a poignant quality
in this context. The choice of Ruqayya, a shadowy
female figure, as a "cover" for a structure of special
significance to a few initiates would not be implausible.

Mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa. The present mashhad
of Sayyida Nafisa was built in the Ottoman period. Of the
Fatimid shrine nothing remains except the site itself and
some woodwork now in the Museum of Islamic Art.
But the history of the mashhad is important because it is
tomb whose prominence dates primarily to the
Fatimid period.49

Sayyida Nafisa was buried, according to common
early Islamic practice, in her own house, which the
mausoleum later replaced. Al-Maqrizi is the only
historian to give any details of the history of this
mashhad: "It is said that the first of the builders over
the grave was 'Ubayd Allah b. al-Sari b. al-Hakim,
governor of Egypt" (821-27).50 The next reference to it
comes from the time of Badr al-Jamali, who restored a door or gate (bāb). Embedded in the north wall of the hawsh is some of the cresting in the form of a chain of inverted Y’s which once decorated its boundaries; it probably dates to 1089, the time of that restoration. In 1138, Caliph al-Hafiz renewed (jadadda) the dome over the grave and ordered a marble lining for the mihrab. Surviving pieces of woodwork in the Museum of Islamic Art indicate that further restoration or embellishment was ordered by him in 1147.

A curious survival among the pieces of woodwork from this mashhad in the Museum of Islamic Art is the top half of a wooden screen or window filling. In the shape of an arch, it is made up of panels of inscription in naskh characters (which in Egypt do not appear on monuments until the Ayyubid period). Occupying the central position of the arch, however, are two broad bands with an inscription in Kufic lettering. It can easily be read as Koran 33:33, the verse that had special significance to the Musta’fids line of the Isma’ili and was appropriate for an imam who was asserting his claim to legitimacy: “O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and with cleansing to cleanse you.”

**Mausoleum of Ikhwat Yusuf.** The mausoleum of the Ikhwat Yusuf (c. 1145; plate 11) lies at the foot of the Jabal Muqattam, practically underneath the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali, which during the medieval period was regarded as a holy site, one of the gardens of Paradise. Before that it was an ancient Jewish cemetery called the Tur Sinai, which contained many relics of the Prophet Moses.

An inscription on a stela set into the wall opposite the mihrab states: “This is the tomb of Ibrahim b. al-Yasa‘ b. al-Ti‘is of the descendants of Abraham. Peace be upon them and [a few words missing] all and may God bless Muhammad and his family and peace.” Because of the style of the simple Kufic lettering, this inscription, although undated, has been placed around the year 1010. Ibn al-Zayyat mentions that Reuben, the brother of Yusuf, is also buried there and that the mausoleum was built as the result of a dream.

The present building is an accretion of later rooms around the original Fatimid qubba. The oldest part is a square room with a plain dome of the keel-arched variety set upon a narrow octagonal drum with simple keel-arched windows in each face. Plain squinches alternate with single windows in the transition zone.

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Plate 11. Mausoleum of the Ikhwat Yusuf (far left); mashhad of Badr al-Jamali (above).

Occupying the whole of the qibla wall is a handsome triple mihrab (plates 12–13). The elaborately plaited cresting which curves forward slightly over the main niche complex is similar, though not identical, to the pattern of the cresting over the main mihrab of Sayyida Ruqayya. The frieze over the two side niches is also similar, but not identical, to the frieze over the side mihrabs of the Ruqayya shrine, and consists of a repeating pattern of stemmed bud forms framed on each side by sloping half-palmette forms, punched and pierced. The spandrels of the main arch are filled with leaf forms of a punched stamped design. The prototype for this treatment appears in the spandrels of Badr al-Jamali’s mihrab, but the forms in the Ikhwat Yusuf mihrab bear a closer resemblance to the arabesque fillings around the arches of the small dome at the transept entrance of the mosque of al-Azhar which was added by al-Hafiz.
A Koranic inscription is set in the outer frame of the mihrab complex. Beginning in the corner of the right niche and ending in the middle of the main niche is Koran 9:18, “Only he shall inhabit God’s places of worship [masjid] who believes in God and the Last Day, and performs the prayer, and pays the alms, and fears none but God alone; it may be that those will be among the guided.” Koran 2:255, the Throne Verse, begins at this point and ends in the left-hand corner of the qibla wall. Both verses are often used in places of prayer, but they seem to have had a heightened significance and popularity in the turbulent times of the late Fatimid period.

Around the arch of the main recess is a second inscription, Koran 112, which is the verse most often used on funerary stelae: “Say: ‘He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to Him is not any one.”’ Slender columns once supported the arch, but they are missing now; the arches of the side mihrabs are sustained by flat colonnettes. The guilloche in the border that appears to either side of the lowest part of the main recess is identical to those that frame the roundels in the restored sahn of al-Azhar dating to the time of al-Hafiz.

A comparative study of the dome and squinches of this mausoleum led Creswell to suggest a date of sometime before 1125.42 Because of the analogies cited in the description of the mihrab to the masjhid of Ruqayya and the work attributed to al-Hafiz at al-Azhar, however, the mihrab seems to belong to 1132-47, when it was presumably added to a preexisting structure. If this is so, then this mausoleum is a product of the very active and officially encouraged building and restoration program of al-Hafiz’s reign.
Mashhad of Yahya al-Shabih. The mashhad of Yahya al-Shabih (c. 1145; plate 14) contains the cenotaphs (plate 15) of the sons of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib: 'Abd Allah ibn al-Qasim (plate 16) and his brother Yahya al-Shabih (so named because of his supposed resemblance to the Prophet). Like the mausoleum of the Ikhwat Yusuf, it was built over preexisting tombs.

The building has a dome of a keel-arched profile, ribbed on the outside, resting directly on an octagonal transition zone, with trilobed squinches alternating with windows of one light over two, similar to that of the mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. There is no historical-inscription band. The plan is that of a central domed chamber with an ambulatory on three sides. There is a small dome over the space in front of the mihrab (which is peculiar to this mashhad) and two small mihrabs to either side. It was the survival of this
buildings's original plan that allowed Creswell to reconstruct the plans of the shrine of al-Qasim Abu-Tayyib and Umm Kalthum.  

The main mihrab is plain except for the hemisphere above the niche which has twelve ribs radiating from a central boss, itself resting on two ribs. Four concentric rows of fluting frame the edge of the arch. The design in the boss is of intersecting lines forming something which approaches a geometric star pattern. It is very likely that the medallion originally contained a design derived from the interlacing of the words “Muhammad” and “Ali” (as on the main mihrab of Sayyida Ruqayya and the left niche of al-Aqmar), but the original design was effaced, and the present boss is the creation of the Comité's restorers.

Everything about this mashhad indicates that it was erected in the period of al-Hafiz after that of Sayyida Ruqayya. Its principal importance here, however, is that it contains the cenotaphs of 'Abd Allah and Yahya ibn al-Qasim (as well as two others) who died in 875 and 877, respectively.

The two plaques on each cenotaph are virtually the same for both brothers, so we will give only those for Yahya:

[After the bismillah and Koran 112 and 2:255:] Yahya ibn al-Qasim, may God's mercy be upon him, died on Wednesday the 28 of Rajab in the year 263 [16 April 877]. O God forgive him and have mercy upon him and permit him to join his pious ancestors and pure forefathers. And God bless Muhammad the Prophet and the chosen people of his great house.  

On the other side of the cenotaph there is a marble stela that reads, after the bismillah:

Praise be to God for what He takes and what He gives, for trial and for affliction, for what He causes to die and what He causes to live; praise according to His good pleasure most to be praised and loved. To Thee be praise by virtue of the praise of those who have passed, high above the praise of those who have stayed; praise to fill all Thou hast created; attaining Thy desire, not hidden from Thee, not falling short of Thee, attaining the noblest goal of Thy good pleasure. [Koran 33:33:] “O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and with cleansing to cleanse you.” [Koran 11:73:] “The mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, O people of the House!” [Koran 5:60-61:] “It is He who recalls you by night, and He knows what you work by day; then He raises you up therein, that a stated term may be determined; then unto Him you shall return, then He will tell you of what you have been doing. He is the Omnipotent over His servants. He sends recorders over you till, when any one of you is visited by death, Our messengers take him and they neglect not.” This is what Yahya b. al-


Qasim b. al-Mu'mammad, b. 'Afsar b. Mu'mammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib testifies and attests to: he witnesses that there is no god save God alone, who hath no associate, and that Muhammad is his servant and Messenger, and God bless Muhammad and deliver unto Him His peace.  

In style and character the Kufic script of these plaques is typical of ninth-century stelae, but the carved wooden frames that embellish the cenotaphs and cite the Throne Verse (2:255-256) are of the late Fatimid period. They were almost certainly attached to the preexisting cenotaphs when the new shrine was erected over them as another memorial to the 'ahl al-bayt.  

Mausoleum of Muhammad al-Hasawiti. No historic inscription survives in the small, modest mausoleum of Muhammad al-Hasawiti (c. 1150; plate 17), nor is it
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recessed niche with a hood in which ribs radiate from a small medallion. The corners of the transition zone are beveled. The main decoration of the interior is on the mihrab (plate 18), which practically fills up the whole "Alid tombs. The chamfered outside corner, the dentilated mihrab arch, and the flat pilasters of the mihrab place it after Sayyida Ruqayya, i.e., after 1133. The indented ribbed niches on the exterior recall the shape of those in the restored sahn of al-Azhari, and their use as outside decorative elements predates those of the mosque of al-Salih Tala’i (1160). The mausoleum of al-Hasawati therefore probably belongs to the last years of al-Hafiz’s reign.69

*Mashhad of al-Husayn.* The modern mashhad of Sayyida al-Husayn is a restoration dating to the nineteenth century; all that remains of the original Fatimid structure is a piece of the decoration—the familiar S-curve outline of the Fatimid period68—over the gate at the south corner of the mosque.69 From an archaeological point of view, nothing of the Fatimid period need detain us here, but the historical sources provide some interesting information about it relating to the cult of "Alid saints.

Badr al-Jamali by his own account discovered the head of al-Husayn in 484 (1091). Ibn Muyassar, however, connects that discovery with al-Afdal. In 1098, after al-Afdal had taken Jerusalem from the Artuqids, "he entered Ascalon, where there was an abandoned place in which was the head of al-Husayn. He ordered it exhumed, perfumed, and transported in a basket to the most beautiful house in town. Then he ordered a mashhad constructed, and when it was ready, carrying the head pressed close to his chest, he went by foot to that place prepared for it and deposited it. It is said also that the mashhad was built by the commander of the armies, Badr al-Jamali, and finished by his son Shahanshah al-Afdal. Later the head was transported to Cairo where it arrived on Sunday, 8 Jumada II, 548 [September, 1153]."70

This story has its parallels in the account of the discovery of the head of Zayd b. ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Abidin b. al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, also attributed to al-Afdal, as it is related by al-Maqrizi.71 In 740, Zayd had led an insurrection in Kufa against the authority of Caliph al-Hisham and had died in battle from an arrow wound in the forehead. His head was severed from his body and sent to Fustat, where it was displayed on the minbar of the mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-‘As until some people stole and buried it. Over this burial site, a mosque was built by the eunuch Muharras. By the twelfth century only the mihrab was visible amidst the ruins of that mosque, but when al-Afdal heard the story, he ordered excavations. The head was found, ex-
humed, anointed with unguents and perfumes, and taken to a house to await the completion of a new sanctuary, where it was placed on Sunday, 29 Rabi‘ I, 525 (1131).

Nothing of this mashhad, which was located about two kilometers north of the mosque of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAs and one kilometer west of the mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa, survives, for it was completely restored twice, first in 1810 and again in 1864. The only trace of the earlier sanctuary is a marble plaque which states in Ottoman naskh: “This is the mashhad of Imam ʿAli Zayn al-ʿAbidin [sic] b. Imam al-Husayn b. Imam ʿAli b. ʿImran [sic] b. ʿAbd al-Muttalib [sic]. May the beneficitions of God be upon them all. In the year 549 [1154].”

This text was probably inspired by Fatimid inscriptions found in the mashhad before its Ottoman restorations, and the error in attribution and genealogy may reflect the Ottoman craftsman’s inability to decipher the original Kufic.

The dates in al-Maqrizi’s account and on the Ottoman plaque are also at variance, for by 525 (1131), the date given for the reinterment of Zayd’s head, al-Afdal ibn Badr had been dead for ten years, and his son al-Afdal Kutayfat, a Twelver Shi‘i, was in power. The year 549 (1154) corresponds more closely to the date on which, a year earlier, the head of al-Husayn arrived in Cairo.

Ibn al-Zayyat ends an account of the construction of the mashhad of the ʿAlid Sayyida al-Sharifa Maryam in the reign of al-Hafiz with the statement that al-Hafiz built many mosques and mashhads, “among them the mashhads of the heads, those of Sayyid Imam al-Husayn, the Mashhad Tibn in which is the head of Ibrahim, and the mashhad of Zayn al-ʿAbidin.”

Ibrahim b. ʿAbd Allah b. Hasan b. ʿAli b. Abi Talib in Basra and his brother Muhammad in Medina organized the first major expression of ʿAlid dissatisfaction with Abbasid rule in 762. The revolt was put down, Ibrahim was executed, and his head was sent to Fustat where it was said to have been displayed in the masjid of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAs (though there is no proof of this) and later interred in a masjid built for it north of the future al-Qahira, the Masjid al-Tibr, also known as the Masjid al-Tibn. Tibr was a local chief in the Ikhshidid period. After a rebellion against Kafur, the Ikhshidid ruler, Tibr too was executed and his body disemboweled and stuffed with straw (tibn)—hence the alternate name of the place—and buried in the masjid that bore his name.

Al-Maqrizi, quoting ʿAbd al-Zahir, also states that the mosque of al-Salih Talaʿiʿ ibn Ruzzik was built in 1154 to contain the head of al-Husayn. We know, however, that this mosque was built in 1160 seven years after the head of al-Husayn reached Cairo. Although this mosque certainly was not built for a relic, it is possible that Ibn Ruzzik may originally have planned to build such a monument on this site, but had been deterred by the women of the court who insisted that the head be kept, like those of the Fatimid imams, within the palace. Since he had already begun construction on the site, Ibn Ruzzik finished by putting up an ordinary place of prayer. Creating a cult locus for the most precious of Shi‘i relics outside the southern gate of al-Qahira—where it would have been accessible not only to the royal city but to the people’s city, Fustat—would have been entirely in accord with the practice of the Fatimid viziers of the time. Ibn Ruzzik, however, was not so powerful or so free an agent as Maʿmun al-Bata‘ihi or Badr al-Jamali. He had been called to power, and was subsequently opposed, by the intrigue-ridden and self-centered harem of the palace. When he tried to limit its power, he was destroyed.

Obviously, the literary sources cannot be taken as completely reliable in their accounts of the founding of these mashhads; the details are similar, but the attributions conflict. Their very confusion, however, indicates the increasing interest and importance attached to the veneration of the ahl al-bayt as a means of identifying the reigning caliphs with the righteous cause of the heroic ʿAlid dead and stimulating the flagging loyalties of their subjects. In this they appear to have had considerable success.

Ibn Jubayr has left us a description of the mashhad of al-Husayn which he visited in the Ayyubid period, thirty years after it was built: “To the right and left of the gate of al-Qahira—where it would have been accessible not only to the royal city but to the people’s city—would have been entirely in accord with the practice of the Fatimid viziers of the time. Ibn Ruzzik, however, was not so powerful or so free an agent as Maʿmun al-Bata‘ihi or Badr al-Jamali. He had been called to power, and was subsequently opposed, by the intrigue-ridden and self-centered harem of the palace. When he tried to limit its power, he was destroyed. We observed men kissing the blessed tomb, surrounding it, throwing themselves upon it, smoothing with their hands the kiswa that was over it, moving round it in a surging throng, calling out invocations, weeping and entreating Glorious God to bless the hallowed dust, and offering up humble supplications such as would melt the heart and split the hardest flint. A solemn thing it was, and an awe-inspiring sight.

Ibn Jubayr was witnessing popular devotion under a Sunni regime. What he saw was only the remnant of the Fatimid-inculcated mass enthusiasm by which the rulers, in discovering relics and in building shrines over them, sought to bind the population to the dynasty. It is
not surprising that later, with the dynasty safely out of the way, the Ayyubids did not seek to tamper with these powerful emotions.

Mausolea constitute the largest single category of surviving monuments from the Fatimid period. Those designated by the literary sources as mashhads (Nafisa, Umm Kulthum, Ruqayya, al-Qasim Abu Tayyib, Yahya al-Shabih, and al-Husayn) are usually set within the confines of an open courtyard, and in all cases the plan, which indicates an ambulatory in the sanctuary or side rooms leading from the central domed chamber, offers a disposition especially favorable for the customary visitation of burial places.

These mausolea are also related in decoration. The Y-stem cresting appears first in the mosque of al-Azhar, then in the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali, after that in the compound of Sayyida Nafisa and in that of Muhammad al-Jaf'ari, Sayyida 'Atika, and Sayyida Ruqayya. The mihrabs of these mausolea are also very similar in form and detail. The innovative years in decoration were 1121-25, as especially exemplified by the façade of al-Aqmar; after 1131, there are no really new additions to the decorative repertory.

Most of the mausolea, built or restored, are datable either from literary sources or inscriptions, or from stylistic similarity, to the years between 1122 and 1153. In the year after a major uprising of Nizari supporters, work was undertaken to restore seven mashhads of the ahl al-bayt, such as that of Umm Kulthum and others in the hawsh of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib. It is to that time also that the erection of the mausolea of Muhammad al-Jaf'ari and Sayyida 'Atika can be attributed. After 1131, and another crisis in the Fatimid dynasty, not only were existing shrines restored (Sayyida Nafisa was restored at least twice in that time), but new tombs for earlier 'Alid saints were built, such as for Yahya al-Shabih who had been buried in the Qarafa centuries before. New mashhads such as Ruqayya, Maryam al-Sharifa, and Zayd ibn Zayn al-'Abidin were also inspired by visions or miracles. In at least one case (Ruqayya) a mashhad was built for an 'Alid whom no one even pretended was buried in Cairo. This period also saw restorations of old tombs, such as that of the Ikhwan Yusuf, and new mausolea for those such as Muhammad al-Hasawati who can be considered from an analysis of the tomb's decorative features to have been a distantly related or minor 'Alid.

The mausolea of the earlier period (c. 1122) are concentrated in the Qarafa, in areas long designated as burial places for the ahl al-bayt, as in the cluster around Sayyida Nafisa and that around the hawsh of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib (fig. 1). The shrines that date after 1131, however, are more scattered (e.g., the sites for the mausolea of Zayd ibn Zayn al-'Abidin, Ikhwan Yusuf, and Sayyidna al-Husayn). The latest of the mashhads to be built (at a time when the imamate was at its weakest), that for Sayyidna al-Husayn, is also, as far as is known, the first to be built within the royal enclosure of al-Qahira.

Most of these mausolea were sacred to the memory of the Prophet's family (Nafisa, Umm Kulthum, al-Qasim Abu Tayyib, Muhammad al-Jaf'ari, Ruqayya, Zayd ibn Zayn al-'Abidin, Yahya al-Shabih, and al-Husayn). Judging by their location and the decorative use of the name of 'Ali, both 'Atika and Muhammad al-Hasawati perhaps also ought to be added to that list. In the period 1122-26, the honored dead are members of the same family (fig. 2), the descendants of Ja'far al-Sadiq who, because of an unsuccessful uprising in the 'Alid cause, were among the first 'Alid families to settle in Egypt. After 1131 they are martyrs who died violently in the cause of legitimacy: Ibrahim, the first to die rebellting against Umayyad rule; Zayd ibn Zayn al-'Abidin, rebelling against Abassid rule; and al-Husayn, the first and greatest of the Shi'i martyrs. Among the surviving tombs are also a great number honoring women: Nafisa, Umm Kulthum, 'Atika, and Ruqayya. Sayyida Nafisa was the first 'Alid officially honored by Badr al-Jamali, perhaps because she could represent conciliation at a popular level of the Shi'i rulers and the Sunni population. Sayyida Zaynab, mentioned in 1122, was Sayyida Nafisa's paternal niece and served her aunt long and devotedly. Nafisa, Zaynab, and Umm Kulthum, descendants of either al-Hasan or al-Husayn, represent early 'Alid families who had settled in Egypt in the early ninth century. The preponderance of female saints might be due also to their general appeal to the women of Fustat whose chief social and religious outlet was in the visitation of the dead in the Qarafa, and through whose sentiments their male kin might also be attracted to the dynasty. All these points indicate either an atmosphere of religious fervor for the saints or official manipulation to create such an atmosphere or, probably, both.83

In their allusions to historical context and their use of Koranic citations the foundation inscriptions are also revealing. Koranic excerpts often allude to the purpose a structure had and the intentions of its builder. The use on monuments of Koranic texts with a propagandistic message is early attested in Islam,84 and the
Fatimids even put them on banners and horse blankets. The mashhads of Badr al-Jamali and Sayyida Ruqayya are especially rich in Koranic allusions exhorting the believer to follow the imam and to accept his interpretation and his intercession as the way to salvation. The exhortation, which first appears after 1122 in the mosque of al-Aqmar, to accept the mysterious ways of God in ridding the ahl al-bayt of abomination, is a message that shows up with increasing insistence in the mausolea of the second succession crisis. The difficulties of both crises may also be alluded to in the use of Koran 2:255, with its central question: “Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave?”

By the time Nasir-i Khusraw visited al-Qahira in 1046-49, there was already a popular cult of the dead, and the Qarafa area had developed considerably. Nasir-i Khusraw, however, confines most of his observations and records to a description of the Fatimid palace. He mentions the four great congregational mosques, but not, as one might expect, the tombs of the venerable Shi'i dead. His silence does not prove they did not exist, but rather that they were not yet places of official interest or patronage. It is from the sources closest to the
period 1120-60 that we derive the fullest documentation and description of the Qarafa tombs, as for example al-Harawi, who visited Egypt in 1176-77 and Ibn Jubayr who visited it in 1183-84.

Commemorating the 'Alid dead did not begin with the Fatimid dynasty. The earliest stela from Egypt citing a member of the al-\textit{al-bayt} is dated 242 (856), and many follow for subsequent years. On them, both in Aswan and Cairo, the deceased's lineage is traced back to the Prophet's family. Among them are the stelae of 'Abd Allah and Yahya ibn al-Qasim (d. 875 and 877, respectively). The visitation of burial places was a well-established practice among the inhabitants of Fustat in the pre-Fatimid era.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, so far as we know, the funerary practices of the Fatimid imams were quite different from those of their subject population. Though the caliphs claimed ultimate descent from al-Husayn, 'Ali, and Fatima, the tombs of their ancestors were hidden in an area within the palace walls, inaccessible except to the court and official dignitaries. The \textit{turbat al-zafarān} was not a place for public visitation,
though the tombs of the imam’s ancestors were venerated by the court on official occasions. Early Fatimid practice did not focus on the cult of the dead; it concentrated loyalty on the living, efficacious imam.

The arrival of Badr al-Jamali witnessed a significant change in the political and religious life of the dynasty. Order and stability, as well as economic prosperity, were reestablished. Socially there was a change in the character of al-Qahira as a royal and fortress city. The monument that Badr built is the earliest surviving from the Fatimid period that is designated a mashhad in its inscription. Badr is also, so far as we know, the first ruler of the Fatimid state to set up a public cult for ‘Alid saints. He restored the mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa, a noble ‘Alid and a saintly person whom the Sunni Imam Shafi’i used to visit, with an inscription which designated his son al-Afdal as co-initiator in the restoration, and founded the mashhad of al-Husayn at Ascalon, where it was desirable to create a rallying point for public zeal.

Real control was now in the hands of the vizier rather than the caliph, and the caliph was consequently de-emphasized. Still the regime depended on Shi‘i loyalties for its power, and if the individual imam, the Commander of the Believers (by serving whom the believer is saved) was now less important to the state, the appeal for loyalty to his family (the Prophet’s “legacy to his community”) was that much more important. The family of the Prophet boasted a tradition of martyrdom, of dying for the community of Islam. Much of the success of Shi‘ism in the tenth century lay in the warm and personal element of loyalty to the Prophet’s family and its suffering members. In honoring the ahl al-bayt, Badr al-Jamali was also making an appeal to that loyalty.

After al-Jamali had indicated the way, his policy was pursued after each succession crisis. Following the heedless reign of al-Afdal, the Fatimids had to deal with the effects of the schism with the Nizaris and the ominous expansion of Crusader power in Syria. It was at that time that Ma’mun al-Bata’hi rebuilt the tombs of the ‘Alids at the already revered Qarafa and perhaps planned to create a new rallying point within the city walls with the mosque of al-Aqmar.

But the greatest number of new and restored mausolea date from after the death of al-Amir. His successor’s claim to the imamate was not recognized by many Isma‘iliis. Isma‘iliism as a state religion, after the 1094 and 1130 succession crises, seemed dead. The active Isma‘iliis were the Nizari and Tayyibi branches, and not the reigning imam’s followers. As a ruler in his own right, Caliph al-Hafiz had to recognize how gravely the religious loyalties which undergirded the state had been weakened. Then and under his successors, attempts to build up popular devotion to the ‘Alids and to transfer this devotion to the dynasty were so strong that new “discoveries” and “visions” spurred the loyalty of his subjects. The culmination came when one of the most revered relics of the Shi‘a, the head of al-Husayn, discovered earlier and elsewhere by Badr al-Jamali, was brought right into the heart of the royal city, where it became the object of passionate popular veneration.

After the passing of the Fatimids, their Sunni successors the Ayyubids also found that monumental funerary architecture was an expedient adjunct to state policy. Contrary to al-Maqrizi’s assertion with regard to the Ayyubids—“Such is the practice of kings, always to efface the traces of their predecessors and to obliterate the memory of their enemies” —they did not efface the cult places of the ‘Alid dead. Instead, the Ayyubids themselves, in a triumphant assertion of their own orthodox rule, built in the midst of the ‘Alid tombs the largest single-domed mausoleum in the Qarafa, a shrine to a great Sunni teacher and saint, Imam Shafi’i, which was architecturally, decoratively, and functionally a successor to the Fatimid mausolea.

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NOTES

3. Ibid., 3:447.
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13. K. A. C. Creswell, Muslim Architecture of Egypt (hereafter MAE), (Oxford, 1952), 1:11-15, found the scanty remains of a building which he reconstructed as a nine-bay open-canopy oratory and identified as belonging to the Tabarabâ family, dating it to 334 (945).


15. E. Combe, Jean Sauvaget, Gaston Wiet, Répertoire chronographique d’épigraphie arabe (henceforth RCEA), (Cairo, 1931-75), 2:137.


19. Ibid., pp. 269-70.


21. Actually the cenotaphs of al-Qâsim’s sons, ʿAbd Allah and Yaḥyâ, who had been invited to come to Egypt by Ahmad ibn Tulun, are now to be found in the mausoleum known as Yahya al-Shâbih, erected c. 1150 in the hawsh of the mashhad of al-Shâbih, erected c. 1150 in the hawsh of the mashhad of al-Qâsim Abu Taṣyyîb. Muhammad al-Dibaj’s revolt appears in Tabari, Târīkh, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1879-1901), 3:989-95, and Yusuf Rajib, “Les Sanctuaires des gens de la famille dans la Cité des Morts au Caire,” Revista degli Studi Orientali 51, fasc. 1-4 (1977): 53.

22. Creswell, MAE, 1:265, fig. 160. The mihrab was discovered in 1903, but has since been destroyed (pls. 3c and 114c).

23. Ibid., pp. 15-18.


25. A previous example of this cresting is to be found around the sahn of the mashhad of Badr al-Jamâli (Creswell, MAE, vol. 1, pl. 48a), and embedded in remnants of the later additions to the mosque of al-Āhzâr, discovered by Christel Kessler in 1960. Examples of the exterior cresting of the mosques of Ibn Tulun and al-Ḥakîm are very different. Badr al-Jamâli’s cresting imitates that of al-Āhzâr, the first Fatimid congregational mosque and headquarters of the Fatimid missionary movement.


27. This information seems to come from Suʿâd Mâhir, Masjîd Miṣr wa-Awliyyaʾuḥā al-Ṣâliḥîn (Cairo, 1973), 2:117-19, who has proposed this identification for ʿAtîka, with no supporting evidence.


29. Creswell, MAE, vol. 1, pl. 117b; the bosses are filled with a fluted spiral.

30. The monuments have suffered damage even since they were restored by the Comité, and the inscription has lost many words since it was first read by Gaston Wiet. Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicaum, pt. 1. Egypte (hereafter MCIA Egypte), (Cairo, 1929-30), 2:196. By now the whole mihrab has disappeared: between 1978 and 1981 it was hacked from the wall, and the niche today is set in a plain plaster wall.

31. Creswell, MAE, vol. 1, pls. 80b and c.

32. It is not later than 1125, the date of the mosque of al-Āqmar, because some of the decorative features of al-Āqmar which are incorporated in subsequent buildings do not appear in what remains of ʿAtîka.

33. Tabari, Târīkh, p. 92; al-Maqrizi, Khitat 3:449, says that Umm Kultûm was “the mother of Jaʿfar b. Musa b. Isâm’il b. Musa Sakâzîm [sic] b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣadiq” (i.e., married to her second cousin, Musa al-Qazîm’s grandson).

34. ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak is the only source that mentions the mosque/mashhad of Sayyida Zaynab, though very briefly, and dates it architecturally to the nineteenth century. See al-Khiraj al-Jâlidat al-Tauṣiyya li-Miṣr al-Qhîra (Cairo, 1888), 3:195. Sayyâb’s genealogy is given by Ibn al-Zayyât, Kauwâbî al-Ṣayyarah, p. 33, and Y. Rajib, “Nafîsa,” p. 84. Most people in Cairo today believe that the Zaynab honored here is the sister of al-Husayn who survived the massacre at Karbala, even though she died and is buried in Medina.


37. Williams, “Cult of ‘Alîd Saints, Pt. I.” p. 41. Another example is the mosque of the Amir Juwâmâr, which the foundation inscription on a plaque over the door states was constructed (in response to a dream) over the tomb of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq in 497 (1103) (MCIA, Egypte 2:160). Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, who died in 765, is not buried in Cairo. Al-Maqrizi attributes the confusion to the fact that one of the sons of Badr al-Jamâli was named Jaʿfar, and it is his tomb that the common people refer to as that of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (al-Maqrizi, Khitat 1:224).


39. RCEA, 8:180-81.


42. Ibid.

43. This pattern is unusual, and its only vaguely similar antecedent appears in a flat mihrab attached to one of the piers in the mosque of Ibn Tulun by al-Afdâl in 1094 (Creswell, MAE, vol. 1, pl. 77). The two tenth-century mihrabs in Ibn Tulun that were discussed in connection with the decoration of the façade
of al-Aqmar contain the shahada in a frieze over their tops (Williams: "Cult of 'Alid Saints, Pt. 1," pp. 45-46). Al-Afdal's mihrab also contains the shahada, but it is the Shi'i version: "There is no god but God, Muhammad is the Prophet of God, 'Ali is the waal of God."

44. Makarem, Political Doctrine of the Isma'ili, p. 30. Laila Ali Ibrahim kindly read these citations for me.


46. RCEA, 8:213. There are four lines of floriated Kufic on the four sides of the cenotaph, but only sides 2 and 3, with historic information, are quoted.


48. Ibid., 3:458.

49. The fullest accounts of the life of Nafisa, the daughter of al-Hasan b. Zayd b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, are to be found in al-Maqrizi, Khitat, 3:446-49, and Ibn al-Zayyat, Kawakib al-Sayyarah, pp. 31-36. Neither Nasiri-Khusraw nor Ibn Jubayr mentions the shrine. Al-Harawi includes it among the mashhads to be found near the mosque of Ibn Tulun (Guide, p. 82), and Ibn Battuta describes it as being of "elegant construction and resplendent brightness" (Khitat, p. 46). See also Yusuf Rajib, "Une Description arabe inédite du mausolée d'al-Sayyida Nafisa au Caire," Arabic 33 (1976): 37-41.


52. Creswell, MAE, vol. 2, pl. 54. This is the type of cresting found in the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali and around the hawsh complex of Muhammad al-Ja'far, Sayyida 'Atika, and Sayyida Ruqayya (see above, n. 23).


57. RCEA, 6:73.


59. A triple mihrab, as opposed to three mihrabs, is one in which three niches are joined together with stucco decoration to make one unit.

60. See above, n. 43.

61. Compare Creswell, MAE, vol. 1, pl. 118 with pl. 90b. Furthermore, the braided pattern between the lam's which appears in the word "Allah" on the left-hand niche does not appear before a similar one in the inscription of the sahn of al-Aqmar of 1125.


63. Ibid., pp. 264-70.

64. RCEA, 2:182; for 'Abd Allah's inscription, see pp. 173-74.

65. Ibid., pp. 187-88; for 'Abd Allah's inscription, see p. 175.


67. This study does not consider the small tomb opposite the khanqa of Baybars al-Jashankir (no. 479 in the Index), nor a small tomb discovered by Laila Ali Ibrahim in 'Abbasiyya (destroyed between 1978 and 1981), nor the mausoleum of Shaykh Yunus, (no. 511 in the Index) located in the cemetery north of the Bab al-Nasr, all from the Fatimid period, because nothing textual, epigraphic, or decorative connects them with the 'Alid saints.

68. For contemporary examples, see the bottom portion of the central arched area of the façade's left wing in the mosque of al-Aqmar, and the shape of the windows in the transition zone of the domes of Sayyida Ruqayya.

69. Creswell, MAE, 1:271-73, pl. 96.

70. Ibn Muyassar, Akhbar Misr, p. 38.

71. Al-Maqrizi, Khitat 3:437-38. Al-Maqrizi, in his section on the mashhad of Zayn al-Abidin, is very careful to emphasize that, though the mausoleum is commonly referred to as that of Zayn al-Abidin, it is really his son Zayd who is buried there.

72. Al-Maqrizi, Khitat 3:438-46. The story of how the head of Zayd ibn 'Ali Zayn al-Abidin was found in Fustat is as improbable as the finding of the head of al-Husayn in Ascalon. Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Tabari in his Ta'rikh, Cairo ed., vol. 8, p. 189, says the head was exhibited at Damascus, Mecca, and Medina. There is no reason to believe it was ever in Fustat. It seems all the more significant that it was "found" there at a time when it could fill some serious religious and political needs of the dynasty.

73. MCIA, Egypte, 2:213; RCEA, 8:267.


75. Here at least is a tenuous connection with Egypt, because Muhammad had a large number of followers there, and his son 'Ali was arrested by the Abbasid governor (see EP, s.v. "Muhammad").

76. Al-Maqrizi, Khitat 3:399.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., 2:162.


82. Ibid.

83. Nor is this perhaps the first time such a manipulation had taken place. Illuminating documentation on this point has been supplied by Jonathan M. Bloom in his unpublished doctoral thesis for Harvard University, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture: Islamic Art in North Africa and Egypt in the Fourth Century A.H. (Tenth Century A.D.)" (June 1980). Analyzing the contents of 4,000 published tombstones from the years 809 to 1000, he noted that their numbers seemed to be equally divided between men and women, and the number of tombstones for both sexes seemed to peak in the decade 854-64 (p. 135). He also discovered that the number of those that contained the Shi'i tasiyya (blessings of God upon the Prophet Muhammad and his family) rose significantly in the fifty years between 912-21 and 960-70, at a time when the general use of tombstones had decreased and that, of these Shi'i tombstones, 54 percent in 912-21 and 60 percent in 960-70 belonged to women. According to Bloom these statistics indicate that a Fatimid Isma'ili propaganda effort was at work, promulgated by a clandestine missionary movement (da'wah), which was established and flourished in the first half of the tenth century, after the Fatimids' first two abortive military attempts to establish themselves in Egypt in 913-14 and 919-20; that this clandestine propaganda effort was centered in the cemetery area, "a natural place in which to work, because of the 'Alid emphasis on genealogy and the existence of graves of 'Alid descendants, and where there were large groups of pious religiously active people far from the reaches of official authority and religion" (p. 149). Finally this conversion success made the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969 much easier. It seems plausible to assume, therefore, that if popular support for the Fatimid cause
had been gained through propaganda efforts in the cemetery at the beginning of the period, at a later time of internal crisis it would again be to the popular support represented by the cemetery-visiting population that the government would turn.

84. Cf. Oleg Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959). A few other examples: around the Nilometer of Rawda are Koranic citations (16:10-11 and 14:37) which refer to water and the cultivation of the land; over the entrance to the mosque of al-Hakim, on a plaque which has now disappeared, was 28:4, a verse pertaining to the duties of the ruler; 9:18 is both popular and relevant for the founding of mosques.

One of the most original inventions of Islamic architecture is the muqarnas, and one of the most effective and widespread of its applications is without doubt the muqarnas dome or semidome. Brick vaults and domes have been known in the Near East since Sassanian times, if not before, but the dome in muqarnas is a truly Islamic creation without precedent in any civilization. Whether made of wood, stucco, brick, or stone, muqarnas vaults were among the most characteristic features of medieval Islamic architecture from Iran to Spain. It is therefore not surprising that a good number of studies have been dedicated to the description and analysis of this architectural form. What is surprising, however, is that in spite of all these studies such basic problems as origin, chronology, geographic distribution—not to mention meaning—remain unclear and subject to debate. My intention here is to discuss these problems, though not for all types of muqarnas in all periods. I shall limit myself to muqarnas domes and vaults constructed between c. 1050 and c. 1250, that is, to the earliest known examples.

Limiting the scope of the discussion to the earliest known muqarnas domes requires some explanation. My reasons are two. First of all, any attempt to discern meaning in such a common architectural form faces the danger of falling into a morass of overgeneralization unless it is focused in some way. The problems of interpreting Islamic architecture have been discussed by Oleg Grabar both very recently and in a number of earlier essays. Grabar attributes the disjunction, or at least the weak connection, between form and meaning (or symbol) to the “low symbolic charge” of Islamic architectural forms, a characteristic that ultimately led to “an ambiguous visual system.” While that conclusion is generally correct, it overlooks the point that certain forms in certain specific times and places had a “high symbolic charge” at the moment of their inception. How long these forms continued to be used with full awareness of their highly charged meaning depended on a variety of factors, but generally speaking that awareness was lost, and the concomitant debasement of meaningful forms into mere decoration took place, much more quickly in Islam than in other cultures and religions. It therefore becomes imperative in searching for meaning in any given form of Islamic architecture to begin with the origin of this form and to focus on its earliest development—particularly its first use outside its place of origin.

Because equally early “muqarnas-like” elements have been found in both northeastern Iran and central North Africa, most authorities assume that the muqarnas (and hence the muqarnas dome) either originated in one or the other place or was invented simultaneously in both. Specialists in Iranian architecture postulate a continuous line of development that begins with the tenth-century fragments found near Nishapur and the tripartite squinches of the late-tenth-century Arab Ata mausoleum at Tim, continues with the numerous eleventh-century Seljuq domes, and ends with Ilkhanid and Timurid muqarnas domes and portal vaults. The problem with this theory is that no direct link can be established between Seljuq domes and Ilkhanid muqarnas domes and portal vaults. Large smooth Seljuq domes which spring from a multipartite squinch zone continue unchanged until well into the Ilkhanid period, as a comparison between the domes of the Great Mosques of Isfahan (1088) and Veramin (1322-26) shows. Therefore, although the differentiation of the squinch into muqarnas cells does indeed occur first in northeastern Iran, the total muqarnas dome of the Ilkhanid period is not a product of this development and must therefore be attributed to some other source.

As for the North African development, I doubt if the so-called muqarnas fragments discovered at Qal‘at bani Hammad and dated to the late eleventh century are muqarnas at all. They share no properties with true muqarnas cells, and in any case they could never have been assembled to fill the cavity of a dome or even a
niche. Not by any stretch of the imagination could they have led to the well-known twelfth-century muqarnas vaults in a number of North African mosques. Both northeastern Iran and North Africa therefore have to be eliminated as likely places for the origin of the muqarnas dome.

Another possibility is Iraq, since it has provided us with the earliest example of a fully fledged muqarnas dome in the so-called shrine of Imam al-Dawr, located some twenty kilometers north of Samarra in a village called al-Dawr. It is a shrine dedicated to Imam Muhammad ibn Musa ibn Ja'far, an alleged son of the fifth Shi'ite Imam. It was begun by the 'Uqaylid prince Muslim ibn Quraysh, who died in 1085, and was completed before 1090 by officials of his court. The mausoleum consists of an elongated chamber with tapering walls about twelve meters high and a muqarnas dome almost exactly the same height (plate 1). As an early example of its type, this dome betrays certain affinities with the regular squinch dome. The square of the chamber is transformed into an octagon through the use of large and heavily profiled squinches (plate 2). Eight smaller squinches (or, in fact, large muqarnas cells) rest on this octagon and form an eight-pointed star with four windows. The rest of the dome is made up of three more eight-celled tiers with ever-diminishing cells, each with a 45-degree rotation and a little cupola on top (plate 3).

Plate 1. Al-Dawr. Shrine of Imam al-Dawr (1075-90). Exterior. (Unless otherwise stated, all photographs are by the author.)

It would have been quite feasible to build a smooth dome after the squinch zone, but a deliberate choice was made instead to continue the intricate layering of eight-celled muqarnas tiers until the desired height and complexity were reached. Structurally, the effect is to make the dome appear insubstantial, as the play of light on its intricate surfaces dissolves its mass. This visual display, totally missing in Seljuq Iranian domes, is one of the most important features of muqarnas vaults. This earliest muqarnas dome, appearing as it does in a small village of little historical significance, is unlikely to have been the first of its kind or the model for all later muqarnas domes. First of all, because Islamic architecture prospered mainly in cities, it is in cities that one should look for major innovations. Second, Muslim ibn Quraysh, the patron of the shrine, was in certain respects a vassal of the Abbasid caliph, and despite his Shi'ite inclinations, maintained strong and generally friendly links with the caliphate. Third, although no early muqarnas domes are preserved in Baghdad, two miniatures, one dated 673 (1275) and the other 944 (1537) show bird's-eye views of the city with numerous muqarnas domes (plates 4-5). Taken together, these suggest that Baghdad might have been the center in which the muqarnas dome originated. It was certainly a very common feature of the cityscape by the late medieval period.

It is curious therefore that the next dated examples of the muqarnas dome are not from Baghdad at all, nor are they from anywhere in Iraq, but come from such diverse places as Damascus, Palermo, Fez, and Tinmal. All date from the twelfth century. Possibly the earliest example is in the mosque of the Qarawiyyin at Fez; it dates from the restoration under the Almohad dynasty between 1135 and 1140. The whole axial nave of this mosque is covered by a series of
stucco muqarnas vaults of great complexity and excellent execution (plate 6).

The sudden appearance of an architectural form at such an advanced level of development has posed a major problem for architectural historians. Henri Terrasse, who devoted a monograph to the mosque of the Qarawiyin, asserts that, although earlier examples of the muqarnas exist in Iran, the muqarnas vaults at Fez are the earliest of their kind and are therefore the product of local development.\(^{15}\) This argument can be refuted in part because an earlier example does exist, in the form of the shrine of Imam al-Dawr of 1087 already mentioned. A much closer, though slightly later, parallel can be found in the maristan of Nur al-Din in Damascus, built in 1154.\(^{16}\) The maristan al-Nuri contains four specimens of muqarnas vaulting used in three different ways: as a portal vault (the earliest of its kind), as a muqarnas dome (plate 7), and as a vault for a niche (plate 8). The similarity between the Fez vaults and
those of the maristan (especially the two niches) is quite clear (cf. plates 8 and 6). These vaults are also made of stucco and serve no structural purpose—they are merely suspended by a wooden framework from the load-bearing vault above them. They are equally intricate, and they both contain pendants and terminate in eight-pointed stars. The muqarnas vaults of the maristan, like other features in it, such as its co-axial four-iwan plan, reflect Iraqi influence. It is reasonable to suggest, therefore, that the vaults of the mosque of the Qarawiyyin are not a local development but rather a direct import from Baghdad.

By far the largest number of independent muqarnas domes are found in Iraq and the Jazira, over an area extending from Basra and Khuzaistan in the south to Mosul and Raqqa in the north (fig. 1). The majority of these shrines are dated, or datable to, between the middle of the twelfth century and the Mongol invasion, a period of great building activity in Iraq and the Jazira. A preliminary typology, largely based on building material and construction method, of the more than twenty shrines known to me can yield the essential features of the muqarnas dome.

The first, but least common, type in Iraq is the vault made of stucco and suspended from the exterior vault above it by a wooden framework. This is the method found in the maristan al-Nuri and the mosque of the Qarawiyyin (plates 6-8), and it later became extremely popular in North Africa and Spain.

The second type, which became most common in Iraq, is made of brick and consists of a single shell: it is the only type in which the interior articulations of the muqarnas are reflected on the exterior. The shrine of Imam al-Dawr illustrates its earliest manifestation, but it is not really typical of later, more developed examples. Its cells are too large to suggest a true muqarnas, even though their multiple profiling was meant to convey that impression. In addition, the cells spring only from the corners of the octagon, in contrast to later instances where they spring from the walls as well. Three outstanding examples of this type are the mausoleum of Nur al-Din in Damascus, the shrine of Zumurrud Khatun in Baghdad, and a little-known shrine called al-Najmi in south Iraq.

The mausoleum of Nur al-Din, dated 567 (1172), is part of a larger complex which includes a madrasa and a masjid. Unlike its prototype at the maristan of Nur al-Din, which is made of stucco, the muqarnas dome over this shrine is made of brick, and its interior articulation is reflected on the exterior (plate 9).
dome springs from a square base which is divided into twelve parts: four tiny squinches and eight small muqarnas columns (plate 10). The muqarnas columns support the central portion of the four sides which consist of three tiers of corbeled muqarnas cells. In the second zone the middle sections taper upward to resemble a trapezoid with considerable horizontal projection; the one-cell squinches expand into two, three, and finally four cells (plate 11). By the third zone, the square base changes into an irregular octagon formed by the shrunken middle sides and the expanded squinches. This zone contains four axial windows, the lowest of them on the exterior. In the fourth zone, the octagon is transformed into an approximately uniform circle of twenty elements. Ten intersecting arches in the fifth zone reduce the number of the cells to ten, and a little scalloped dome of ten elements rests on this drum. The drum also contains ten tiny windows. Thus, by using extremely unobtrusive squinches in combination with corbeled muqarnas cells, it was possible to move gradually and almost imperceptibly from the square to the octagon to the circle.

The shrine of Zumurrud Khatun in Baghdad has the most graceful profile and one of the most integrated interiors among the monuments of its kind (plate 12). One reason for the success of this dome is that its base is octagonal; that is, half the transition has already been made. Above an extremely unobtrusive squinch zone (plate 13), the octagonal base is transformed into a muqarnas dome of sixteen cells. Seven tiers of sixteen cells make up the majority of the dome; their number is cut to ten in the last three tiers (plate 14). Each cell contains a tiny opening covered by thick glass.

More interesting than either of these two domes is the ruined shrine of al-Najmi, located on a once major canal called Shatt al-Nil in what is today a desolate salt
THE MUQARNAS DOME

THE MUQARNAS DOME

Although poorly preserved, enough has survived to reconstruct it as a tall muqarnas dome with an especially large span, around a hundred meters square (plate 15). This feat was accomplished by the use of large triangular cells and brackets skillfully arranged in such a manner as to form corner squinches which alternate with four muqarnas pendentives, one in the middle of each side (plate 16). In this manner, the square base is gradually transformed into a forty-part base which begins just above a zone of eight windows. The conical part of the dome would have begun just above this base.

The third type of Iraqi muqarnas has an exterior pyramidal roof and is made of fired brick. In the earliest examples, the pyramidal roof was usually covered by green-glazed tiles; traces of revetment are still visible in the shrine of Yahya Abu’l-Qasim. This type is restricted to Mosul, where it seems to have developed around the beginning of the thirteenth century under the influence of Baghdad. Five examples are preserved there; the finest of them is the shrine of Imam Āwn al-Din (plate 17). The design of this dome is more precise and rigorous than that of the Baghdad examples or even of the mausoleum of Nur al-Din, which it otherwise resembles, perhaps because muqarnas cells are faced with tiny color-glazed tiles, a feature unique to Mosul. As in the mausoleum of Nur al-Din the gradual transition from the square to the octagon is made by the use of muqarnas squinches and small muqarnas colonnettes. Here, however, the squinches are themselves turned into tiny muqarnas domes which end in eight-pointed stars (plate 18). Above the octagonal zone, the dome is further divided into sixteen cells; the number is reduced to eight in the last two tiers (plate 19), producing a large eight-pointed star in the middle surrounded by four small eight-pointed stars. This ingenious and pleasing design is imitated and further developed in the shrine of Shaykh Ābd al-Samad at Natanz.

All these muqarnas domes share some basic features: (1) they are made of small but distinct cells; (2) their squinches, colonnettes, and other structural features are obscured; (3) layers of stucco, paint, or glazed tiles are often used to embellish the cells, and (4) windows are used frequently, though of course in a double-shell design they are only possible at the base of the dome.

Having established the origin and the geographic and temporal distribution, typology, and basic features of the muqarnas dome, it is reasonable to inquire into its raison d’être. What led the Muslim architect in this period to abandon the smooth hemispherical dome with its age-old symbolic associations and take up this fragmented conical vault? What meanings were intended which differed from those inherent in the hemispherical dome, and how did this new form carry these meanings? We know that the form may have originated in Baghdad sometime in the early eleventh century, that it very rapidly spread to Syria and North Africa, and that it was used first as a funerary monument and later in mosques, hospitals, fountains, and even palaces.

To my knowledge, the only explanation that has been offered is that provided by Oleg Grabar for certain muqarnas domes in his book on the Alhambra. Grabar’s interpretation is not derived from the form of the muqarnas itself, but rather rests on evidence external to it: water symbolism, Koranic and poetic inscriptions, and poems written in praise of the muqarnas domes of the Alhambra. From this evidence, Grabar comes to the conclusion that the Abencerrajes and the Hall of the

Two Sisters represent rotating domes of heaven. This plausible but specific interpretation tempts one to work backward using similar, though scantier, evidence to interpret earlier muqarnas domes in the same manner. There are, however, two difficulties in this approach: first, since it is based on external, and often unavailable, evidence it can be used to explain some muqarnas domes but not the phenomenon in general. Second, since any dome can be a dome of heaven it does not really tell us why a muqarnas dome was used.

To avoid these objections I chose an approach that was exactly the opposite of Grabar’s and sought the meaning of the form in the form itself. I started with the premise that subdividing matter into tiny interrelated segments implied a certain attitude toward matter, or, more specifically, that the division of a dome into segments implied a certain conception not just of the dome but of its referent, the universe.

Muslim philosophers and theologians devoted considerable thought to the nature of matter and the universe and their relationship with God. The Aristotelian concept of an eternal cosmos was rejected by most Muslim theologians from the first because it contradicted the Islamic conception of God as the only absolute and eternal. From very early on and “with hardly a single exception, the Muslim theologians accepted the atomic view of matter, space and time and built upon it a theological edifice over which God presided as absolute sovereign.” Accordingly, matter was neither eternal and immutable nor infinite in composition, but rather composed of particles which cannot be divided any further: al-juz‘ alladhi lā yatajazza. The Ashʿarites of the tenth and eleventh centuries, in particular al-Baṣillānī (d. 1013), modified this atomistic theory into one of strict occasionalism—that is, a theory of atoms and accidents (aʿrādhi, pl. of ʿardhi). Al-Baṣillānī
argued that the world, which to him was everything other than God, was composed of atoms and accidents; accidents could not endure within matter (jawhar) for longer than an instant, but were continuously being changed by God. It follows then that the attributes of matter (color, luminosity, shape, etc.) are transitory accidents which change according to the will of God and that even the preservation of matter—the collocation of its atoms—requires the continuous interference of God. This was a solid argument for the existence of God as the only creator, for since such a world was created and is continually being created, then it must by necessity have a creator.

I would like to suggest that the muqarnas dome is an architectural manifestation of this thoroughly orthodox Islamic concept. Its likely origin in Baghdad in the early eleventh century coincides well with the triumph of the atomist-occasionalist view of the universe as formulated by al-Baqqālī and supported by Caliph al-Qādir (991–1034). It must have become obvious to al-Qādir, or a mathematician-architect in his court, that the usual smooth dome which rests on squinches could no longer express this truly new Muslim view of the universe: it was too solid and continuous, its particles were imperceptibly small; and it was visibly supported by squinches. To reflect an occasionalist view of the


universe, the dome would have to be divided into small but distinct units arranged in a complex manner, and (like the universe) supported and kept whole by the will of God—thus the deemphasis of the squinches, clearly the work of man, a feature common to all muqarnas domes. In fact, the earliest muqarnas in northeastern Iran was nothing more than the division of the squinch zone into three or more parts, undoubtedly in order to deemphasize its structural appearance. The dome, like heaven, had to stand unsupported: ‘khalqa al-samāwāt bi-lā ṣimād’ (Koran 31:10).

The muqarnas cells of many of these domes were painted, and windows were frequently and effectively used. This is nowhere truer than in the muqarnas domes at Imam ʿAwn al-Din and of course the Alhambra. According to Grabar, the changing sun- and moonlight were intended to give the impression of a rotating dome of heaven, a view which is supported by Ibn Zmarak’s poem inscribed in the halls of the Abencerrajes and the Two Sisters.36 This is perhaps a secondary meaning that became attached to the muqarnas dome in its three centuries of evolution, but it was not the original intention. Rather the effect of light on
these intricate painted surfaces was meant to reflect certain very important Ashā'ri concepts, namely that shape, color, and luminosity are accidents which by definition are subject to continuous change according to the will of God. The dome is therefore not just a physical manifestation of the occasionalist universe, but also a proof of the existence of a God Who can keep this seemingly unsupported, perishable, and ever-changing dome from collapsing, just as He can keep the universe from destruction.57

The muqarnas dome should therefore be viewed not merely as a decorative device to fill some of the space left vacant by the Muslim injunction against religious images, but rather as a uniquely Islamic solution firmly grounded in the theology of its time. Although undeniably decorative—and in later periods admittedly used solely for decoration—at the time of its creation and up to the time of the Alhambra that was not its primary purpose. Neither could it have been the product of mathematical or architectural experimentation alone. Mathematics and architecture were simply the tools used to flesh out a major theological concept about the nature of the universe and its relationship to God. That the occasionalist concept permeated Islamic culture can be seen in the parallel developments of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in architectural ornamen-

The importance of Baghdad, a city of vanished splen-
dor, to this development cannot be overestimated. As Herzfeld wrote, “One must not underrate Baghdad, seat of the caliphate and one of the seats of the Seljuk sultanate and a cultural center down to its conquest by Hulagu in 656 H. (A.D. 1258). To underrate Baghdad is to underrate Rome.”41

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NOTES

1. I would like to express my thanks to Professors Oleg Grabar and Wolfhart Heinrichs for their helpful comments on this paper. I am also indebted to Professor Heinrichs for his remarks on the influence of atomism on Islamic literature.

The already large literature on the muqarnas and on the problem of geometry in Islamic architecture increases daily, but only a small portion of it deals specifically with the muqarnas dome. One of the earliest historical analytical studies of the muqarnas in general is by J. Rosintal, Pendentifs, trompes et stalactites dans l'architecture oriental (Paris, 1928). Much more important are the short studies by Ernst Herzfeld on a number of muqarnas domes in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, published in sections of volume 2 of F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, Archéologische Reise im Euphrat und Tigris Gebiet, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1911-1914); and Ernst Herzfeld, “Damascus: Studies in Architecture, I,” Ars Islamica 9 (1942): 10-40. Michel Écochard, Filiation de monuments grecs, byzantins et islamiques: une question de géométrie (Paris, 1977). Includes a chapter on brick and stucco muqarnas vaults with numerous analytical drawings. The only book so far published on the muqarnas domes of Iraq is ‘Aṣaṣ al-Ḥadithi and Hanā‘ ʿAbd al-Khaliq, al-Qibāb al-Makhrūjyya fil-Iraq (Baghdad, 1974). Although useful as an inventory and for some factual information, the book is marred by poorly reproduced photographs.

2. For example, Titus Burckhardt, Art of Islam; Language and Meaning (World of Islam Festival Trust, 1976), and Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar, The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture (Chicago, 1973). See also a review of these works and others in the same genre by Oleg Grabar, “Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art,” Mugarnas 1 (1983): 25-32.


5. Grabar, “Symbols and Signs,” p. 27.

6. R. Stephen Humphreys, “The Expressive Intent of Mamluk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay,” Studia Islamica 35 (1972): 69-119. Although it deals with Mamluk architecture as a case study, the methodological discussion in this paper is very useful for all efforts at architectural interpretation.


9. These fragments have been published by Lucien Golvin in Recherches archéologiques à la Qafi' des Banâ Hammadid (Paris, 1965), pp. 125-27. Golvin reconstructs these fragments as bundles of pendants which decorated the corners of a ceiling (fig. 40). In a later work, Essai sur l'architecture religieuse musulmane, vol. 1, Généralités (Paris, 1970), pp. 157-59, he states that the earliest muqarnas may be found in Iran, although the chain of transmission to the Maghrib is incomplete. This being the case, Golvin concludes that, until we are better informed, the first appearance of muqarnas vaulting must be placed in Qafi'at Bani Hammad. See also Henri Terrasse, La Mosquée al-Qarawiyyin à Fes (Paris, 1968), pp. 31-32. Terrasse agrees with Golvin that the Qafi' fragments came first and led to the developments of the twelfth century.

10. Several North African mosques were built or restored in this period with one or more muqarnas domes over the mihrab and the axial nave. Among them are the Great Mosque at Tlemcen, 1136 (Hoag, Islamic Architecture, fig. 124); the Qarawiyyin mosque at Fes, 1132-42 (Terrasse, Mosquée al-Qarawiyyin, pls. 28-37); the Great Mosque at Timmal, 1154; the mosque of al-Kutubiyya at Marrakesh, 1162 (Hoag, Islamic Architecture, fig. 133); and the somewhat earlier so-called Almoravid Qubba (1107-43) at Marrakesh. Although not quite a muqarnas dome, the Qubba nevertheless contains two tiers of highly ornamented squinches which resemble those in the shrine of Imam al-Dawr (ibid., fig. 2). See Richard Parker, A Practical Guide to Islamic Monuments in Morocco (Charlottesville, Va., 1981), pls. 10-12.

An astonishing use of a large muqarnas vault is displayed in the Palatine chapel at the Norman palace in Palermo, built in 1142. See U. Monneret de Villard, Le Pictaire musulmane al soffitto della Cappella Palatina in Palermo (Rome, 1950), and Annabelle Simon-Cahn, "Some Cosmological Imagery in the Decoration of the Ceiling of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1978. This Christian monument poses some problems for my interpretation of the muqarnas dome as a form with well-established orthodox Muslim associations, especially since it employs a muqarnas vault with figural paintings on its cells. The Cappella Palatina is, in my opinion, a monument that reflects on the most general level the influence of three architectural strains: Romanesque, Byzantine, and Islamic.


12. This information is given in some detail in five inscriptions placed within star-shaped panels located on the inner walls. See Hadithi and ʿAbd al-Khaliq, al-Qibab al-Makhruṣiyya, pp. 20-21, for their transcription.

13. Khāshiʿ al-Maʿādhiḍī, Dawlat bani ʿAqīq fi l-Mawsil (Baghdad, 1968), pp. 75-79 and 105-07, for the biography of Muslim ibn Quraysh and his connection with the Abbasids and the Fatimids. The sources consulted by the author suggest that the Shīʿism of the Uqaylids had strong political and ethnic components. Politically the Uqaylids used their Shīʿism to keep in favor with the Fatimids while at the same time, by virtue of their geographic proximity, remaining close to the Abbasids. Ethnically, the Uqaylids stood for the independence of the Abbasids and other Arab dynasties against the Daylamite Persians and the Seljuq Turks.

14. The dome placed over the shrine of Imam Abu Hanifa in Baghdad by Sharaf al-Dawla, the finance minister of Alp Aralan, in 459 (1064-65) may have been a very early muqarnas dome. It is described in Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazam fi Tūrīkh al-Mulûk wa'l-ʿUmm (Hyderabad, 1940), 8:245-46, as having been tall and well built. It is illustrated in Matraği, Bâyân-i Mendizîl-i Sefer-i İrâkîn-i Sultan Sâlemdî Hân, ed. H. Yurdâyîn (Ankara, 1976), folio 53b. Two independent shrines are shown in the miniature, one octagonal with a hemispherical dome and the other square with a conical muqarnas dome. No further information is provided in the text.

15. Terrasse, Mosquée al-Qarawiyyin, pp. 31-32.


18. For the dating of these shrines, see Hadithi and ʿAbd al-Khaliq, al-Qibab al-Makhruṣiyya, passim, where the authors attempt to date the undated shrines by comparing them with the firmly dated ones.


20. This is not the case with the maristan's dome, which originally was smooth on the exterior. See Jean Sauvaget, "Notes sur quelques monuments musulmans de Syrie à propos d'une étude récente," Syria 24 (1945), fig. 1, which shows the exterior of the dome before its faulty restoration.


22. Ibid., p. 239.


24. There are no muqarnas domes in Mosul that can be dated to the twelfth century. The shrine of Imam ʿAbd al-Rahman, which was built by the atabek Masʿud ibn Mawdud (1180-93), is conical on the exterior but smooth on the interior. The only dated examples—the shrines of Imam Yahya ibn al-Qasim and Imam ʿAwn al-Din—are both from the reign of Badr al-Din Dhu'l-Kifl (Ezekiel) at al-Kifl before the Natanz shrine. Ul-
jaytu had the shrine rebuilt with a muqarnas dome and with a minaret adjacent to it, undoubtedly to emphasize its change from a Jewish to a Muslim sanctuary. The Natanz shrine, however, resembles, not the Kilf shrine, but the shrine of Imam 'Awn al-Din at Mosul. The points of similarity are the double-shell design, the exterior pyramidal roof with blue glazed tiles, and squinches that end in eight-pointed stars. The main difference is that the Natanz shrine has a cruciform plan, whereas 'Awn al-Din has the usual square one. There is, however, one muqarnas dome in Iraq with a cruciform plan, the so-called mashhad al-Shams at al-Hilla. See Hadithi and 'Abd al-Khaliliq, al-Qibab al-Makhruiyya, pp. 81-83, and Herzfeld, "Damascus, I," pp. 29-30 and 38. See also Sheila Blair, "The Shrine Complex at Natanz, Iran," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1980.

27. I know of three twelfth-century instances of a water fountain emanating from a muqarnas niche: the first (now almost totally destroyed) in the west iwan of the madrasa al-Nuriyya al-Kubra (1172); the second in the Ziza palace outside Palermo (1180); and the third in the north iwan of the palace of al-Aziz Muhammad in the citadel of Aleppo (c. 1220). Grabar, Alhambra, pp. 144-48.


33. There are some indications in the sources that in the late tenth century Sunnis of Khurasan were creating new ceremonies and erecting new monuments (qibāb) designed to be counterparts to those of the Shi'is; see Makdisi, "Sunni Revival," p. 156, and Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam, 7:263-66.


35. Perhaps the first scholar to address the question of atomism in relation to the aesthetics of Islamic art was Louis Massignon in "Les Méthodes de réalisation artistique des peuples de l'Islam," Syria 2 (1924): 47-53, and 149-60, esp. pp. 50-53. His ideas were in part followed up by Bishr Farès in Essai sur l'esprit de la décoration islamique (Cairo, 1952). In the recent Istanbul conference entitled "The Common Principles, Forms and Themes of Islamic Art" (April 18-22, 1983) a presentation by Ali Louati, entitled "Khawāṣir ḫwāl al-Wiḫāl al-Jamāliyya li'l-Turāṭ al-Fanni al-Islāmi," suggested that Ash'arite atomism permeated Islamic artistic, architectural, and urban aesthetics in all periods and places. While his paper represents an advance over preceding work, it too overgeneralizes. It would be difficult—to give two examples far apart in time and space—to apply atomistic philosophy either to the austere architecture of the Ayyubids of Aleppo or to the naturalistic art and symbolic architecture of the Mughals of India.

38. The best study on arabesque ornament is Ernst Kühnel, The Arabesque, trans. Richard Ettinghausen (Graz, 1976). The earliest examples of true arabesque occur in Fatimid Egypt, on both architecture and especially wooden objects. But its greatest development occurs under the Rum Seljuqs in Anatolia and the Ayyubids in Syria.

39. Massignon, "Méthodes," pp. 154-58. At the Istanbul conference (above n. 37) the ethnomusicologist Mahmoud Guettat (of the Institute for Music at Tunis) dealt with improvisation and embellishment in Islamic Tunisian music. The situation in literature is not so clear, since characteristics that might be called "atomistic" are already present in pre-Islamic poetry. The problem has been discussed by G. von Grinebaum, "The Spirit of Islam as Shown in Its Literature," in Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition, 2d ed. (London, 1961), pp. 95-110. According to von Grinebaum, in reference to Arabic poetry, "an exclusive attention seems to be given to the individual verse, phrase, or paragraph, at the expense of the consistent layout of the whole." He adds a little later (p. 98) that "it may be tentatively and somewhat hesitatingly suggested that there exists a certain psychological affinity between the leaping from topic to topic, these momentary shifts of attention and mood, and the occasionalist world view which dominates Muslim theology and scholastic philosophy." Although von Grinebaum states in his article that Ash'arism was most successful and effective around the time of al-Baqillāni (late-tenth and early-eleventh centuries), he does not explain what might have influenced Arabic poetry and prose in the earlier centuries or whether Ash'arism enhanced a trend which had always existed in Arabic literature.
Not all medieval cities survive into modern times as major urban entities, and when they do not their monuments are often only slowly brought to light. This is particularly true of eastern Iran (fig. 1), where in some cases almost impenetrable mountain valleys have concealed extraordinary buildings for centuries. Two examples are the minaret at Jam and the madrasa at Garjistan, both discovered only recently. In other cases dramatic shifts in systems of irrigation and canalization reduced medieval metropolises to obscure villages. One example is Zuzan, located some sixty kilometers south of Khwaf near the present Iran-Afghan border, where an enormous building overwhelms an otherwise humble mud-brick hamlet (plate 1).
André Godard first described this large building, published a plan (plate 2) and photographs, and read some of the inscriptions. The date 616 (1219) at the end of a band across the back of the qibla iwan (plate 3) enabled him to place the building in the reign of the malik of Zuzan, Qiwam al-Din, Mu‘ayyid al-Mulk Abu Bakr ibn ʿAli al-Zuzani, governor of the area during the reign (1200-20) of the Khwarazmshah ʿAla’ al-Din Muhammad ibn Tekish. Godard also ascribed artistic importance to the monument’s enormous size and to its decoration, which included the first exterior use of two-color faience.

Godard’s publication has remained the basic study of the building. Donald Wilber included it in his compendium of Ilkhanid architecture, but simply summarized Godard’s comments. J. Michael Rogers has challenged Godard’s dating and his claim that it was a typical twelfth-century Khurasani mosque by arguing that the date could be read sabaʾ (seven) instead of sitta mī‘ā (six hundred) and that the decoration appeared to him early-fourteenth rather than early-thirteenth century, but he suggested no new patron. Others, however, have gone along with Godard’s dating, and it is indeed correct. The large Kufic band framing the north iwan confirms Godard’s reading of the date. Although no longer extant, its final word [s]itta mī‘ā (six hundred) is still visible on his figure 106 (plate 4). The similar bold Kufic band on the south iwan, which Godard made out as “in the month of Rajab,” on closer examination shows a bismillah (plate 5) and the opening words of sura 23, qad aslaha al-mu‘minin al-dh[iinna]… (plate 6), and ends with fi shahr rabī‘ al-awwāl sana khaans ʿashr wa... “in the month of Rabī‘ I of the year fifteen and…” (plate 7). Rabī‘ I corresponds to June 1218.
These inscriptions, then, clearly confirm Godard’s attribution of the building to the malik of Zuzan who ruled at a time of extreme political instability, with the Khwarazmshahs and Ghurids vying for control in Khurasan. Of humble birth, he had risen through the ranks until he was appointed governor of Zuzan by the Khwarazmshah ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad. He then turned to Kirman, and assisted by Khwarazmian troops, he launched his attack in Ramadan 609 (February 1213). Many of the surrounding cities sur-

rendered almost immediately, and the amir sent back so much booty to the Khwarazmshah that he was rewarded with the title, malik, and the tuqab Mu‘ayyid al-Mulk. In 1217-18 the Khwarazmshah set out on a campaign against the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. When he reached Damghan, he engaged the Salghurid atabeg of Fars, Sa’d ibn Zangi, who had taken advantage of the unrest and was marching on the province of Persian Iraq, and took him prisoner. The Khwarazmshah wanted him put to death, but Sa’d took refuge with the malik of Zuzan who persuaded his overlord to spare the atabeg’s life.

Various bits of information in texts suggest that the malik of Zuzan died the following year. Juzjani reports
that the malik died some years after his appointment as governor of Kirman.\textsuperscript{12} Nasawi tells us that the Khwarzمشاه "Abā’ al-Dīn Muhammad learned of the malik’s death upon his return to Nishapur after his campaign against Baghdad had foundered in unusually heavy snows.\textsuperscript{13} According to Juwayni, the ruler spent a month idling in Nishapur and then moved on to Bukhara where he remained from 8 Shāban to 10 Shawwal of the year 615 (1218).\textsuperscript{14} Therefore he must have learned of the malik’s death in Rajab, the same month as the major dated inscription at Zuzan.\textsuperscript{15}

While governor of Kirman, then, and just before his death the malik of Zuzan had ordered an enormous building constructed in his native city. Godard assumed that the building was a mosque, but its true function is revealed in the magnificent inscription that runs across the back of the south iwan (plates 8-10). Measuring approximately thirteen by five meters and executed in light-blue glazed bricks set against a plain reddish-brick ground, the band is divided into three zones: in the lower zone are the bodies of the Kufic letters; in the middle zone the stems of the letters braided with hexagrams inserted in the interstices; in the upper zone alternating keyhole and segmented arches decorated with delicate cut stucco growing out of the interlacing below. The band reads: \textit{bi-rasm aṣḥāb al-imām al-ṣamā‘irāj al-umma Abī Hānīfa Nu‘mān ibn al-Th[abit al]} Kūfī rādiya Allāh ū nhu. (For the followers of the great imam, light of nations, Abu Hanifa Nu’man ibn al-Th[abit al]-Kufi, may God be pleased with him.)

Godard read some of this inscription but failed to recognize in it a typical dedication of a Hanafite madrasa. Abu Hanifa (d. 767), the great theologian and religious lawyer from whom the legal school (\textit{madhhab}) of the Hanafites took its name, was often referred to by the epithet \textit{ṣirāj al-umma} (‘light of na-
Endowment inscriptions from four twelfth-century Hanafite madrasas in Syria are dedicated to his disciples (ṣala ʿashab/madkhab) using that phrase. From Iraq the Hanafite school spread eastward. Well-known Hanafite jurists from Khurasan and Transoxiana developed a special law of irrigation adapted to the canals in Khurasan. Under the title of ʿade, they controlled Bukhara from the eleventh to the fourteenth century through a Hanafite family whose head acted as hereditary chief (ṣāb). In 1451 a Hanafite sheikh, ʿAbd al-Karim Abu ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn ʿAbdallah al-Khwafi, left an inscription in the Karimiyya madrasa in Aleppo (1256), which apparently converted it from a Shiʿite to a Hanafite school.

Contemporary texts as well substantiate the building at Zuzan as a Hanafite madrasa. Yaqut, writing about 1225, calls Zuzan a small Basra because of the large number of doctors, savants, and litterateurs there. Writing in 1259-60 Juzjani reports that the khwaja of Zuzan is “an excellent man and founded colleges (madrasas) of great repute and ribāy and erected the fortress of Sala-Mibr at Zuzan.” A century later, Hamdullah Mustawfi reiterates that the malik of Zuzan had built a mighty palace there, and the people were of the Hanafite sect, law-abiding, and very attached to their faith.

The identification of the building at Zuzan as a Hanafite madrasa explains some of its peculiarities. Although the orientation is not indicated on the plan, Godard tells us that it was at an 80° angle to a north-south axis. This gives a qibla orientation of either 260° or 280° from north, which Godard explained by the presence of the palace next to it. Although the door through the qibla wall next to the mihrab (plate 2) suggests that it was meant to provide ready access for the ruler, as was the case in early dar al-ʿImara-congregational mosque combinations in Mesopotamia, that does not necessarily mean that the palace next door determined the orientation of the qibla. Other considerations could have determined the orientation of both buildings.

Plate 9. Zuzan. Madrasa. Middle of the inscription across the back of the south iwan.

David King has found that the orientation of all medieval Islamic religious architecture was determined by a variety of factors, among them the azimuth of the rising sun at the winter solstice, the direction of the prevailing winds, the orientation of Canopus, and the determination of the Ashab (Companions of the Prophet). Bazdawi, an eleventh-century qadi of Samarqand, states that Shafi‘ites used a value of 180° due south, and Hanafites favored one of 270° due west, yet the congregational mosque was oriented toward the setting sun at midwinter (c. 240°), and medieval astronomers gave values of 230°. That the madrasa at Zuzan fits most closely to the Hanafite value suggests that religious considerations and the requisite of the particular madhab influenced the orientation of both madrasa and palace.

The Hanafi connection also explains the tribunes, which Godard suggests indicated the presence of palace inhabitants at religious ceremonies. In fact, the activities housed there may well have been judicial and educational, and the surrounding rooms used for support functions such as residence for staff and students, libraries, and so forth.

Only three examples of pre-Mongol madrasas still exist in greater Iran, and even their identity is not certain. One is the Seljuq four-iwan building whose ruins were excavated at Ray, but the lack of a mihrab and scanty documentation render its identity inconclusive. A second is the fragmentary ruin of a building in mud-brick at Khargird. Its south iwan clearly bore the name and title of the Seljuq vizier Nizam al-Mulk, but whether it is a mosque or a madrasa and whether it had a two- or a four-iwan plan are in doubt. The only secure example is the recently discovered Ghurid madrasa at Shah-i Mashhad in Gargistan in northwestern Afghanistan. Here again, the plan is unclear: only two iwans remain, but excavations might still reveal two others. The inscription over the entrance portal identifies the building as a madrasa, its date as 571 (1176), and its patron as a female. The still extant eastern dome gives the name of the patron. Visible in a published illustration of the east side are the words al-dawla al-malik al-mu‘azzam al-‘alima, and its end accords blessings on her: ... ha wa khallada Allah mulkahu wa dafa quadrahu bi-ta‘rikh ramadān sana ihdā wa saba‘in wa khamsmī‘a (... her, extend her dominion and double her power; dated in the month of Ramadan of the year 571 [March-April 1176]). The high rank and lofty benedictions suggest that she was the wife of the reigning Ghurid ruler Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam. According to Juzjani, she was named Malika Taj al-Harir Jawhar Malik and was the daughter of Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad’s paternal uncle, the infamous Ghurid sultan ‘Ala‘ al-Din Husayn Jahan-suz (“the world-burner”).

Although the rite the Garjistan madrasa followed is not specified, it was probably Shafi‘i. Juzjani reports that as youths both Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad and his brother Mu‘izz al-Din had been adherents of the Karramiyya, but as a result of a vision Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad had transferred his allegiance to the Shafi‘ite school of law. He founded a madrasa for the famed Shafi‘ite teacher Fakhr al-Din Razi in Herat and even invited him to Firuzkuh where popular support for the Karramiyya touched off such a riot that the speaker was forced to withdraw. The madrasa at Zuzan, in contrast, was from the beginning Hanafite. But the religious differences between the two are in no way reflected in their architectural tradition and style.

That style can be traced through a series of dated royal Ghurid buildings in the second half of the twelfth century. The earliest of them is the south palace at Lashkar Gah whose entrance iwan bears the traces of an inscription with the date A.H. 55 x (1156-65) and the words al-dawla al-malik al-mu‘azzam. ‘Ala‘ al-Din Husayn had sacked the castle and occupied the region in 1150-51, so this inscription must refer either to him (he died in 1161) or to his nephew and successor, the future Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam (1163-1203), who wintered in the region. The Ghurids continued to build in the area throughout the century. The arch at Bust contains a standard Ghurid dedicatory inscription of a framed rectangular band in knotted Kufic. The incomplete inscription with Koran 2:121 belongs to a religious structure, possibly a qubba. On the basis of its epigraphy, style, and lack of glazed decoration, Sourdel-Thomine attributed it to the third quarter of the twelfth century.

The second dated monument is a small domed structure at Chisht (plate 11, left). A cursive inscription with triple punched stems running around the drum of the dome gives the name of the patron. Visible in a published illustration of the east side are the words fi ayyām al-dawla al-malik al-mu‘azzam al-mu‘ayyad al-mu‘azzaf al-manṣūr al-‘alim al-‘adil Shams al-Dunya wa-l-Din (during the days of the reign of the great malik, assisted [by God], victorious, triumphant, wise, just, Shams al-Dunya wa-l-Din) referring to the Ghurid ruler Muhammad ibn Sam before he assumed the title of sultan and the regnal laqab Ghiyath al-Dunya wa-l-Din. A band in Kufic with single punched stems

encircles the blind arches on the four interior walls and is inscribed, beginning in the northeast corner, with the bismillah, Koran 3:18-19, 2:255 and, ending on the east wall, with another bismillah and the date in Persian: 39 bi-tārikh-i dahum jamid al-a'wāl sāl-i qabr [?] pānsad shast dū az hijrat-i payghāmbar Muḥammad sall-i Allāh ʿalayhi (dated the tenth of Jam [sic] I of the year [one word] 562 [March 4, 1167] since the hegira of the Prophet Muḥammad, God’s blessings upon him [plate 12]).

In 1163 the malik Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Sam assumed the title of sultan and the regnal name Ghiyath al-Dīn. He annexed Herat three years later, the same year that the Gargistan madrasa was built, presumably under the patronage of his wife. Around the same time, one of the Khwarazmian princes, Sultan Shah, also solicited Ghiyath al-Dīn Muḥammad’s aid against his brother, the reigning Khwarazmshah, ʿAlaʾ al-Dīn Tekish. An inscription in the shrine at Mashhad records this alliance and the date 577 (1181). The agreement was rather short-lived: in 1190 Ghiyath al-Dīn Muḥammad defeated his erstwhile ally Sultan Shah near Merv and took over most of his territory in Khurasan.

A second, taller domed structure at Chisht dates from this period as well (plate 11, right). All that remains of the dedicatory inscription on its portal are the words al-sultan al-muʿazzam ... bi-tārikh rabiʿ al-akhir sana (the great sultan ... dated in Rabiʿ II of the year) (plate 13).

Stylistic characteristics link it to the 1176 Gargistan madrasa, but the use of the title “great sultan” connects it to the 1181 inscription and prefigures the most extraordinary Ghurid monument, the minaret of Jam. Wiet published the dedicatory inscription of this minaret, which includes the full name and titles of the Ghurid ruler Ghiyath al-Dīn Muḥammad. Another inscription names the artisan ʿAli ibn Amir Muḥammad al-L. According to Pinder-Wilson, the octagonal plinth above the north entrance gives the date 590 (1194).

In the last decade of Ghiyath al-Dīn’s life, the Ghurids undertook a major building program of mosques and related structures. Since Ghiyath al-Dīn Muḥammad had sent his brother Muʿizz al-Dīn
Muhammad and his lieutenant Qutb al-Din Aybak (the founder of the Delhi sultanate) off to conquer India, many of these buildings were commissioned at Delhi and Ajmer, as well as other sites. Most of them are ascribed to Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad or Qutb al-Din Aybak, but a notable exception is the Qutb Minar in Delhi, whose two inscription bands bear the names of the Ghurid co-regents and brothers. No date is given for the construction, but it must predate Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad's death in 1202, and may well be coincident with the 1196 date inscribed on the nearby mosque. At about the same time Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad restored the congregational mosque in Herat. Melikian-Chirvani has published Ghurid inscriptions from three parts of the building: vaults flanking the west iwan, a recently uncovered portal dated 597 (1200) on the east side, and a now-destroyed tomb chamber on the north. Texts tell us that the work was quickly completed by his son when Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad died, so that by the early thirteenth century the mosque would have reached its current limits.

Altogether, then, a remarkable range of civil, religious, and commemorative architecture sponsored by Ghurid rulers in eastern Iran in the second half of the twelfth century has survived. Standard building types (iwan-plan mosques and madrasas, cylindrical minarets) were lavishly inscribed with large epigraphic bands giving the names and titles of the sovereign, sometimes emblazoned in blue tile, and framing portals or archways (Bust, Garjistan, Chisht, Herat) or encircling minarets (Jam, Delhi). Appropriately declamatory Koranic verses were selected. The beginning of the Victory Sura (18) rings the oratory that was added to the audience hall at Lashkar Gah and the blind niches on the façade of the Garjistan madrasa. The arch at Bust carries Koran 2:127, metaphorically connecting the construction with Abraham and Isma'il's raising of the first temple at Mecca. Most spectacularly, the interlacing band around the bottom shaft of the minaret at Jam, with the entire Sura of Miryam (19), undoubtedly had some sort of significance for the local population.

These royally sponsored monuments show not only that the Ghurids were lavish patrons of architecture, but also that their architectural endowments were part of a coordinated campaign to champion Islam. In part, this was done through the patronage and endowment of mosques and madrasas, both to convert the heathen and to counter internal heresies. Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad's titles, such as mu'izz al-Islam wa'l-Muslimin (he who exalts Islam and the Muslims) or qasim amir al-mu'minin (associate of the Commander of the Believers), underscore his role as defender of Islam. His tomb in the mosque at Herat not only has dedicatory bands around the dado and base of the dome, but even a panel on the lower wall, in a strange knotted Kufic, which instead of simply repeating pious phrases, extols the sultan as defender of God's countries and vanquisher of God's enemies (hāfiz bilād Allāh, qāhir aṣdā' Allāh). Ghurid titles are as polemical as those of the contemporary Zangids in the west.

Another way the Ghurids championed Islam was to encourage the cult of saints and mystics. Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad sponsored at least two buildings at Chisht, where the founder of the Chistiyya order of
Sufis, Khwaja Abu Ishaq of Syria, had settled. In the late twelfth century, one of the outstanding figures of the order, Khwaja Muʻin al-Din Hasan Sijzi Chishti, took the order to India, going to Delhi in 1193 and then to Ajmer where he established a major Chishti center.65 He followed right on the heels of the Ghurid sultan Muṣizz al-Din Muhammad, who had just conquered these cities and was busily ordering major mosques to be built in them. At the same time, Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad had conquered territories as far west as Bastam where the last Ghurid ruler, ʿAlaʾ al-Din Muhammad (d. 1215), ordered his own burial next to the tomb of the famous mystic Shaykh Bayazid Bastami.66

Among the popular saints, Mahmud of Ghazna was a particular favorite. The Ghurids fixed up his tomb by adding doors and a prismatic dome to the cenotaph.67 The choice of Mahmud of Ghazna is not surprising. In both form and intent, Ghurid architecture continues that of the Ghaznavids, who had been strong supporters of the Abbasid caliphs and the sunna and patrons of similar proclamatory works like the minarets of Ghazna and the opulent palace cities of Lashkar Gah and Ghazna.68 Ghaznavid inscriptions had been similarly pointed, from the panegyric poetry emulating the Shāhnāma specifically commissioned to decorate the court of the palace at Ghazna to the apody chosen Koranic verses (27:40-41), referring to the Queen of Sheba’s visit before the throne of Solomon, inscribed around the audience hall in the palace at Lashkar Gah.69

The same themes and forms are found in the post-Ghurid madrasa at Zuzan. Its very scale attests to the zeal and wealth of its patron, and its monumental Koranic inscription (beginning of sura 23) framing the south iwan champions the triumph of believers. The Seljuqs had already used these verses polemically by inscribing them across the south façade of the domed sanctuary inserted into the mosque at Isfahan, the first known Seljuq construction in the congregational mosque in the capital after the defeat of the Shiʼite Kakuyids.70

Where Ghurid architecture departs from its predecessors is in style. Sourdel-Thomine was the first to describe a “Ghurid” style in which the brick patterning of earlier monuments had given way to a revetment in the form of a geometric grid, and where, despite the elegant floral motifs and vegetal forms decorating epigraphic bands of Kufic with an ornamental border of Kufic on an undulating scroll, decoration had a certain

on the arch at Bust, the Garjistan madrasa, the later building at Chisht (plate 15), the minaret at Jam (though there the interlacing band is not geometric but epigraphic), and the east portal to the congregational mosque at Herat.\textsuperscript{64} The same style is also used on the minaret at Qasimabad in the upper band bearing the titles of Taj al-Din Harb, local malik of Seistan and Nimruz.\textsuperscript{67} Juzjani mentions that he was a vassal of the Ghurids, reciting the khutba and inscribing the coinage in their name,\textsuperscript{68} and hence it would have made sense for him to use a script typical of his overlords.

The inscriptions at Bust and Jam, however, differ in some respects from the other Ghurid foundation inscriptions. The Bust inscription is a similar frame band in a tripartite strip of letters, interlacing, and floral ornament, but it lacks the rhythmic progression of paired verticals and split palmettes.\textsuperscript{69} The Jam minaret’s lower inscription is also similar, but in place of the interlaced split palmettes are silhouetted leaves with an arbitrarily applied surface pattern inside the tendrils.\textsuperscript{70} The upper foundation inscription in glazed tile lacks the intermediate interlacing, and the floral decoration has become more stylized and lacks stipling.\textsuperscript{71}

The Khwarazmshahs, heirs to the Ghurid dominions in Khurasan in the early thirteenth century, adapted the style of their predecessors. The inscription framing a portal at Dahistan in southern Turkmenistan records the titles of the Khwarazmshah ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad in the usual tripartite inscription, done in light-blue glazed tile with terra-cotta half-palmettes inserted in the upper tier, but the knotting has lost the spontaneity of the best Ghurid examples (e.g., the mosque portal at Herat) and the middle tier has become a monotonous succession of identical knots.\textsuperscript{72}

The 1218 madrasa at Zusan, whose patron was an amir in the service of the Khwarazmshah, uses a similar tripartite layout for the inscription framing the south iwan (plates 5-7). This time, however, the band is unglazed and the letters have incised borders. Unfortunately almost nothing remains of the dated cursive inscription that once ran around its back (plates 8-10), but it still shows the same tripartite division and fascination with interlacing and ornamentation of the upper zone. The closest comparison to be found is a band on the outer right-hand side of the arched portal at Garjistan, where the stems form an intermediate zone of interlaced hexagons and terminate in pairs.\textsuperscript{73} Could Zusan’s south iwan have had triple punched stems on an undulating scroll background such as those used on Ghurid buildings? The 1167 structure at Chisht (plate 12), the Garjistan madrasa, and the tomb of Ghiyath al-
Din Muhammad in the mosque at Herat come most immediately to mind. Stamped stems on a scroll ground are also used in an inscription with the name of a later malik of Seistan Yamin al-Din Bahramshah (1215-21) in the ruins at Peshwaran and remain typical of Khurasani epigraphy during the succeeding centuries.

Thus the decorative epigraphy on the madrasa at Zuzan compares most closely to Ghurid monuments at Garjistan, Chisht, and Herat, and differs from those at Jam and Bust. On geographical grounds alone one can surmise that Herat was the center for this style (fig. 1), but the texts also provide a more tangible link between the malik of Zuzan and that city. Juwayni reports that in 603 (1206-07) the governor of Herat, Ibn Kharmil, secretly concluded an alliance with the Ghurid sultan Ghiyath al-Din Mahmud. Enraged, the Khwarazmshah ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad surreptitiously ordered his amirs to seize the deceitful governor. The amirs summoned Ibn Kharmil to a consultation, after which the malik of Zuzan invited him home—ostensibly for a feast, actually to kill him. Aware of the malik’s intentions, Ibn Kharmil refused to come, so the malik then ordered the other amirs to carry him off to a fortress where they killed him and sent his head back to Khwarazm. The episode shows that the malik of Zuzan was a most trusted follower of the Khwarazmshah, but it incidentally also tells us that he had a house in Herat. Living there, he must have had more than a passing acquaintance with the art and architecture in the city, particularly the major reconstruction of the congregational mosque that had been completed some five years earlier.

Herat in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century was a flourishing metropolis famed for its artisans. In 1163 a merchant there commissioned what became one of the most famous metal objects in Islamic art, now known as the Bobrinsky kettle, and a whole series of similar inlaid buckets and ewers originated there. Herzfeld published a remarkable inlaid pen box now in the Freer Gallery of Art, made for the last Khwarazmian vizier, dated 607 (1210) and signed by its maker, al-Shazi. Melikian-Chirvani also found other pieces signed by the same master with the nisba al-Haravi (of Herat) and has assigned a large number of bronze objects to that city during this period. All these pieces are characterized by decorative epigraphy, particularly a type of bordered script in which the upper ends of the stems terminate, not in fleurons, but in faces.

Herati builders were also notable in this period. The Ghurid ruler Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad must have taken Herati builders with him to India, for the mosque at Ajmer has an inscription stating that that work was done in 596 (1200) under the supervision (ji tawliyya) of Abu Bakr ibn Ahmad Khalu (?) of Herat.

All the sources speak of the great wealth of the malik of Zuzan. In the 1210’s when he decided to endow an enormous madrasa in his native city, he would have hired the best architects and craftsmen available to build it, men who had been trained on royal Ghurid buildings in and around Herat. These artisans were available for outside commissions, for following the death of Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad in 1203 and that of his brother in 1206, the Ghurids were wracked by internal quarrels, and their territory fell to Khwarazmian domination. Herat was finally taken in 1208-09, just before the malik undertook his work.

The scale of the investment and the quality of the craftsmen explains one final aspect of the decoration at Zuzan: the sophisticated glazed tile which is done in an intricate technique and in a broad palette of three colors. All three parts of the epigraphic band across the south iwan (letters, interlacing, and arcading) are done in light-blue glazed brick (plates B-10). Inserted into the interlacing are white pentagrams and dark-blue hexagons. Guard bands are composed of rectangles of alternating white and light-blue glazed bricks. Below, a row of thirteen roundels encloses decorative patterns in plain and light-blue glazed bricks. The central roundel in light-blue glazed brick has an interlaced pentagram, the name Muhammad repeated five times in a circle around the central word, Allah.

In his seminal article outlining the development of mosaic faience in Iran, Donald Wilber showed that the use of glazed revetment followed a logical, if slow, development from the mid-eleventh through the twelfth century. However, the lack of any dated examples from 1200 to 1270—indeed the dearth of any monuments in Iran from that period—forced him to posit a hiatus of some seventy years which he attributed to the Mongol invasions. Production, he argued, was resumed on a rather small scale a generation after the invasions, but by the beginning of the fourteenth century imperial Mongol monuments in Azarbajyan had reached the threshold of complete mosaic faience using a three- or four-color palette.

More recent discoveries allow a revision of this chronology, particularly with respect to eastern Iran. In
central Asia light-blue glaze was used for an inscription in relief as early as the 1277 Kalyan minaret in Bukhara, and glazed terra cotta appears on several other Bukharan monuments attributed to the twelfth century (e.g., the mosque of Maghok ⁵Atari and the Namazgah).⁵² Light-blue glazed inscription bands were popular at this time: those on the Ghurid monuments at Jam and Herat and on the two portals at Dahistan and Ahiverd in southern Turkmenistan have already been mentioned.⁵³ The Herat portal also has light-blue glazed plugs inserted into a complex strapwork pattern.

Two-color glazed decoration also appears on two early-thirteenth-century Khurasani tomb towers at Radkan and Kishmar. The light-blue glazed inscription band below the conical roof on the Radkan tower is partially destroyed: one short word ending in two teeth is missing in the date between fi ṣana (in the year) and sittaka mi'ya (six hundred) (plate 16). Van Berchem originally suggested that Ṣthnayn, the word for “two” filled the gap,⁵⁷ but Herzfeld pointed out that the words for five, twenty, thirty, sixty, or eighty were also possible, and he himself favored a date of 680 (1281-82) which accords with the local tradition identifying the building as the tomb of the amir Arghun, the local governor under the Ilkhanids Hulagu and Aqaqa who died in Radkan in 1275.⁵⁸ Wilber followed Herzfeld’s attribution and used the tower, and the similar undated one at Kishmar, to illustrate the resumption of faience following the Mongol invasions.⁵⁹

In fact, van Berchem’s earlier dating of 1205-06 is to be preferred. The missing word in the date occupies very little space, and Ṣthnayn is the shortest choice. Although not entirely legible, the rest of the inscription (plate 17) is written in Persian, a practice that is more common in the pre-Mongol period, and shows that the tomb was not built for the Mongol governor Arghun, but rather for ʾAbdallah, an otherwise-unknown amir of Radkan, by his heirs.⁶⁰ Similar in style and decoration, the tower at Kishmar should also be attributed to the early thirteenth century.

A second color glaze required no new technology, but only adding small amounts of cobalt oxide. Cobalt was mined in central Iran near Kashan and was already used in alkaline-glazed ceramics, particularly the type known as iaqabi-ware.⁶¹ While Kashan had a cobalt monopoly for centuries, the small amounts needed for glazes (2 or 3 percent) must have been available in eastern Iran through trade.⁶² Under the Yuan dynasty (1260-1368), cobalt was exported to China, where it was known as “Muhammadan blue.”⁶³

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, eastern Iran imported other ceramic techniques from central Iran. Italian excavators at Ghazna uncovered an unusual series of small glazed tiles in the post-Ghaznavid layers of the palace of Masʿud III.⁶⁴ Although crude in execution and limited in decorative repertory, the tiles show a broad range of colors (green, yellow, brown, red, blue, and turquoise). A large part of the material found during the excavations—including bronzes, ceramics, and marble pieces—has been attributed to the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and glazed wares in particular
share motifs and stylistic peculiarities with Iran proper. The excavators suggested that under the Ghurid ruler Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad, economic conditions were favorable for an artistic revival, including an expansion of ceramic workshops, and concluded that the central Iranian influence occurred either through the spontaneous or forced migration of artisans or from the normal current of trade.

The madrasa at Zuzan, therefore, is both a continuation of a tradition of glazed ceramics in eastern Iran into the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and a step forward, not only in its use of a third color but also in its greater realization of the potential of glazed tile in playing off various colors and glazed with unglazed surfaces. The patron's substantial investment in using the best craftsmen available from Herat paid off in increased sophistication. The effects of both investment and craftsmanship can be measured by comparing this monument with the minaret at Nigar (a village fifty-six kilometers south-southwest of Kirman and twenty kilometers east of Bardsir), another building constructed under the auspices of the malik of Zuzan.

Sykes, the first person to publish the mosque and minaret, was told that the mihrab once had an inscription dated 615 (1218). Almost nothing remains of the mihrab, but the mosque still has the truncated shaft of a baked-brick minaret with a Koranic inscription (sura 97) in light-blue glazed brick surrounded by guard bands of alternating light- and dark-blue glazed diamonds. If we accept the 1218 date—and it fits stylistically—then the minaret and mosque fit precisely under the patronage of the malik of Zuzan who had taken over Bardsir in June of 1213.

The decoration of the Nigar minaret shows some affinities to that used on other monuments in eastern Iran, particularly in its light-blue glazed tripartite inscription of letters, interlacing, and floral ornament and its two-color guard bands. But its glazed decoration is much more restricted in color and technique than that found at Zuzan, and it must represent a lower level of investment.

The madrasa at Zuzan exemplifies the cultural florescence of eastern Iran in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. It partakes of a Ghurid style of architectural decoration in brick mosaic, particularly the style that was centered in Herat in the last quarter of the twelfth century with its bordered Kufic and split-palmette inserts in the upper zone. Its sophisticated use of glazed tile attests to the burgeoning ceramic industry in the area. Despite political unrest and dynastic fighting, on the eve of the Mongol invasions the rulers of eastern Iran, both sultans and local princes, had enormous resources at their command to invest in major building programs and luxury objects with sophisticated decoration.

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NOTES


5. Leonard Harrow and Antony Hutt, for example, captioned their photographs with the date 1219 and the identification, mosque of the malik of Zuzan (Iwan 1 [London, 1977] pp. 136-38, pls. 80-82); the List of Historic Sites and Ancient Monuments of Iran also uses this word and mentions inscriptions dated A.H. 600 and 610 (Nasratallah Mīshkhātī, Fīhris-i Binābā-yī Yūrīkī wa Amāčān-i Bāštānī-yī Iran (Tehran, 1349/1971), p. 85.

6. The vertical cursive inscription on the back of the south iwan has deteriorated since Godard’s visit (compare plates 1 and 3). The last words ‘ashr wa sitta mi‘ṣ (61 x ) are clear, but the unit’s digit has been partly destroyed. Godard’s reading of sitta (six) is possible, but I am unable to confirm it, and on historical grounds it is questionable.

7. Ibn al-Attir reports that the malik was a camel driver who rose through the army ranks (al-Kāmil fi l-Tāʾrikh, 15 vols., ed. C. J. Tornberg [repr. Beirut, 1965-67], s.v. anno 611, 12:303); Nasawi says he was the son of the wet nurse of Nusrat al-Din Muhammad ibn Lizz, ruler of Zuzan, and had been appointed ambassador to the Khwarazmshah’s court. There he intrigued against his master until the latter was forced to flee; the Khwarazmshah then appointed the erstwhile ambassador vizier of Zuzan (Muḥammad ibn Aḥam al-Nasawi, Sirāt Jālāl al-Dīn Mankubītī, ed. H. A. Ḥamīdī (Cairo, 1933), pp. 74-75; ed. and trans. O. Houdas, Histoire du Sultan Djelal ed-Din Mankobītī, 2 vols. (Paris, 1891-95), 2:47-98).

THE MADRASA AT ZUZAN

11. This episode may have inspired the poet Sa’di’s reference to the malik of Zuzan in the Gulistan. Story 24 of the first section recounts the tale of the noble minister who once angered his master, the malik of Zuzan, and was consequently thrown into prison. Despite the unjust imprisonment, the vizier refused to yield to a rival king’s secret plea for sedition and instead sent back a short, noncommittal reply. Upon intercepting the message—that whoever usually shows kindness can be pardoned if he once appears cruel—the malik of Zuzan naturally forgave his minister. The story ends with a poem to the effect that God, not man, is responsible for causing benefit or pain.
14. Juvayni, World Conqueror, 2:369. Many manuscripts lack the year, but Boyle (n. 25), following Barthold, places these events in 615.
15. If we accept Godard’s reading of the cursive inscription as 616 (see n. 6), then the building must have been completed after the malik’s death. Alternatively, the unit’s digit of the cursive inscription might not have read six (see n. 6).
17. Two of the madrasas are in Aleppo (the 1169 Muqaddamiyya and the 1193 Shahbakhtiyya) and two are in Damascus (the 1172 madrasa of Nur al-Din and the 1180 Rayhaniyya). The endowment inscriptions are published in Répertoire chronologique d’épigraphie arabe (hereafter RCEA), vol. 9 (Cairo, 1937), nos. 3284, 3467, 3293, and 3342 respectively. In addition, for the Aleppo examples, see Ernst Herzfeld, Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum (hereafter MCIA): Alep (Cairo, 1954), no. 11, p. 233, and no. 122, p. 256. For the madrasa of Nur al-Din, see also Ernst Herzfeld, “Studies on Damascus 1,” Ars Islamica 8 (1942):40-49. The epithet is not used, however, in the endowment inscription of the earliest extant Hanafi madrasa, that of Abu Mansur Mushtahid at Busra (RCEA 3077).
27. These arguments were set forth by King in several recent lectures and in his unpublished monograph on orientations.
32. In a personal note, the authors amended the date published in their article from A.H. 461 to A.H. 471. Janine Sourdel-Thomine also published corrections to the inscription in Annales de l’École Pratique des Hautes Études, IVe section (Paris, 1975-76), but this work was not available to me.
35. EP, s.v. “Fakhrl al-Din Râzî,” by C. G. Anawati and “Harrat” by N. R. Frye. The orientation of the Gargistan madrasa does not help in ascertaining its rite, for no mihrab was found. According to Bazdawi, Šaf‘îites used a qibla of due south, and the Gargistan madrasa is in fact cardinaly aligned with the major entrance portal on the south. The discoverers suggested that the building faced west, thus assuming that the now-vanished western section would have contained a prayer hall with a mihrab. It is also possible that one of the domed rooms along the south entrance wall could have served as the prayer hall.
37. Ibid., pp. 63-68.
38. Photograph by Josephine Powell published in A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, “‘A Propos of the Ghirid Parts of the Great Mosque at Herat,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 33 (1970) pl. 9; Saljuqi has also published part of the inscription in Mazarat-‘e Hirat, ed. Fikri Saljuqi (Kabul, 1967), p. 157, but the lack of binoculars hindered his reading, and it does not entirely make sense.
39. Persian inscriptions are quite common in this area and time. The most famous is the panegyric poem inscribed around the court of the palace of Mas‘ud III at Ghazna (Alessio Bombaci, The Kūfī Inscription in Persian Verses in the Court of the Royal Palace of Mas‘ud III at Ghazni (Rome, 1966). Rabat-i Malik (1078) has an as yet unread Persian foundation inscription (illustrated in A. U. Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, eds., Survey of Persian Art [Oxford, 1939] pl. 272); the 1152 Uzkend mausoleum’s inscription (RCEA 3416) has been read by A. Y. Yakubovskv, “Dve nadpisî na severnom Mavzolei 1152 g.v. Uzgende,” Epigrafika Vostoka 1 (1947): 27-32. Contemporary Saljuqi inscriptions in Fars are also in Persian; see A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, “Le Royaume de Salomon,” Le Monde iranien et l’Islam 1 (1971): 1-41. Inscriptions such as these help document medieval Persian and may attest to spoken variants. The Chisht inscription, for example, uses the form jumid for the Arabic month Jumada.
40. RCEA 3370.
41. Maricq and Wiet, Djam, pp. 25-29.

43. Ralph Pinder-Wilson, “Ghaznavid and Ghurid Architecture and Epigraphy,” a paper given at the symposium on the art of the Seljuks in Iran and Anatolia (Edinburgh, 29 August-2 September 1982). However, Sourdrel-Thomine (Schlumberger and Sourdrel-Thomine, Lashkari Bazar, p. 49, n. 3) gives A.H. 570. As the titles, decorative style, and use of glazed tile seem to me to accord better with Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad’s later monuments, I have for the moment accepted Pinder-Wilson’s reading. It is often difficult to distinguish between tis’u‘ and saba‘ (or here, tis’u‘in and sab‘in) but one hopes that publication of a full range of photographs of the inscription will resolve the problem.


45. As Wiet noted (Maricq and Wiet, Djam, pp. 53-54), the bracketed sections of the two inscriptions in RCEA have been incorrectly completed. The second band around the base (RCEA 3618) refers to Mu‘izz al-Din Muhammad and should not include the introductory bracketed passage; the fourth band (RCEA 3619) records the name and titles of his brother Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad and should read Abu‘l-Fath, not Abu‘l-Mu‘azzafar.

46. RCEA 3496.

47. Melikian-Chirvani, “Great Mosque of Herat.”


52. Oleg Grabar first suggested this in his review of Maricq and Wiet, Djam (Ars Orientalis 4 [1961]: 419), but the exact meaning of the choice is still unclear.

53. Basic study by Wiet, in Maricq and Wiet, Djam, pp. 51-54.


60. Bombaci; Sourdrel-Thomine, in Schlumberger and Sourdrel-Thomine, Lashkari Bazar, p. 36.


63. See Sourdrel-Thomine’s clear summary of the change from late Ghaznavid to Ghurid architectural decoration in her conclusions to the architectural decoration at Laškar Gah (Schlumberger and Sourdrel-Thomine, Lashkari Bazar, pp. 69-71).

64. Schlumberger and Sourdrel-Thomine, Lashkari Bazar, pl. 45; Casimir and Glatzer, “Šah-i Malḥād,” 14-22; Maricq and Wiet, Djam, pl. 2; Melikian-Chirvani, “Great Mosque of Herat,” pls. 12-14.

65. The basic study of Ghaznavid epigraphy is Samuel Flury, “Le Décour épigraphique des monuments de Ghazna,” Syria 6 (1925): 61-90. His magnificent drawings are still worthy of study, although his conclusions have been modified by Janine Sourdrel-Thomine’s redating of the minaret of Bahramshah (“Deux minarets d’époque seljoukide en Afghanistan,” Syria 30 [1953]: 105-36). The Firuzabad minaret is illustrated in Harrow and Hutt, Iran 1, pp. 103-04; its inscription is RCEA 3209.

66. Casimir and Glatzer, “Šah-i Malḥād,” inscription no. 2, figs. 8-11; Maricq and Wiet, Djam, pl. 9; Melikian-Chirvani, “Great Mosque of Herat,” pls. 7-8.

67. In his paper, “Seljuk Minarets: Some New Data,” delivered at the Edinburgh symposium on the art of the Seljuks, Bernard O’Kane called attention to this minaret, visited by Ernst Herzfeld (photograph 2873 in the Herzfeld Archives at the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.). The lower band in simple Kufic (RCEA 3259) bears the name of Taj al-Din Nasr, grandfather of Taj al-Din Harb mentioned in the upper band (RCEA 3785).

68. Junejani, Tabaqat, Raverty trans., p. 192.

69. Schlumberger and Sourdrel-Thomine, Lashkari Bazar, pl. 127a-b, and pp. 64-66.

70. Maricq and Wiet, Djam, inscription no. 6, pl. 7, 3.

71. Ibid., inscription no. 4, pl. 7, 1.

72. RCEA 3864; G. A. Pugachenkova and L. I. Rempel, Puti Razvitija Arkhitektury Yuzhnogo Turkmenistana (Moscow, 1958), pp. 260-66 and M. A. Pribikova, Stroiteli'nye kul'tura Srednei Azii v. IX-XII vv. (Moscow, 1973), pp. 205-06. There is another portal with a similar inscription in the village of Abiverd (Pugachenkova and Rempel, Puti Razvitija, pp. 259-60) which they attribute to the first half of the twelfth century, but on the basis of their similarities to the nearby portal at Dahistan, I would date later.

74. Melikian-Chirvani, "Mosque at Herat," p. 9; Casimir and Glatzer, "Sah-i Maḥād,," figs. 33-34; Niedermeyer, Afghanistan, fig. 154. Triple punched stems are also found in the mausolea at Sar-i Pul (Bivar, "Seljuqid Ziyarats," pls. 1-9) and at Vekil Bazar (G. A. Pugachenkova, Iskusstvo Turkmenistana [Moscow, 1967], pl. 80).


76. For example, the mosque at Farumad (Godard, "Khorasan," fig. 68) and the mihrab at Bastam (Wilber, Ilkhanid Period, fig. 37).

77. Juvayni, World Conqueror, 1:334.


82. RCEA 3530; Michael Meister, "The 'Two-and-a-half Day' Mosque," Oriental Art, n.s. 18 (1972): 57-63 (see below, n. 91, for another builder possibly from Herat).

83. Nasawi tells us that the malik of Zuzan doubled the prosperity of the Kirman province and increased animal breeding so that when the Khwarazmshah returned from Iraq having lost most of his camels, the malik of Zuzan sent him 4,000 replacements in Nishapur. After the malik’s death, seventy loads of gold pieces and diverse objects were carted off to the royal treasury. These riches arrived just as the Khwarazmshah was fleeing the Mongols on the banks of the Jayhun River, however, so without even breaking the seals they were all thrown into the river along with an even larger quantity of treasure that the sovereign had carried with him (Nasawi, Strat Jalal al-Din, Houdas trans. p. 49; Hamdi ed., p. 75).

According to Juvayni, however, when Rukn al-Din, governor of Iraq, heard of his father’s flight, he set out to meet him. En route he passed through Kirman, where he opened the treasury of the malik of Zuzan and distributed its contents to his troops (Juvayni, World Conqueror, 2:475).


85. B. P. Denike, Arkhitekturii Ornament Srednei Azit (Moscow, 1939), p. 133; all are illustrated in Derek Hill and Oleg Grabar, Islamic Architecture and Its Decoration A.D. 800-1500 (Chicago, 1964).

86. See above, n. 72.

87. Van Berchem, in Diez, Chusranische Baudenkalter, pp. 107-09.


89. Wilber, "Mosaic faience," p. 41; color illustration in Hutt and Harrow, Iran I, pl. 14.

90. I can make out the following text: warthat-i amir 'Abdallah [10-12 letters] mulk-i ishdn bid (?) [7 letters] majmā'-i āl wa zamīn-i Rādkān ... ghafara Allah lahum fi sana [sithnayn] wa sitta mi'a waqf kardard (the heirs of Amir 'Abdallah ... from their possession ... all the people [?] and land of Radkan ... endowed this, may God forgive them, in the year [two] and six hundred). A small cursive inscription at the top of two of the engaged colonnettes gives the signature of the builder, 'amal-i Abu Bakr ibn (one word) / al-banna? al-Haravi (the work of Abu Bakr ibn [one word]/the builder of Herat [?]). The final words in both parts of the inscription are unclear.

91. James Allan, "Abi'l-Qasim's Treatise on Ceramics," Iran 11 (1973), para. 8, mentions that cobalt (called /a@jvard) was mined in the village of Qamsar near Kashan; see also Hans E. Wulff, Traditional Crafts of Persia (Cambridge, Mass., 1966) p. 14.

92. Ibid., pp. 120 and 127; for the analysis of the glaze, see Wilber, "Mosaic Faience," p. 29 and n. 50.

93. Wulff, Traditional Crafts, p. 147.


GÜLÜR NECİPOĞLU-KAFADAR

THE SüLEYMANİYE COMPLEX IN ISTANBUL:
AN INTERPRETATION

The Süleymaniye complex (külliye), sponsored by Sultan Süleyman the Lawgiver and built in Istanbul between 1550 and 1557, is the largest of the Ottoman building enterprises (plates 1, 2). It is a rationally planned socioreligious complex with geometrically organized dependencies, consisting of the monumental Süleymaniye mosque and two mausolea (tombs of the sultan and his wife Haseki Hürrem Sultan, built in a walled enclosure) at the center (plate 3), separated by an outer courtyard from four general madrasas; two specialized madrasas—one for the study of medicine (darü'l-ḥadīṣ); a hospital (darü'l-şifa?); a Koran school for children (mekteb or mu'allimhane); a hostel (tābhnâne); a public kitchen (imaret-i ʿāmire); a hammam; a caravanserai; and rows of small shops (plates 4-7).

Because this monumental building complex is well documented and stands today almost as it was built, it has neither to be reconstructed nor dated, but it does pose problems of interpretation for the historian. Its roles in the evolution of the Ottoman külliye type and in the development of the Ottoman classical style of architecture have been studied, but those studies center mainly on classifying Ottoman architecture according to formal criteria, such as typologies of dome structure or space, and have underplayed its cultural significance, seeking its meaning in the architect’s inventions rather than in the patron’s intent. In the case of the Süleymaniye, that approach leads to interpretations of this building complex solely in terms of Sinan’s artistic intentions. Although Sinan’s creative genius and his role as an inventive synthesizer of architectural traditions in the Mediterranean and the Middle East are undeniable, seeing his buildings only as modular structures based on a rational organization of abstract forms results in misconceptions about the cultural meanings they carried in their own time.

Ottoman architects did not formulate a theoretical framework for their architecture comparable to those found in the treatises of Alberti or Vitruvius, but that does not justify the conclusion that Ottoman architecture was merely functional. Cultural associations do tend to lose their charge over time, and today in republican Turkey most of the Süleymaniye’s references to Ottoman institutions have been forgotten. But that it once had culturally assigned symbolic meaning can be demonstrated by analyzing the references to its architecture in its endowment deed, inscriptions, contemporary histories, and travel literature.

Written sources are obviously useful for confirming the dates and other details about the Süleymaniye’s construction, but it is less often recognized that they can also provide conceptual categories and ideological implications that can clarify a building’s meaning. Through them, it can be made clear that, in the case of the Süleymaniye, the a priori notions on which the formalist-functionalist interpretation is based do not reveal all levels of its architectural meaning. Here an attempt will be made to interpret the Süleymaniye complex by seeking to uncover the mechanisms through which its manifold layers of meaning were produced in its original social context. In saying this I claim neither to have exhausted all the cultural associations of the Süleymaniye complex nor to have found meanings that can be assigned solely to it, but only to demonstrate that culturally recognized symbolic and ideological associations do constitute a significant aspect of the Süleymaniye’s multilayered architectural discourse. Those interacting layers of meaning on which this ideological discourse is based can be classified as: functional; connotative (i.e., cultural associations and myths); formal (architectonic); and literal (its inscriptions). Each will be dealt with in turn to show how they unite to communicate a single, consistent political statement of power and legitimization.

THE FUNCTIONAL LEVEL

The Süleymaniye mosque and the dependencies tightly organized around it comprise a unit with various social, religious, and educational functions. In earlier times these functions were met by multipurpose zawiya-
Plate 2. Süleymaniye complex. View from the Golden Horn. (Unless otherwise stated, all photographs are by the author.)

Plate 3. Süleymaniye complex. Mausolea of Süleyman and his wife and the mausoleum keeper’s chamber.

Plate 4. Süleymaniye complex. First and second madrasas. On the mosque’s west side.
Plate 5. Suleymaniye complex. Third and fourth madrasas on a terraced slope overlooking the Golden Horn. On the mosque's east side.


Plate 7. Suleymaniye complex. Public kitchen and hostel.
mosques and their dependencies—madrasas, mausolea, and caravanserais. Zawiya-mosques were built by colonizer sheikhs and state officials, as well as sultans, to provide charitable social, religious, and educational services similar to those later offered by the more elaborate imperial complexes built after Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453.

Early Ottoman complexes in Bursa and Edirne consisted of dependencies loosely arranged around a zawiya-mosque with flanking hostels used for informal gatherings or as lodgings for itinerant and resident Sufis. The incorporation of hostels into the fabric of these mosques entrusted to Sufi sheikhs demonstrates the significant spiritual and social role of colonizer sheikhs in the early conquest period. The gradual abandonment of the zawiya-mosque type after the fall of Constantinople coincides with the declining social function of Sufi sheikhs as a result of the increasing centralization of the Ottoman state.

In Mehmed II’s monumental complex built between 1463 and 1470, the hostel is detached from the mosque’s fabric and established as a dependency (plate 8), perhaps reflecting the declining role of the Sufi sheikhs during Mehmed’s reign. The centrally organized geometric plan of this complex also seems to express the centralizing tendencies of the Ottoman state. Neither Bayezid II’s three complexes in Istanbul, Edirne, and Amasya (1481-1512), nor Selim I’s modest complex in Istanbul (c. 1520) approach its grand scheme. It was the largest Ottoman complex until the building of the Süleymaniye. Süleyman, too, following Mehmed’s example, detaches the hostel from his mosque—an architectural development that coincides with the strict control of the zawiyas, the purge of the Sufi orders, and the conversion of the Sufi convents of Bayezid II’s reign into Sunni madrasas under Süleyman. The detaching of the hostel from the Süleymaniye mosque, the majority of whose dependencies are Sunni madrasas, seems again to be an attempt to express in architectural terms the subordination of Sufism to the powerful orthodox Islamic state and the growing importance of the ulema and of Sunni Islam during Süleyman’s reign (1520-66).

Despite their striking structural similarities, the complexes of Mehmed II and Süleyman were built to serve different ideological functions. When the Conqueror declared himself the successor of the Byzantine emperor by assuming the title sultan-ı Rûm, he was still surrounded by a predominantly Christian population. But after Selim I’s conquest of the Arab lands of Asia and Africa and Süleyman’s subsequent conquest of central Mesopotamia, the Ottoman frontier state could be transformed into an Islamic empire, and Sultan Süleyman could claim to be its supreme caliph. That claim, however, required the reinforcement of the Islamic imperial tradition. In Süleyman’s law code (kânûn-nâme), which was adapted to his predominantly Muslim empire, the earlier title of sultan-ı Rûm, used by Mehmed, is replaced by pâdişâh-ı İslâm, and the absolute sovereignty (‘urf) of the sultan stressed in Mehmed’s code of laws is subordinated in Süleyman’s law codes to the Shari‘a. In this new context, Süleyman established the religious law of Islam as the basis for his administration, which explains the growing interest in jurisprudence and the elaboration of the orthodox Islamic apparatus of law during his reign. This strongly institutionalized orthodoxy becomes the ideological support of the Ottoman state against both the Shi‘ite Safavid dynasty and the heterodox movements of Anatolia.

These policies allow us to surmise that Süleyman intended his complex to serve an ideological function rather different from Mehmed’s. The complex sponsored by Mehmed II was built to turn the fallen and half-deserted city into a center of learning and of monumental buildings to support his imperial claims to the Byzantine succession. Its endowment deed expressly states that its numerous madrasas were built “to repair and fill with light the house of knowledge, and to convert the imperial capital to a realm of learning.” But those madrasas also suggest an attempt to impress state control over education by placing the ulema in institutions centrally controlled by the state. On the other hand, because they were built in a different context, the Süleymaniye madrasas represent the growing political role of the ulema in legitimizing Süleyman’s rule through the Sunni doctrine of the orthodox state. This changing role of the ulema under Süleyman’s reign was reflected in the sultan’s reclassification of educational institutions, according to which the Süleymaniye dârîl-hadîs ranked above all educational institutions including the four Süleymaniye madrasas dedicated to the four Sunni schools of law (as were the sultan’s four madrasas in Mecca), a change that reveals the growing importance of the Shari‘a in the administration of the state. Süleymaniye’s waqfiyya gives the function of the madrasas: “to elevate matters of religion and religious sciences in order to strengthen the mechanisms of worldly sovereignty and to reach happiness in the afterworld.”
The scholars of these madrasas cooperated closely with the state administration. It is stated in Süleyman’s law codes that the professors of the Süleymaniye madrasas and their leader (i.e., the professor at the dārū’l-hadīṣ) had to consult with the grand vizier in his palace after every Friday prayer, and with the şeyhū’l-islâm every Thursday. Ebussuud Efendi, the şeyhū’l-islâm entrusted by Süleyman with the task of harmonizing the rules of the Shari‘a with the administrative practice of the state, was also involved in
the Süleymaniye’s construction: he placed the cornerstone of the mihrab in Süleymaniye’s foundation ceremony and wrote the mosque’s foundation inscription.17

The difference in emphasis between Süleyman’s complex and Mehmed’s is also revealed by a comparison between the functions assigned to each mosque’s personnel in their respective waqfiyyas.18 While similar services were provided in both mosques, the number of people attached to the Süleymaniye mosque was far greater, and the additional functionaries were all assigned duties that can be said to enhance the sultan’s political power in the mosque’s religious ceremony.

An important new personage assigned to the Süleymaniye was a preacher (vâ'iz) from the Hanafi school, authorized to give sermons to believers during Friday prayers, religious holidays, and holy nights, and to pray for the souls of the Prophet, his companions, earlier Ottoman sultans, and the continuation of the present sultan’s caliphate. The number of juz’ readers was also raised from twenty in Mehmed’s mosque to a hundred and twenty in the Süleymaniye, and the waqfiyya specified that they had to read relevant sections of the Koran in groups of thirty every morning to assure the place of the sultan in heaven and on earth. The post of mu’arrif, assigned to recite the tasliya and Fatiha on Fridays in Mehmed’s mosque, was charged with a new duty in Süleyman’s: he had to be trained in Arabic and Persian literature so he could compose poems in praise not only of the Prophet but also of the Ottoman sultans, especially the ruling sultan after Friday and holiday prayers. Other new functionaries of the Süleymaniye were the meddâh-i bâşhân, whose task it was to praise the Prophet in Arabic verse, and the müferrîk-i eczâ, the man who marked the end of every juz’, praying for the Prophet, the Ottoman sultans, and the continuation of the reigning sultan’s rule.19

By incorporating into the religious ceremony constant reminders of the sultan’s power, these new functionaries were meant to reinforce the idea that his power was God-given. Along with the Koran reciters who were assigned suras 78, 67, and 37, the forty enâmci̇s—those who read every day the sixth sura of the Koran for “the strengthening of the sultan’s sovereignty”—daily provided a justification for Süleyman’s rule.20 This sura begins by praising the absolute power of God to whom everything belongs and ends with a divine legitimization of secular power: “It is He who has appointed you viceroys on earth and has raised some of you in rank above the others” (6:165).

The functions of the mosque, like those of the madrasas, specified in its waqfiyya, demonstrate the political nature of the Süleymaniye complex. The Süleymaniye fulfilled the function of an imperial mosque where Süleyman and his impressive retinue prayed each Friday.21 Those observances began with a stately procession through the city:

First the Janissaries who must be seven thousand in number march on foot in front of him in such good order that one does not pass the other, carrying Turkish bows in their hands and gilded quivers at their sides, well furnished with damascined arrows. They walk in a wonderful silence while their old captain marches behind them. Various officers follow them on horseback, some called beylerbey, admiral, qadi, subaşı, provincial judges ... sipahi, and beyond all of them comes the grand mufti (whom they hold in almost the same rank and reputation as we do the Pope, though he does not differ from the others in terms of accoutrement). They are all equipped and armed (except the aforementioned mufti) in their Turkish manner, some wearing gilded cloth; others velvet, white, red or blue satin, heavy with lace, variegated, and woven with gold and silver thread of a very rich manufacture. After them march a grand number of handsome pages decorated and adorned in a manner beyond description. Next come the four pashas who govern the grand lord [i.e., the sultan] peacefully and whose countenances demonstrate a very seigneurial majesty. Then comes the aforementioned grand lord, about fifteen paces after them. Those who follow him (who are of about the same number and equipage as those in front) proceed at another fifteen paces distance, so that in the midst of them all, he moves in small paces, mounted on a handsome horse caparisoned in velvet—the said caparison being decorated all over with fine oriental pearls. The said Süleyman carries a scimitar entirely covered and decorated with emeralds, rubies, diamonds, and other exquisite materials; it is surely the richest thing one can imagine. In the manner I have described, he goes to the aforementioned mosque in such beautiful order and silence that, except for the sound of the horses’ hooves, one would think there was not a soul in the streets, although an almost infinite multitude from diverse nations are watching him pass. Then all the people salute him, bowing their heads low; their lord returns the same salute to his people with a great sweetness and gentleness, inclining his head, now here and now there, with a very becoming gravity.22

The sultan then entered the mosque from the ramp on the east that led to the royal east gate and the royal box beyond, while his court entered through the other side entrances. Then, “after having finished his prayer according to the customs of their law, he returns to his palace in the same way as he had come.”23
The French traveler G. Postel, who was in Istanbul when Süleyman was sultan, witnessed one of these processions to the Friday mosque, and describes it in similar terms; he adds that Süleyman distributed alms to the needy after the prayer was over.\textsuperscript{24} Such a procession clearly had a political purpose in its display of power and charity by a ruler who for the most part remained hidden behind the forbidding walls of his palace. As a pious and charitable foundation carrying the sultan’s name, the Süleymaniye symbolized the power and charity of the patrimonial Ottoman state.

That monumental complexes like the Süleymaniye functioned as symbols of political power is frankly recognized by Mustafa Ali in the book of etiquette he wrote for Murad III in 995 (1586-87):

To build masjids and mosques in the well-developed and prosperous seat of government and likewise to construct convents or madrasas in a famous capital are not pious deeds performed to acquire merit in God’s sight. Every wise and intelligent man knows that these are pious deeds performed in order to accomplish being a leader and to make a good reputation. There are thousands of towns whose inhabitants are in need of masjids and convents. ... Yet, those who wish to perform pious deeds for ostentation and display obviously wish to be renowned in cities which are seats of the throne.\textsuperscript{25}

Although this passage does not mention the Süleymaniye complex, it suggests that such a large-scale building project in a city that already had several royal Friday mosques would have been recognized by contemporaries as a symbol of the sultan’s glory and not merely of his piety.

**CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS AND MYTHS**

The Süleymaniye intermingles political and religious functions. To see how this intermingling is manifested in the building’s architectural language, the building has first to be broken down into its constituent architectonic elements and formal units. Those that are culturally significant can then be identified by turning to the texts that refer to this complex, most of which include detailed inventories, dates, expenditures, and lists of buildings arranged according to function.\textsuperscript{26} While those documents provide useful data pertaining to architectural vocabulary and building typologies, the organization of labor, and the daily sequence and economic aspects of construction for the period, their information is limited when it comes to the conceptual categories through which the Süleymaniye complex may originally have been seen.

Among the sixteenth-century documents yielding particularly rich information are, in addition to the Süleymaniye’s waqīyya, the Taḡkireṭ‘ī’l-Bünūyān, written toward the end of Sinan’s life (d. 1588) by his poet-painter friend Mustafa Sai Çelebi, in which the qualities of Sinan’s selected buildings are discussed under separate sections; the history by Ramazanzade Nişancı Mehmed (d. 1571), covering Ottoman history until the end of Süleyman’s reign, which includes a detailed description of the Süleymaniye; Mustafa ibn Celal’s Taḡkariṭ‘ī’l-Memālīk ve Derecâti’l-Mesâlîk and the second volume of Lokman ibn Seyyid Hüseyin’s Hünärnâme, which also contain descriptions of the royal complex.\textsuperscript{27} From the mid-seventeenth century, Evliya Çelebi’s travelogue has a descriptive section on the Süleymaniye and also recounts popular myths about its construction.\textsuperscript{28}

These four sixteenth-century sources describe the mosque in terms of its symbolic associations and mention its dependencies only briefly. The dependencies, which are standard in plan, they regard as significant on account of the public services they provide rather than for their architecture. They identify the culturally significant architectonic elements of the mosque’s interior (plates 9-10) as the minbar, the mihrab, the various pulpits, the royal box, the elaborate stained-glass windows, the artistic inscriptions; porphyry discs, revetments and columns of rare marble, colossal piers, great arches, and, finally, the monumental central dome and its satellites. The architectural features of the mosque’s exterior they find significant are its monumentality, four tall minarets, arcaded marble courtyard with a fountain in its center, mausolea, and its broad outer precinct.

The descriptions are full of cosmological terms and references to paradise. For example, the waqīyya likens the mosque’s dome and satellites to Gemini and the celestial orbits (plates 11, 12): “the earth challenges the sky ... with a dome that is even higher than paradise.”\textsuperscript{29} The fountain (ṣâdkrwaṭ) at the center of the marble courtyard is compared to Kawthar, the water basin in paradise into which the celestial rivers flow (plate 13).\textsuperscript{30} The French traveler Du Fresne-Canaye who saw this (no longer functioning) fountain in 1573 describes it as a square marble basin into which water dropped like rain from a dome,\textsuperscript{31} a description repeated by Evliya and Lokman that leaves no doubt that the fountain was meant to be a visual replica of Kawthar.\textsuperscript{32} The Taḡkareṭ‘ī’l-Memālīk compares the whole building to paradise, an analogy conveyed in the mosque’s inscrip-
tions, as well as in Sai’s inscription of Sinan’s tomb, north of the Süleymaniye, which calls the Süleymaniye mosque a “symbol of paradise.”

The light provided by the numerous windows is also given its symbolic significance in the Süleymaniye’s waqfiyya, where the Light Verse, “God is the light of the Heavens and the Earth” (24:35), is quoted to show that the mosque is illuminated by divine light. The verse, “The lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star” (24:35), compares the mosque at night lit with oil lamps to the night sky. The qibla-wall windows continue this theme: they are the only stained-glass windows in the mosque and the attributes of God, as well as phrases from the Light Verse (plate 14), are inscribed on them. The wall is covered with ceramic panels of flower motifs, representing the garden of paradise.

The mausolea of Süleyman and his wife again take up the paradisal theme. They are decorated with underglaze ceramic panels with blossoming tree and flower motifs, similar to the panels donated by Süleyman for the revetment of the Dome of the Rock. Süleyman’s mausoleum resembles the Dome of the Rock, the site of Solomon’s Temple, with its double dome inside, supported by a circular colonnade, and its octagonal shell outside, surrounded by an octagonal ambulatory. The similarity between the two interiors is particularly striking (plates 15, 16). The mausoleum ceiling is decorated with palmette motifs and ceramic stars with rock crystals and precious stones in their centers, a design apparently inspired by the jewel motifs of the Dome of the Rock. It may well be that the similarities are meant to be a reference to the legendary Temple of Solomon; it is known that the sultan intend-
ed to renovate the Dome of the Rock, that he frequently made allusions to passages in the Koran where Solomon is mentioned, and that he was referred to as "Süleymân-i Zamân" (the Solomon of the Age) in his waqfiyya and in inscriptions on public fountains.

Compared to the mausoleum, few motifs in the Süleymaniye mosque are recognizable as taking up the paradise analogy. The qibla wall is the notable exception. A passage in the waqfiyya compares the mosque to the legendary Irâm, a garden built by Emperor Shaddad to imitate the garden of paradise (according to Mas'udi its precious columns were reused by Alexander): "Built on top of columns, it is an Irâm whose like has never been created anywhere before." Rather than directly imitating the paradise garden, the mosque takes the legendary columnar garden as its model. Just
as the mausoleum is modeled on the Dome of the Rock with its culturally recognized paradisal and Solomonic references, so the mosque makes its paradise analogy through the intermediary of Irām, an already firmly established reference to paradise.

The Irām metaphor suggests why such an enormous effort was devoted to finding appropriate granite, marble, and porphyry columns for the Suleymaniye. They were collected both from ancient ruins, by architects sent to various parts of the empire, and from newer buildings that had reused ancient materials and were ordered torn down by the sultan.41 The Flemish antiquarian P. Gyllius, who was in Istanbul when the first steps in the Suleymaniye’s construction were undertaken, witnessed the removal of seventeen pillars of white marble from the Hippodrome:


The present Emperor Soliman has taken up a Place in the middle of this Precinct; where he is laying a Foundation ... now building with the most elegant Marble, brought from several Parts of the Turkish Dominions, so that you may see infinite Kinds of it lying about the Building, not lately dug out of the Quarry, but such as for many ages has been used in the Palaces of several Princes and Emperors, not only in Byzantium, but in Greece, and all Egypt.42

Because of the difficulty in transporting these huge stones, a number of legends grew up around them, just as they had around the stone used for the construction of the Hagia Sophia, whose pillaged treasures and their transportation were thought to demonstrate Justinian’s wealth and power.43 Latifi, who lived during the reign of Süleyman, recounts the partly mythical history of Hagia Sophia in his Ezâfet-i Istanbul written just before the Suleymaniye’s construction. In it he reports that some of the priceless marble columns came from the Irām-like palace which Solomon’s demons and fairies (dīvāns and paris) had built for his wife.44

The Suleymaniye makes a deliberate reference to the Hagia Sophia through its use of precious materials from
distant places as well as its use of a dome abutted by two half-domes. While this allusion to Justinian’s building was made in part simply because of its prestige, there may also have been other reasons. \(^{45}\) Hagia Sophia was built as the *templum novum Salomonis*, imitating Solomon’s legendary temple through its textual descriptions. According to a popular tradition, at Hagia Sophia’s opening ceremony Justinian declared, “‘Solomon, I have surpassed you!’”\(^ {46}\) The reference to Hagia Sophia might have been meant to imply a connection between Suleyman’s mosque and Solomon’s Temple. Ottoman poets and historians who refer to huge columns as being “‘suleymani’ also tie the mosque to the Iram metaphor.\(^ {47}\)

Suleyman had ships built to transport a colossal column and rare marbles from the ruined Temple of Jupiter in Baalbek to Istanbul, just as Justinian once had reportedly transported marble columns from the same antique site for Hagia Sophia’s construction.\(^ {48}\)
The Baalbek Temple is associated in Islamic sources with the palace Solomon built for the Queen of Sheba, and bringing stone from Solomon's palace therefore provides yet another Solomonic reference for Süleyman’s mosque. That this was deliberate is confirmed in a passage of the Tegirkirîl-Bûnîyân, where Sai writes about the Süleymaniye, “Each of its world-famous colored marbles carried the memory of a different land, and according to the authority of most histories, came from the ruins of the Queen of Sheba’s palace built by Solomon the Prophet.” R. Lubenau, a German who visited Istanbul during the reign of Murad III (1574-95), mentions that the colossal red columns were transported at huge expense from King Solomon’s palace in Jerusalem. The comparisons drawn in the Tegirkirîl-Bûnîyân between Süleymaniye’s construction workers and the mythical dies who built Solomon’s Temple and in the waqfiyya between Süleymaniye’s mihrab and the jimn-like creations of Solomon (echoed in Evliya Çelebi’s description of the same mihrab, “It is said to be like the mihrab of Solomon the Prophet”) suggest that the consistent Solomonic references can not have been accidental.

Legendary feats of construction were part of the Ottoman popular imagination. When Evliya Çelebi describes the origins of Istanbul, he identifies its founder as King Solomon and its pre-Ottoman rebuilders as Alexander and Constantine, who constructed many buildings to strengthen their religion and nation. Building is one way of marking epochs in history, and Evliya continues to describe the buildings of Ottoman sultans as the successors of those great kings. This type of intermingling of myth and history was an aspect of Ottoman popular culture that could easily turn Süleyman’s search for columns from Solomon’s palace in Baalbek, Alexandria, and Constantinople into a symbolic act. That Süleymaniye’s references to the past were readily recognizable is suggested by the Flemish traveler Busbecq, who was in Istanbul during Süleyman’s reign: “The Turks have not the slightest idea of chronology, or of different epochs, and they mix up together in a wonderful way all historical events. Should the thought occur to them, they have no hesitation in stating that Job was King Solomon’s seneschal, and Alexander the Great commander-in-chief of his armies.”

According to Sai, two of the four colossal red-granite columns that help support the lateral arches between the piers of the main dome came from Baalbek and Alexandria respectively, the other two from the royal palace (Sarây-ı Âmire) and the Kıztaşı in Istanbul (plate 17). The documents published by Barkan support Sai’s claim, since they include imperial orders for the transportation of the columns from those places. Michael Rogers has raised some doubts about the provenance of these columns, arguing that they are not the ones referred to in Sai or in Barkan’s documents, because locating four identical columns in four different places would have been impossible. He thinks the matching columns must have come from elsewhere, and that the ones mentioned in the documents may have been stored for use in other buildings. He concludes that “the orders published by Barkan show the Ottoman administration at its most efficient, but not at its most imaginative,” and asks, “Why go to the difficulty of matching four separate columns when the transport of four identical columns or at least two pairs would have saved so much trouble?” Perhaps the answer lies in Süleyman’s desire to acquire columns with a rich range of royal connotations; ordinary matching columns would not have fulfilled that...
purpose. The time-consuming operation of searching out and transporting the columns, whether they were used or not, also shows considerable imagination, contrary to what Rogers says; few people need know the source of the columns actually used in the Süleymaniye. What mattered was that Süleyman had proved he had the power and wealth to carry out a vast operation and that people believed the columns came from Baalbek, Alexandria, the royal palace, and Kızılağaç, whatever their actual provenance. Texts such as Sai’s served to propagate this belief.

The central baldachin was perhaps the most symbolically charged element in the mosque (plate 18), with its mighty dome carried on gigantic arches, which are compared in the sources to the arch of Chosroes,\(^59\) and its four red-granite columns, which gave it royal, as well as specifically Sunni, associations. In the *Tezkiretü’l-Bünâyên*, Sai describes them as the station of the Prophet’s four chosen friends, the caliphs Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, and ‘Ali. He later uses the same metaphor in a poem:

This well-proportioned mosque became the Ka’ba
Its four columns became the Prophet’s four friends,
A house of Islam supported by four pillars,
It gained strength through the Prophet’s four friends.\(^60\)

This analogy is also encountered in the *Tabakatü’l-Memâlîk*, which likens Süleymaniye’s four colossal granite columns to the four caliphs who are the four pillars of Sunni theology, thus adding a religious layer of meaning to the royal connotations of these columns.\(^61\)

An intermingling of royal and religious symbolism was also attributed to the four minarets. The
Tuhfetül-Mi‘märin and Evliya’s travelogue tell us that their ten balconies represent Süleyman’s position as tenth Ottoman ruler;62 both Sai and Mustafa ibn Celal state that the Süleymaniye’s four minarets and its dome represent the Prophet who is the “Dome of Islam” surrounded by his four friends Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, and ‘Ali.63 This religious symbolism superimposed on the imperial theme advertises the Süleymaniye as a specifically Sunni mosque, and that Sunni character is emphasized in the numerous descriptions that compare the mosque to the Ka‘ba. A line from Sai’s poem about the mosque reads, “This well-proportioned mosque became the Ka‘ba,” an idea repeated by Nişancı Mehmed and Mustafa ibn Celal, who refer to Süleymaniye as “the second Ka‘ba.”64 A letter from Shah Tahmasp for the opening ceremony refers to the Süleymaniye as a sanctuary whose site recalls that of the Holy House of God (i.e., the Ka‘ba) in the Haram.65 Enclosing the mosque in a wide outer precinct where caravans would pitch their tents and surrounding it with four madrasas resembling those he built around the Ka‘ba and dedicated to the four Sunni schools of law reinforced the analogy; the message is driven home by the piece of the Ka‘ba’s Black Stone placed over the gate of Süleyman’s mausoleum.66

THE FORMAL ARCHITECTONIC LEVEL

The theme of power in the complex is not communicated through an innovative architectural vocabulary. Süleymaniye’s dependencies are easily classified: they represent functional building types and standard schemes. The mosque itself represents a culmination of earlier experiments. What distinguishes the Süleymaniye from other monuments of its time is the way these traditional architectural motifs are used in a creative synthesis and monumentalization of architectural forms that had accumulated since the reign of Murad II. Its geometric plan is skillfully terraced to adapt it to the sloping terrain. Its monumental scale, its priceless multicolored building stone, its numerous minarets contribute to the symbolic effect. Its imperial site on Istanbul’s third hill is particularly significant. From that place it dominates the city. Three sides of the outer precinct are surrounded by walls pierced with windows. The fourth overlooks the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, providing a panoramic view of Galata, Üsküdar, the Old Palace, and the Topkapi Palace; it was left open to avoid blocking the view. The Süleymaniye’s dominion over this panoramic landscape is beautifully expressed by Evliya’s remark that from its outer courtyard the mosque’s congregation “can watch the world.”67

Its site was once occupied by the Old Palace, which had served as the imperial residence before the Topkapi (Saray-ı Cedid). Evliya tells us that the Old Palace was damaged by fire and then rebuilt on a smaller scale. In the space remaining the construction of the Süleymaniye complex, together with various palaces for important state officials, was begun.68 Surrounded by mansions and the Old Palace, where part of the Sultan’s harem remained,69 the Süleymaniye complex was suitably located in an area probably rivaled in prestige only by the residential quarter of the Topkapi Palace itself, which also boasted a number of palaces.

The theme of royal power is repeated in the Süleymaniye’s architectural features. The central baldakín, already highly charged with royal and religious associations, is architecturally accentuated with colossal piers, great arches, and lateral arches with alternating voussoirs resting on the four legendary red-granite columns that detach themselves both structurally and decoratively as significant architectonic elements (plates 9, 10, 17, 18). This concern for the articulation and detachment of separate architectonic units also explains the comparatively simple decoration of the Süleymaniye.

Unfortunately, little of the original decoration remains. The mosque suffered from a fire in 1660 and an earthquake in 1766; it was redecorated in an ugly baroque-roccoco style in the nineteenth century by Fossati, and its inscriptions were renewed in 1869 by Abdülfettah Efendi.70 This Europeanizing decoration was removed in a renovation undertaken between 1959 and 1969, and was replaced by original designs whenever they were uncovered under the nineteenth-century layer of paint; where no underlayer was found, the restorers improvised motifs based on other decorated mosques dating from Süleyman’s reign.

The results in no way measure up to the original, however. It was executed by the foremost artists of the time, whose names can be found in the documents published by Barkan. The same documents give lists of materials used in the decoration, such as dyes, pigments, ceramic tiles, lamps, and stained glass, and specify the amount of gold leaf used for inscriptions on the domes, for gilding the capitals of columns, and for other painted decorations,71 but they do not provide sufficient information for a reconstruction of Süleymaniye’s original decorative program. It can be
argued, however, that the decoration was subordinated to the structural lines, since few areas of the mosque were suitable for painting. The walls faced with expensive stone revetments, the tiled qibla wall, and the columns would not have been covered with paint except for the gilded capitals. Only the ceilings of the pulpits and the royal box, the domical superstructure, and the pendientes would have been painted.

Nişancı Mehmed mentions the mosque’s precious columns, its colored marbles, its stained-glass windows, and its ornamented mihrab, minbar, and pulpits, and praises the painted decoration, especially the sun-like pendientes (günşes venselera) shining on its ceiling with a brilliance that dazzles the eye, and the gold and silver motifs decorating the domes. These pendientes with gold letters radiating from a center like rays of the sun help support the analogy drawn in the waqfyya between Süleymaniye’s domes and the heavenly realm and suggest that the lost decoration on the domes probably consisted of radially arranged medallion motifs representing the zone of the heavens. The iron rings suspended from the central dome in several layers, on which hung glass lamps, decorated ostrich eggs, and reflective balls of mirror, echoed the circle of the dome in the lower zone. When these oil lamps were lighted at night, the mosque’s interior must truly have resembled the starry night sky.

In contrast to the lavishly painted domes and pendientes, the stone revetments of the mosque’s lower zones were left relatively bare. Tile facing was used only on the qibla wall, even though Süleyman’s reign saw the flourishing of the Iznik tile industry, whose products covered the interiors of whole buildings (the Rüstem Pasha mosque, for example). Such intricately patterned tile revetments create a densely decorated surface whose numerous motifs cannot be perceived individually. In contrast, Süleymaniye’s relatively plain walls accentuate its symbolically charged architectonic units and the structural skeleton to which the decorative elements are subordinated. In the mosque’s interior, differences are kept to a minimum in order to concentrate attention on the columns, marble panels, porphyry discs, great arches, the mihrab, minbar and royal box, the stained-glass windows, and the inscriptions.

A passage in the waqfyya supports the theory that ornamentation with tiles or painting was deliberately kept to a minimum. There it is written that the mosque would have been decorated with pearls and rubies, if decorating sanctuaries with precious stones, gold, and silver had been required by the Prophet’s Shari‘a. Since it was not required, they refrained from applying gilding (tezhib) and precious stones (tarşî), and concentrated instead on increasing the mosque’s services and on strengthening its structure. In other words, structural presence was regarded as more important than splendid decoration. The floating effect of Hagia Sophia, where forms interpenetrate smoothly, and the integration of architectonic elements were deliberately rejected in favor of an appearance of strength and durability. The waqfyya praises the mosque’s sturdy foundations and buttressing based on a careful use of Euclidean geometrical principles (plate 19). The text prepared by the sefîl-islâm Ebussuud Efendi for the mosque’s foundation inscription describes it as “built with mighty pillars strengthened with stakes, supports, and haughty buttresses, lofty stairs, and high minaret balconies.”

While this concern for structural solidity was no doubt partly inspired by the constant threat of earthquakes—many domes had collapsed in the earthquake of 1509—it was also a recognized architectural metaphor for power. Evliya Çelebi says that Sinan boasted to Süleyman, “My Emperor, I have built you a mosque that will remain on the face of the earth until the Day of Judgment, and when Hallaj Mansur comes to shake Mount Damavand from its foundations, he will be able to shatter the mountain but not this dome.”

The unshakable Süleymaniye is powerfully expressed in its imposing mass. On its high hill, the royal mosque and its multidomed dependencies form a pyramid descending from the great central dome toward the Golden Horn (plate 2), a cascade of forms that visually expresses the sultan’s absolute power over Ottoman institutions—a power exerted downward from the divinely appointed sovereign at the top.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

Royal and religious messages are interwoven in the Süleymaniye’s inscriptions to communicate the sultan’s absolute power. Aside from the founding inscription, all are Koranic. The foundation inscription can be found at the mosque’s main entrance which leads from the inner courtyard to the sanctuary (plate 20). Its thuluth script, composed by Hasan Çelebi who was a student of Ahmed Karahisari, is carved in relief on three rectangular stone panels. The two vertical panels are placed on the flanking sides of the portal, the horizontal one above the door. The text begins on the
top line of the right panel, reads through the middle section, and ends on the left panel, an arrangement similar to the tripartite foundation inscription of Mehmed II’s mosque. In both, the right panel inscription states that the mosque was built as a pious deed according to God’s wish and is followed by the sultan’s titles; the middle panel lists the sultan’s genealogy; and the left panel contains prayers for the continuation of the Ottoman dynasty and for the souls of the royal ancestors.

Although similar in arrangement and content, the two inscriptions emphasize different themes. Mehmed’s stresses his role as conqueror. In the right panel, it says he has rebuilt the deserted ruins of knowledge and science in the unequalled city of Istan-
THE SULEYMANİYE COMPLEX IN ISTANBUL

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bul, which so many had earlier tried without success to conquer. The Süleymaniye’s foundation inscription (prepared by the same şeyhül-islam Ebussuud Efendi who was given the task of bringing the administrative practices of the state in line with the Shari’ah) emphasizes on the right panel the sultan’s divine right to rule as revealed in the Koran and his role as protector of orthodox Islam and of the Shari’ah against heterodoxy. The middle panel gives Süleyman’s Ottoman lineage and his title as the promulgator of the Ottoman laws. Together with the section that portrays him as the just ruler who codified Ottoman law, the foundation inscription represents a balance of Süleyman’s worldly and spiritual authorities.

Ebussuud’s text was shortened on the stone panels. The left panel includes a summary of the passage where he refers to the mosque as a place “for people who dedicate themselves to prayer and to devotional services, for those who despair at night and ask forgiveness at dawn, for those who recite God’s verses all night and mornings and evenings.” Constant communal prayer is not mentioned in Mehmed’s inscription; his mosque is simply called a pious foundation. The reference to communal devotion may reflect the policy of enforcing religious orthodoxy in Süleyman’s reign. The firmly institutionalized Sunnism adopted by the Ottoman state to replace an earlier tolerance for heterodoxy influenced the choice of Koranic inscriptions for the mosque.

The painted Koranic inscriptions in the mosque have been restored several times, but unlike the other painted decorations their correspondence to Evliya Çelebi and Sai’s descriptions suggests that they have retained the outlines of the original script. The ceramic inscriptions on the qibla wall, over the windows of the mosque’s courtyard façade, and inside the mausolea, as well as the carved stone inscriptions inside and above the gates of the marble courtyard and around the dome of Hürrem’s mausoleum, are original. Although there may have been more inscriptions in Süleyman’s time, the sources suggest that those remaining are at least representative.

Koranic texts chosen for the Süleymaniye turn up in other monuments as well; it is their cumulative effect that makes them significant. They were clearly chosen to convey a single message. Evliya tells us that “each alif, lam, and kaf was made ten arsun tall so they could be easily read.” References in documents to paper for the planning of Süleymaniye’s dome inscriptions suggest that they were carefully laid out.

Inscriptions for monuments were usually selected by their founders, and this suggests that the patron was aware that they could convey a message of importance. For the Süleymaniye, Koranic passages were chosen that were related to the metaphor of paradise and the prescriptions of the Shari’ah regarding the ritual duties of orthodox Muslims.

The two side entrances bear Koranic inscriptions for those entering the marble courtyard whose fountain (südervân) is compared to the fountain of paradise in various sources. The west gate reads: “Peace be unto thee! Thou art good, so enter ye to dwell therein” (39:73), a reference to believers whose piety is powerful enough to open the gates of paradise (plate 21). The east gate has a similar quotation: “Peace be unto thee! Enter the Garden of Eden because of what ye used to.
do’” (16:32) (plate 22). The same formula is repeated at the side entrances of the mosque. The one on the east, mentioned by Evliya, reads: “Peace be unto you! For if you are patient, fair is the ultimate abode” (13:24). The pendant gate on the west is again an invitation to enter paradise. In short, the Suleymaniye’s gates are being equated with the gates of paradise, its interior and courtyard with the gardens of paradise.

The Koranic passage on the mosque’s main dome draws attention to the comparison made between it and its satellite domes and the celestial bodies. According to Sai, the entire verse 35:41, written in beautiful script by Karahisari, was put there:86 “Lo! Allah grasps the Heavens and the Earth so that they deviate not, and if they were to deviate, there is not one that can grasp them after him. Lo! He is clement, forgiving.” Together with the four calligraphic roundels on the main dome’s pendentives, this cosmic verse proclaiming the absolute power of God suggests a parallel between the cosmos held steadily in balance by God and the heavenly dome of the Suleymaniye held steadily by its piers.87 The dome inscriptions are contained in circles with letters radiating like the sun’s rays to give visual support to this cosmological analogy. The earth “challenges the sky” with Suleymaniye’s dome.88

That the Suleymaniye is a Sunni mosque is announced by the Sunni profession of faith, or shahada, inscribed on the monumental portal that serves as the main entrance to the marble courtyard (plate 23).89 The shahada is repeated in two rectangular panels above the mihrab (plate 14). The stained-glass windows of the qibla wall bear the names of God, Muhammad, and the four caliphs, above which are two roundels reading “Muhammad” and “Allah,” representing the importance of the Prophet as preacher of the Shari’ah and of God as the lawgiver without the intercession of ‘Ali. The roundels on the four huge piers also carry the names of the four caliphs and represent the four pillars of Sunni theology.

According to the Tabakat-i-Memalik, all the mosque’s inscriptions were chosen from the Koran, a source directly conveying the word of Allah, as opposed to the Safavid and early Ottoman mosques, such as the Yesil Cami, in which the less authoritative hadith, references to ‘Ali, and even passages of Persian poetry are extensively used.90 Almost all the verses emphasize the straight path of the Shari’ah to be followed by the orthodox believer, the ritual duties that distinguish the Sunni from the Shi’i Safavids (who according to Ottoman historical texts of the period ignored such formal requirements). Pecevi, a seventeenth-century historian, writes that during Suleyman’s reign Ottoman multifis prepared fatwas against the Shi’i Safavids, calling them infidels because they not only disregarded communal ritual duties and Friday prayers, but also cursed the Prophet’s chosen friends Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthman.91

Paul Ricault, who visited Istanbul in the mid-seventeenth century, observed that Ottoman multifis continued to write fatwas against the Safavids, whom they regarded as infidels because they did not consider public prayer in mosques to be necessary. These fatwas also reprimanded the Shi’ites for using mosques for purposes other than prayer.92 For the Sunni Ottomans, mosques were sanctuaries devoted solely to ritual
duties. They rejected the early multifunctional zawiya-mosques and separated madrasas and hostels from the mosque’s fabric. That the mosque was strictly sacred space is also the message conveyed in a ceramic-tile inscription over the window next to the minbar, “Wear thy beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer” (7:31).

The Sunni Ottoman state enforced prescriptions of the Shari’a about the ritual duties of orthodox Muslims. In the Süleymaniye mosque, Koranic inscriptions place these outward manifestations of devotion above the inner, mystical relation to God. Beneath the shahada on the monumental portal, “Worship at fixed hours hath been enjoined on the believers” (4:103) (plate 23); inside the marble courtyard, above the north arcade, “And those who are attentive at their worship, these will dwell in gardens honored” (i.e., the Garden of Eden) (70:34-35) (plate 24); at the same courtyard’s south arcade, above the central arch leading to the mosque’s main entrance, “Be guardians of your prayers, and the midmost prayer, and stand up in devotion to Allah” (2:238) (plate 25). Inside the mosque (plate 10), in the inscriptions on the north half-dome: “O ye who believe! Bow down and prostrate thyself, and worship thy Lord and do good and haply ye may prosper” (22:77), and on the small half-domes flanking it: “Recite that which hath been revealed to thee of the Scripture, and perform worship. Lo! Worship preserveth from lewdness and iniquity” (39:45). On the four rectangular marble plaques over the Süleymaniye’s lateral arches carried by the red-granite columns (plate 17), the verse (9:112) where reference is made to the covenant whereby God gives everlasting felicity in paradise to the believer who follows the path of orthodoxy is inscribed. Placing it here tells the worshiper that following the regulations of the Shari’a for correct worship will ensure him a place in paradise.

Ebussuud’s fatwas also dictate the compulsory performance of the official Islamic prayer ritual and justify the punishment of those who neglect it. One exhorts the qadis to enforce the building of Friday mosques in districts lacking communal prayer places, even if the inhabitants are reluctant to go there.93 This emphasis on strict religious orthodoxy was in part the result of the long and bitter struggle with the Safavids and the heterodox Kızılbaş. Popular uprisings in Anatolia nearly always took the form of heretical religious movements, since opposition to Islam had become synonymous with opposition to the power of the Ottoman state.94 The Süleymaniye’s Koranic inscriptions reflected this policy of religious orthodoxy enforced by a caliph-sultan seeking to legitimize his power as being in the service of the Shari’a’s straight path.

The Süleymaniye’s four levels of meaning—functional, cultural, formal, and verbal—together repeat the themes of power and legitimization. Some of the mechanisms used to do this have been described here, but no claim is made to having exhausted all the culturally assigned contextual associations of the Süleymaniye. Every interpretation is inevitably tied to the interpreter’s own point of view. Here we have only tried to determine how the multilayered architectural discourse of the Süleymaniye complex operated within a specific social context and how its structures of signification were mobilized to communicate a political statement.
The Süleymaniye complex was the most ambitious of Süleyman’s many building activities, but he sponsored others, not only in the vicinity of Istanbul, but in the Balkans and Anatolia, and in the cities of Mecca, Medina, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Baghdad. All of them sought, either by the addition to already extant buildings of minarets, inscriptions, and ceramic tiles or by newly built edifices in the classical Ottoman style, to legitimize the ruler’s power.

The unity of this imperial style was reinforced by the corps of royal architects organized under Sinan and stationed in the Topkapi Palace, which directed the construction of buildings throughout the empire. The relatively unified imperial style they created poses
problems when the meaning of individual monuments is sought. That is why most studies of Ottoman architecture adopt a functionalist-formalist interpretive framework that de-emphasizes the culturally assigned symbolic meanings of individual buildings. Extra-architectural mechanisms such as cultural associations, references to popular myths, and carefully chosen inscriptions played an important role in the ideological discourse, however. It may even have been precisely the culturally recognized extra-architectural connotations that conveyed meaning to individual monuments, whose commonly repeated architectural forms were otherwise lacking a strong symbolic charge.

Although here we have concentrated on the Süleymaniye's ideological message, the integration of this building complex into the Ottoman social fabric also deserves attention. The Süleymaniye's opening ceremony, for example, brought together all segments of Ottoman society as well as foreign statesmen;97 the transportation of its building materials from all over the empire through a complex communication network made its construction a public enterprise. The numerous villages, islands, and shops whose income formed the endowment of the imperial complex were an integral part of that enterprise, even though they were geographically removed from it. The Süleymaniye's construction took an army of workers eight years to complete; huge amounts of building materials involved a complicated organization that in itself reflected the power of the Ottoman state. Financing and building it had a significant impact on the empire's economic and social life.98 It also owed much to Süleyman's victories at the height of Ottoman power: Evliya Çelebi tells us that Süleyman diverted huge shares of the spoils of battles fought at Belgrade, Malta, and Rhodes to the construction of the royal complex and that it was built as a memorial to his conquests,99 an idea also suggested in a passage from Mustafa Ali's *Counsel for Sultans*, written for Murad III in 1581:

> As long as the glorious sultans, the Alexander-like kings, have not enriched themselves with the spoils of the Holy War and have not become owners of lands through gains of campaigns of the Faith, it is not appropriate that they undertake to build soup kitchens for the poor and hospitals or to repair libraries and higher medreses or, in general, to construct establishments of charity, and it is seriously not right to spend and waste the means of the public treasury on unnecessary projects. For, the Divine Laws do not permit the building of charitable establishments with the means of the public treasury, neither do they allow the foundation of mosques and medreses that are not needed. Unless a sultan, after conducting a victorious campaign, decides to spend the booty he has made on pious deeds rather than on his personal pleasures, and engages to prove this by the erection of [public] buildings.100

This passage explains why, after the Selimiye in Edirne (1568-74), which was built with the spoils of Selim II's Cyprus campaign,101 no royal complex approaching the Süleymaniye's monumentality was built for so long a time. Lubenau says that Murad III did not build a royal mosque in his capital because he had won no important victories: according to Turkish custom, only sultans who led armies that had conquered Christian lands had the right to build a royal mosque in the capital.102 Between 1609 and 1617, Sultan Ahmed I broke that rule by sponsoring the last great Ottoman complex, despite the ulema's protest that mosques should be built only with the spoils of conquest.103 Ahmed's complex represented an attempt to recapture past glories at a time when the economic and political decline of the Ottoman empire had already begun.

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NOTES

1. Construction continued on the dependencies of the complex after 1556-57, the date in Süleymaniye's foundation inscription. The mausoleum for Süleyman's wife was completed after her death in 1558, and that for Süleyman was built by his son Selim II after his father's death in 1566; Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbul: Byzantion-Konstantinopolis-Istanbul bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth, 1977), pp. 466-67. A court order from Selim II to the qadis of Bursa, Amasya, Kastamonu, and Merzifon, dated 975 (1567-68), demands that skilled masons immediately be sent to Istanbul to build his father's mausoleum; Ahmet Refik, *On Altincı Ashura İstanbul Hayatı: 1553-1591* [Life in Istanbul in the sixteenth century: 1553-1591] (Istanbul: Devlet Basimevi, 1935), p. 15, no. 3. An illustration of the Chester Beatty Süleymannâme (ms. 413, folio 115b) written in 987 (1579-80) depicts the burial of Süleyman in an imperial tent temporarily erected for the ceremony on the plot where his mausoleum was later to be built.


5. See Koca Sinan [Sinan the Great], ed. Cengiz Bektas (İstanbul: Doğuç Matbaası, 1968); Ernat Egli, _Sinan: Der Baumeister osmanischer Glanzzeit_ (Zürich: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1976).


8. Ibid., p. 26. Eyice adds that by the middle of Süleyman’s reign, mosques are no longer built with hostels for the Sufi orders.

9. When Süleyman I laid claim to the supreme caliphate and used the title, Caliph of the Muslims, he was claiming preeminence among Muslim rulers as protector of Islam; Halil İnalcık, _The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600_, trans. N. Itakowitz, C. Imber (New York: Praeger, 1973), pp. 57, 182.


11. İnalcık, _Ottoman Empire_, p. 34.

12. Faik Mehmet II Vakıfları [Endowment deeds of Mehmed II the Conqueror] (Ankara: Vakıflar Umum Müdürlüğü Neşriyat, 1938), paragraph 52. Mehmed’s complex was built on the site of the Church of the Holy Apostles, where the Byzantine emperors were buried. Compared to earlier complexes, its rational plan and monumental size represent a significant step in the development of Ottoman külliyes.

13. Mustafa Ali criticizes Mehmed’s policy in his book of etiquette written in 1586-87: "However, organizing the path of learning and knowledge in terms of offices or rank is unreasonable. This is a practice initiated in the Ottoman lands by the Father of Conquest [i.e., Mehmed II]. It is true that he desired to encourage the learning of knowledge through this measure, thinking that each person would strive to reach higher official ranks in the established order. … Yet he did not foresee that after a while … the gate of bribery would be opened" (Gelibolu Mustafa Ali, _Mesâ’i’d-i-Neﬁsi’s fî Kasîrât-i-f%Melîitî_, ed. Cavid Baysun [İstanbul: Osman Yaçın Matbaası, 1956], pp. 102-3).

14. About the new hierarchy of madrasas, see Cahid Baltacı, _XVI. Asrîlarda Osmanlı Medreseleri_ [Ottoman madrasas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries] (İstanbul: İrfan Matbaası, 1976), pp. 49, 518-34, 601; İnalcık, _Ottoman Empire_, p. 169.


18. All the new functionaries are listed in Kürkçüoğlu, _Süleymaniye Vakıfları_, pp. 33-37.

19. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

20. A. Thvet, who visited Istanbul during Süleyman’s reign, states that the sultan went to the Friday mosque punctually every Friday; F. André Thvet, _Cosmographie de Levant_ (Lyons, 1554), p. 59. Du Fresne-Canaye who stayed in Istanbul in 1573 observes that Selim II, unlike his father Süleyman, went to the Friday mosque only twice in three months (Philippe du Fresne-Canaye, _Le Voyage du Levant de Philippê du Fresne-Canaye_, ed. M. A. Hauser [Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1897], pp. 120-21).

21. Thvet, _Cosmographie de Levant_, p. 59. Since the Süleymaniye mosque was still under construction during Thvet’s visit, the passage describes the sultan’s procession to Hagia Sophia. Du
Fresne-Canaye, who was in Istanbul in 1573, tells us that the sultan’s horse was suspended in air and left without food all night and until the procession began to guarantee a slow and stately pace (Du Fresne-Canaye, Le Voyage du Levant, p. 126).

33. Although Siileyman’s mausoleum was not built until his son’s Kirkciioglu, Sileymaniye Vakfiyesi, p. 21.


37. Sourcek points out that Solomon’s Temple was associated in Islamic texts with the Dome of the Rock. The fourteenth-century copy of al-Biruni’s text depicts this legendary structure with a dome supported by a circular colonnade (Friscilla Sourcek, “The Temple of Solomon in Islamic Legend and Art,” in Temple of Solomon, ed. J. Gutmann [Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, 1976], p. 76).


40. Kürkçüoğlu, Süleymaniye Vakfıyesi, p. 22. Mustafa ibn Celal, too, compares the mosque’s interior to the garden of Iram (Tabakati’l-Memalik, fol. 421b).


42. Kürkçüoğlu, Süleymaniye Vakfıyesi, p. 22.

43. Although Süleyman’s mausoleum was not built until his son’s reign (see above, n. 1), its plan must have been approved by Süleyman along with the rest of the complex. Sai writes, “A meeting was held about the holy mosque, at which its site and plan [resm-i binâ] were selected” (Sai, Tezkiretu’l-Bünyân, p. 57). Du Fresne-Canaye says the mausolea were located in a flower garden, and that inside Hürem Sultan’s mausoleum exquisite ceramic vases were filled each day with fragrant flowers (Voyage du Levant, pp. 103-05).

45. That Hagia Sophia’s prestige remained after the fall of Constantinople is apparent. In his history, Tursun Bey states that Mehmed II’s mosque was built according to Hagia Sophia’s plan (Ayasofya karnamesi resmi) (Tursun Bey, Törük-i Ebu’l-Feth [History of the Father of Conquest], trans. M. Tulum [Istanbul: Baha Matbaa, 1977], p. 70). Mehmed wanted to surpass Hagia Sophia and severely punished the architect of his mosque because, by shortening the colossal columns, he caused the dome to be lower than Justinian’s building (I. Hakki Ayverdi, Osmani Mimarlarindan Azadlı Sinan [The freed slave Sinan, one of the Conqueror’s architects] [Istanbul: Halk Basimci, 1953], pp. 57-66).


47. Konyah, Fatihin Mimarlarindan, p. 72.


52. Sai, Tezkireti’l-Binyan, p. 59.

53. Kürkçüoğlu, Süleymaniye Vakıfyesi, p. 21; Evliya, Seyahatnâme, 1:150.

54. See Özdemir, Die altosmanischen Chroniken, pp. 112-62.


57. Barkan, Süleymaniye Camii ve İmaretı, 2:13-24, nos. 15-46. According to the Tabaqat-i-Memalik, two of the columns came from Alexandria and the other two from Istanbul (Mustafa ibn Celal, Tabaqat-i-Memalik, fol. 422a). This information is echoed in the report of a Moroccan ambassador el-Tambrouti (1589-91), who was told by an eye-witness from Monastir that the walls of Alexandria had to be pierced to transport four colossal columns destined for the Süleymaniye mosque, of which only two were actually used; the other pair sank with the ship in a storm.

58. Rogers, The State and the Arts, pp. 77-78.

59. Meriç, Mimar Sinan, p. 12; Evliya, Seyahatname, 1:158.

60. Sai, Tezkireti’l-Binyan, pp. 58, 59.


62. Meriç, Mimar Sinan, p. 51; Evliya, Seyahatname, 1:154. The same type of symbolism was used in the later Sultan Ahmed Mosque (1609-17), whose fourteen minaret galleries signaled Ahmed’s place as the fourteenth Ottoman ruler (there are now sixteen, but two were added at a later date). This symbolism is mentioned in Cafer Efendi’s Risale-i Mi’imiyye written in 1023/1614-15 (Gökyay, “Risale-i Mi’imiyye,” p. 165) and Mustafa Naima, Tarihi Na’ïma (Istanbul: Mathbaa-i ‘Amire, 1280/1863-64), 2:156.

63. Sai, Tezkireti’l-Binyan, pp. 59-60; Mustafa ibn Celal, Tabaqat-i-Memalik, fol. 422a.

64. Sai, Tezkireti’l-Binyan, p. 59; Mustafa ibn Celal, Tabaqat-i-Memalik, fol. 422a; Nişancı Nişancı, Tarih, p. 287.


83. Evliya, Seyhânatname, 1:152.
84. Barkan, Süleymaniye Cami ve İmareti, 2:184, no. 466; 2:187, no. 481.
85. An order sent by Selim II to Sinan during the Selimiye’s construction shows that the sultan was involved in choosing the inscriptions: “Now, definitely, there must be tiles up to the windows and the fatiha sura should be written on tiles above the windows” (Ahmet Refik, Türk Mimarları [Turkish architects] [Istanbul: Sander Yayınları reprint, 1977], p. 113, no. 18). Since Ebussuud prepared Süleymaniye’s foundation inscription, he may also have chosen the mosque’s Koranic passages. He did write an interpretation of the Koran (tafsir) which was greatly admired by the sultan.
86. Sai, Tezkireti’l-Biinyan, p. 71.
87. Ögel’s list of Koranic inscriptions used on the central domes of classical Ottoman mosques shows that this sura continued to be frequently used, and that it was chosen to emphasize the symbolism of the dome as the heavenly realm (Ögel, “Die Innenfläche der osmanischen Kuppel,” pp. 224-28). The calligraphic roundels on the pendentives contain verses 11:88, 13:16, 17:84, and 6:102 which all stress the absolute power of God, the source of the sultan’s temporal power.
88. The Koranic verses on the half-dome over the mihrab (6:79) and the ones on the smaller half-domes flanking it (7:29 and 2:115) direct the reader to turn toward God in front of the mihrab. The quotation on the mihrab is the standard verse (3:37) used on most Ottoman mihrabs.
89. The Shi‘i profession of faith differs from the Sunni by the addition of ‘Ali’s name after the names of Allah and Muhammad.
90. Mustafa ibn Celal, Ta’bâkatü’l-Memâlik, fol. 423b. For the inscriptions of Yeşil Cami in Bursa, see Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, Osmanlı Mimarisinde Çelebi Mehmet ve II. Sultan Murad Deern (806-855/1403-1451) [The period of Çelebi Mehmet and Murat II in Ottoman architecture], vol. 2 (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1972), pp. 56-94. The Yeşil Cami has a couplet from Sadi’s Gâlistân inscribed near its mihrab, as well as passages from the hadith. For inscriptions from Safavid monuments, which are characterized by frequent references to ‘Ali and the twelve imams of Twelver Shi‘ism, see Lutfullah Hunarfar, Ganjineh-ye Athar-e Tarikhi-ye Isfahan (Isfahan, 1344/1965).
94. Inalcik, Ottoman Empire, pp. 187, 197.
95. See Bates, “Patronage of Sultan Süleyman,” pp. 65-76.
97. Mustafa ibn Celal, Ta’bâkatü’l-Memâlik, fols. 420a-420b. Barkan, Süleymaniye Cami ve İmareti 1:54-57. Documents show that workers labored through weekends and nights for two months before the opening ceremony, whose date was strictly imposed by the sultan.
98. Ibid., p. xiv.
101. The Selimiye’s construction continued beyond this date into Murad III’s reign; Lubenau states that Selim’s mosque was built with the spoils of Cyprus and was still under construction when he was in Edirne (Lubenau, Beschreibung der Reisen, 1:119).
103. About the ulema’s protest, see Goodwin, History of Ottoman Architecture, p. 343.
ALAN W. FISHER AND CAROL GARRETT FISHER

A NOTE ON THE LOCATION OF THE ROYAL OTTOMAN PAINTING ATELIERS

Where was the royal Ottoman atelier? Ever since Rifki Melul Meriç's publication of the sixteenth-century Ottoman pay records listing court artists and their salaries, scholars have assumed that, because artists appear on the court lists, they must have worked together in a common atelier or ateliers in or near the palace. The question then asked was where this atelier was located, and that question remained unanswered. But it now seems possible that the question posed was the wrong one. For if the question is instead asked whether a royal Ottoman atelier ever existed inside or near the Topkapi, at least a tentative answer can then be produced.

Several pieces of evidence suggest that the palace, and more specifically the palace library, may have served as a gathering and collating place for sections of manuscripts that were either written or decorated at various locations, both in Istanbul and elsewhere in the Ottoman empire. If so, this would broaden the implications of Marianna Shreve Simpson's recently published suggestion that pieces of the sixteenth-century Safavid Haft Aurang were produced at various places in the Safavid state and then brought together at the kitâbkhâna of its patron, Sultan Ibrahim Mirza. Our hypothesis would extend this production practice to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman empire.

The first piece of evidence is really the absence of evidence in an unpublished 1686 translation of a description of the Topkapi Sarayi found in the papers of Girardin, the envoy of Louis XIV to Istanbul. It is a French translation of Serai enderun sic, cio, penetrate dell’serjiio detto nuovodei G. sri e re ottomani written by Bobovi in 1657. Bobovi was a slave and music instructor in the palace until he was ousted for drunkenness. His description of the Topkapi Sarayi circulated throughout the European community in Istanbul.

Bobovi’s description of the palace, aside from the harem, is detailed. It describes virtually all the rooms in the first three courtyards, including the laundry, baths, dormitories, kitchens, schoolrooms, and the treasury. He tells us about the training of the palace functionaries, includes lists of textbooks, and notes that some of the palace pages were taught various calligraphic styles and could study famous examples of calligraphy in the palace. But Bobovi does not say exactly where the now famous Ottoman manuscripts were produced, or whether any of these pages were trained in illumination, painting, or any other aspect of the art of the book. Because of the detail in which he described the palace and the education and functions of those inside it, the question arises whether the books were produced in the royal palace at all.

Bobovi paints a different picture of the city of Istanbul. He refers to tutors, deaf-mutes, and merchants “from the bazaars” who come and go from the city to the palace. He says that some of the best craftsmen work near the bazaar. It is clear from this description that by the mid-seventeenth century the palace was certainly not completely removed from Istanbul, as it is said to have been in the early sixteenth century.

Another source makes it clear that Istanbul was full of craftsmen and artists. Evliya Çelebi, the mid-seventeenth-century Ottoman gentleman and traveler, says that Istanbul had more than 1,100 sub-guilds (esnaf) organized into 57 large guild groups. The group of artists was headed by the ser nakkaş, whose headquarters, Evliya says, were in a “manufactory” (kârhanâ). Its members included the gold-beaters (zerkûbyan), gilders (mâzehheb kesan), bookbinders (mücellidan), booksellers (sahhafan), stationers (kaqitcian) who specialized in Persian and Venetian paper, inkstand and portfolio makers, clerks, inkmakers, paper cutters, artificial-palm-tree makers, wax-bird makers, printers, calico printers, embroiderers, and embroiderers of handkerchiefs.

In this group were three sections of painters. The first, the nakkaşan, is said to have had one hundred shops, including one in the upper story of the Lion...
House (Arslan-Han), and to number over a thousand men. Evliya says these painters "arrange bows, chairs, and so forth on litters, upon which they place works of the most famous painters, such as Shah Quli, Veli Jan, Ağa Riza, Murdar Ilik, Bizad, Mani, Frenk Sinor, and Jan Shah." The second group are the portrait painters (nakkasân-i müsavîrân), who number forty men in four shops. Evliya says that while the Prophet Muhammad gave no one permission to paint any image other than the lion on his battle standard, the Greek painters "to exalt the glory of Islam" paint the battles of Hamza and the heroes of Islam, and that they "paint them like the ancient heroes, of whom mention is made in the Shahname." He lists the most famous Turkish portrait painters as Miskâl Solâzkâde, Terâaki Osman Çelebi, and Taş Baş Pehîivan Ali.

Finally, the third group of painters comprises the painter fortune-tellers (fâlciyan-i müsavîrân). Their chief is Hoca Mehmed Çelebi whose shop was in the district of Mahmud Pasha and who had once had the honor of speaking with Sultan Süleyman I. His shop, reports Evliya, is filled with "pictures and figures of all the aforesaid heroes and knights drawn with the pen on coarse paper to be used as soothsaying devices." Those portrayed include Yusuf and Züleyka, Majnun and Leila, Farhad and Şirin, Warka and Gülşah. Evliya asserts that Hoca Mehmed Çelebi "carried them to the Sultan, and at the public procession passed as chief of these painter soothsayers exhibiting his pictures." In short, according to Evliya there were literally hundreds of painters in Istanbul in the mid-seventeenth century, and some of them had dealings with the royal palace.

Other texts add support to our hypothesis and extend it back into the sixteenth century. If one examines certain manuscripts from the reign of Murad III in the late sixteenth century, it is possible to find a stylistic likeness between manuscript illustrations assigned to the "palace ateliers" such as some in the Siyâr-i Nabi, a cycle of eight hundred miniatures produced in 1594-95 for Murad III, and the "tekke style" identified by Atasoy and Çağman in a group of manuscripts whose colophons indicate they were made in Mevlevi dervish convents in Baghdad or Konya. Because of their identification with Sufi convents, scholars have been slow to connect these manuscripts with the orthodox palace milieu, but there is evidence that there were connections. In 1590, for example, Murad III brought Mahmud Dede, a Mevlevi from Konya, to the Topkapi Sarayi to have him make a translation of the Manâqib-i thavaqîb. He is said to have returned to Konya to carry out this task. Further, the Meriç pay records note a piecemeal payment of 300 akçes per miniature for the Siyâr-i Nabi miniatures. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that miniature painters and calligraphers—including some working in the tekke style—may have been supplying these miniatures from various sources, either by moving artists between tekke or other ateliers and the palace or by sending job lots to a central gathering place.

A still earlier piece of evidence can be considered. In a document recording palace expenses for the period 1552-55, the expenses for the production of the Şehname-i hassa of Kanûnî Süleyman are recorded. The total comes to 21,056 akçes. Among the items listed are 161 akçes for "the cost of carpenters for construction of partitions in the room of the kâtîbs of the şehname in the house of Fethullah Çelebi, the Şehnameci." It seems possible in this instance to postulate a separate atelier for this master in the sixteenth century. As in the later descriptions of Evliya Çelebi, it seems possible, too, that this atelier was situated in the city of Istanbul, but outside the palace.

Although far from providing a definitive answer to the question, the evidence does warrant considering the possibility that in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Ottoman empire handled the manufacture of its memorable manuscripts much as the Safavids did. The palace served as a gathering point for the artistic genius of the various workshops of the empire and was much more closely connected with the art of the city and of the tekke than has heretofore been perceived.

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NOTES

4. Evliya Çelebi, Seyahatname, 10 vols. (Istanbul, 1896-1928), 1:607-12. Susan Skilliter, Life in Istanbul, 1588: Scenes from a Traveller’s Picture Book (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1977), and in private conversation in June 1981, states that in the sixteenth century there was a school of painters in Istanbul who were probably European—comparable to the well-documented China-trade painters who were both Chinese and Euro-
pean—who produced genre scenes of the city and countryside for Europeans. It is important to keep in mind that such official titles as sernakkas, nakkaşbaşı, üsta, and kethüda found in works about Ottoman painters were titles commonly used for officials throughout the Ottoman guild system; they had no special significance for artists (i.e., they were not equivalent to "master," "chief painter," and so forth). See Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1962), pp. 367-89, for an analysis of guild organization. The pay records in Meriç, show that the guild titles, sernakkas, üsta, and kethüda, were used in the palace pay registers as well.

6. Ibid., pp. 610-11.
7. Ibid., p. 611.
   - gold leaf (178 packets), 2,805 akçes
   - ink, 209
   - paper (dorel-abade, which was the much valued yellowish glazed paper): 356 pieces, 3,392 akçes
   - Samarkand paper, 192 pieces, 800 akçes
   - gold leaf and lapis lazuli for the chief grater, 200 akçes
   - lapis lazuli, indigo blue, aqī (?), vermillion, white lead, red lead, yellow, green, camel (lok), smoke (diide) for illustrating the Şehname-i Hassa, 185 akçes
   - salary for Mustafa, chief katib of the şehname, 4,620 akçes
   - subsistence for the katibs of the şehname (30 persons), 1,726 akçes
   - subsistence for the painters (15 persons), 558 akçes
   - cost for katibs for writing the şehname of 45,000 beyts
     a. 15,000 beyts 600 akçes
     b. 30,000 beyts 3,600 akçes
   - katib-graters foreman (lübasi), 200 akçes
   - bookbinder, for cardboard and chemicals, 20 akçes
   - scribes for "white writing" (beyaz-ı şehname), 1,880 akçes
5. Which Shahnama is involved is unclear. Çağman and Atasoy list two that could conceivably be candidates: Topkapı Sarayi R. 1549, 43 miniatures, c. 1540, and Topkapı Sarayi H. 1522, 55 miniatures, c. 1560-65; but it could, of course, be an entirely unknown one.
11. Fethullah Arif Celebi was the şehnameci for much of the reign of Sultan Süleyman I. Atasoy and Çağman, *Turkish Miniature Painting*, p. 28, state that "this position only became official during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. Its main characteristics were based on the works of Arifi. ... Arifi wrote his şehname of the Ottoman dynasty in five volumes, of which the Suleymannama is the fifth and last.

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ULTÜ Ü. BATES

TWO OTTOMAN DOCUMENTS ON ARCHITECTS IN EGYPT

The significance of two archival documents in Istanbul concerning architects who worked in Egypt in the late sixteenth century lies in three areas. First, both documents mention the name of Sinan, the greatest architect of the Ottomans, and add to our information about the office of head architect, or ser míârân-i hâsâ, which was then occupied by him. Second, both deal with provincial architecture and thus add to our information about the relationship between Istanbul and peripheral areas. Third, the documents help clarify the role of the architect, a very elusive component in Ottoman architecture. We tend to ignore the creative role architects played when we discuss Ottoman buildings, except perhaps when we deal with those built by Sinan and his few students. This neglect is largely due to the meagerness of information in the sources concerning artists and architects. Biographical references to architects and critical descriptions of their buildings are very rare in Ottoman historiography. If the documents described here are representative of others yet to be revealed, then archival material may still yield more of the kind of information we need. At the very least, we might discover how architects were hired, what their education was, and how they were organized.

A thorough understanding and interpretation of Ottoman architecture requires a careful investigation of the interrelationship between the architectural endeavors undertaken in the various provinces, such as Egypt, and those undertaken in Istanbul and its environs. Clearly the study of the architecture of a province should do more than to document stylistic, structural, or typological peculiarities that set it apart from the architecture of the capital and other regions of the empire. Such a major tradition as Ottoman architecture is only be defined in terms of its variations, permutations, and the extent of its influence over a large area and a span of time. As with Roman architecture, Ottoman architecture has to be seen in conjunction with the imperial system from which it takes its name and whose fortunes it reflects. Egypt, quite clearly, is a case in point.

The diversity of styles that appeared in Egypt in the years between 1520 and 1620 reflects the complexity of the factors that affected building activities in a region that had a rich architectural past but had subsequently been reduced to provincial status. This complexity included the effects of the radical administrative and economic changes Egypt underwent after it was conquered by the Ottomans in 1517. Given the centralized administrative system of the Ottoman empire, we might expect the architectural models of the capital simply to be replicated in the provinces, but this was not always the case. Although between 1520 and 1580 the Ottoman governors of Egypt had mosques built in Cairo that would have been appropriate for any neighborhood of Istanbul, they also commissioned structures that emulated Mamluk architecture so closely that they could have been undertaken by a Mamluk amir.

Generally, we might assume that the presence and continuity of a local, as opposed to a central imperial, architectural tradition largely depended on the prominence and strength of regional power and authority. In Egypt, many of the Mamluk institutions were continued under Ottoman rule, thus signaling this province's special administrative status and its higher degree of independence within its boundaries. The Ottoman governor (he was called beylerbeyi until the early seventeenth century; later vali became the more common term) in Cairo presided over a court or council (divan) that paralleled the one in Istanbul, although of course subjugated to it. The governor usually remained in the Cairo post for a brief period, two years being the normal stay. The post was a highly prestigious position: the governor held the rank of vezîr with four plumes, and more often than not his governorship would be followed by an appointment to the council of the imperial city.
On the other hand, if the tenure of the governor was short and if he was largely unsuccessful in forming alliances with the local elite, few grandiose architectural undertakings could be expected from him. As a province, Egypt was not as fully integrated into the imperial system as the Syrian provinces were. The land of Egypt was not granted in fiefs, but was farmed out, usually to the mamlik amirs who as tax farmers (multazim) eventually became landlords.

Many of the patrons of architecture in Egypt seem to have felt a less than total commitment to the promotion and continuity of imperial Ottoman symbols. In 1535 Husrev Pasha, then governor of Egypt, had built a sabil-kuttab in Cairo that was modeled after the Mamluk type. But later, as governor of Aleppo province, he commissioned Sinan or one of his immediate underlings to build his mosque, madrasa, and other dependencies, and they are unmistakably Ottoman. The variance in style between two foundations by the same patron can be attributed in large degree to the different administrative policies in effect in the provinces in which they were built.

The availability of well-established local architectural forms to serve as models for new structures undoubtedly accounts for much of the diversity in styles in Ottoman Cairo. Cairo in the early sixteenth century boasted many more imperial monuments than did Istanbul. The sheer number of buildings from the Islamic period in Cairo might well have overwhelmed the Ottoman patrons. Influences from Istanbul and local traditions vied with each other, as patrons selected one style or another for their buildings. The popularity of architectural styles in Ottoman Cairo fluctuated with the taste and political ambitions of the patrons.

Whether or not continuity in local traditions of architecture is maintained in the face of political changes depends a great deal on who the architects were. Were the architects and master craftsmen local people, or were they outsiders who were partly trained and worked in Egypt? How were they organized and what were their links to the associations of architects and craftsmen in Istanbul? In the centralized state characteristic of the Ottoman empire, particularly in the classical age, from about 1450 to 1600, the choice, training, appointment, and organization of architects was closely controlled from the office of imperial chief architect (ser mi'mar-i hāssa) at the court in Istanbul. The chief architect had under his immediate command the second architect-in-chief (mi'mar-i sāni), the supervisor of waterworks, the agha of Istanbul, chief of lime products (kırcıbaşı), the director of the magazines, the head secretary of the magazines, and finally the head of repair work (ta'mirāt). The chief architect was also the head of the organization of imperial architects (cemâ'at-i mi'marān-i hāssa). This organization consisted of court architects, the steward (kathkudā), the scribe (kātib), the minaret builder (mi'nârɛrɛ), the marble carver (mermerci), mason (trâşçi), plasterer (swaçi), and finally the painter/decorator (nakkâş). The organization occupied a workshop (kâr-khâna) situated in the Vefa quarter of Istanbul. The counterpart of the chief architect in the supervision of building activities was the prefect of the city (şehr-eminî), who was responsible for the financial aspects of construction.

Our knowledge of the organization of architects, as well as of individual architects, is limited. Sinan, whose life spanned almost a century, was the most prolific and famous of Ottoman architects, and the Ottoman historians are comparatively informative about him. Yet our knowledge even of his career and life does not extend beyond a sketchy biography. Sinan’s involvement in major imperial undertakings such as the Suleymaniye is well documented, but the extent of his contribution to the buildings sponsored by lower-ranking patrons is not known. It is documented that architects used to prepare drawings and models of their projected buildings for their patrons, but very few of these have come to light. We also have no critical writings on architecture by Ottoman historians or travelers. If our familiarity with the chief architect of the imperial court is so meager, it would appear that there is little hope to learn much about the architects of Ottoman Cairo, a provincial capital.

In the absence of biographical references or critical observations by Ottoman historians about Cairo’s architects, I turned to the Register Books of the Imperial Court (Divân-i Humâyûn Muhimme Defterleri), partly preserved in the Prime Minister’s Archives (Başbakanlık Arşivi) in Istanbul. I expected to find decrees (hukm̄-i şerîf) issued from the court of the Ottoman sultans to their representatives in Egypt concerning building activities under their jurisdiction. I was fortunate. There are indeed a large number of such documents in the Istanbul archives. Many of them pertain to structures in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the care and maintenance of which were entrusted to the Ottoman governor of Egypt and his court.

Two of these decrees directly concern the activities of architects in Egypt, and give some sense of what might
be learned from archival sources if interpreted in the light of what we already know about Ottoman bureaucratic practices. They are dated 992 (1584) and 993 (1585) and therefore are from the reign of Murad III. In addition to providing information on the status of certain architects in Ottoman Egypt, they are significant for having been initiated by the imperial chief architect himself. Sinan, at the time over ninety years old and very famous, had built his last monumental mosque, the Selimiye mosque complex in Edirne; his present master, Sultan Murad, unlike his predecessors Süleyman the Magnificent and Selim II, was not interested in architecture. The mosque in Manisa, begun while he was still governor of that province, is of rather modest dimensions. As sultan, his major contribution to Ottoman art lies in the realm of manuscripts; he was a connoisseur of miniature painting.

The decrees concern architects, but they do not link them with buildings known to us. They do, however, yield information on the position of architects in Egypt toward the end of the sixteenth century. I have rendered the text in an English that is as close to the original meaning as possible, but have not included the usual panegyrics or repetitions which are used to emphasize the importance of a command. The documents are, of course, open to other readings and interpretations.


"To the governor of Egypt [Misir Beylerbeyisine].

"Sinan Agha, the chief architect [mi'mar-bas] at my Threshold of Felicity [mi'marlarni bas], has sent us a letter regarding Mehmed, a faithful servant who holds the post of agha of the Circassians. He, being trained by his fathers in the profession, has made himself a connoisseur of miniature painting."

One significant point in this particular decree is that the architect in question held a high military rank. A second point, no less significant, is the reference to the qualifications this architect is described as having. Architects and other craftsmen in construction work seem to have been trained on the job, working their way up through the ranks. There are documented cases of sons being trained by their fathers in the profession. Not all architects or master-builders were members of the imperial architects' association, but the best among them would have been recruited to the royal corps whenever vacancies occurred. Membership was accorded through a complicated process. One of the most valued qualifications an architect could have was proficiency in 'ilm-i hendese, or the science of geometry. The word 'ilm-i hendese means more than geometry: it encompasses the science of "correct estimation of measurements and successful arrangement of lines and forms in space" in the Euclidean sense of the term. Although skill in this kind of geometry was highly prized, this and the other document do not refer to the architect as muhendis, derived from hendese, but as mi'mar or "builder."

It is not surprising to find Mehmed Agha at the head of a military corps in Egypt. Sinan himself was recruited as yeniceri, or janissary, in the 1510's, during the reign of Selim I (1512-20) and perfected his knowledge of hendese as he rose through the ranks. It seems that mi'mar was a relatively high rank to which a master trained in numerous crafts related to construction could aspire. A master carpenter or mason could eventually be promoted to the rank of architect; the organization of architects included not only architects but other artisans. Still, there must have been some ranking among the various levels. The highest rank must have been that of the agha on whom was bestowed one horse plume (tuğ). Sinan's rank was also agha. The rank of sancak beg was also marked with a single plume. Therefore Mehmed Agha had already reached the highest possible rank, and having been given the sancak did not add another plume to his turban.

The corps of imperial architects was considered to be outside the court (birün). Included among its members were non-Muslims. For example, in Istanbul in 1582 nine out of seventeen imperial architects were non-Muslims. The office of chief architect kept registers of names of members belonging to building crafts in the organization of architects in the provinces, so that during military campaigns or the erection of imperial structures they could be summoned and pressed into service. Ömer Lütfü Barkan, in his monumental work on the expense register books of the Süleymaniye mosque, records names which show a diversity in the ethnic backgrounds of the builders (benna?), as well as in their provinces of origin. Craftsmen who were not members of these official associations, however, were not permitted to work on state buildings. It seems that the organization of architects, both at the imperial center and in the provinces, was regarded as part of a centralized administration directly under state control and as a component of the military system.

A decree (hukm) in the Istanbul archives from the council of Selim II to the governor of Egypt, dated 4
Mehmed Agha is the evidence it provides of the centralization of a wide-ranging bureaucracy. The appointment of Mehmed Agha to the rank of beg with an unspecified annual stipend is particularly interesting in the light of an earlier edict from the court in Istanbul to the governor in Egypt, which advised him that the vacant sancak beylikş should not be filled. There was already a surplus of them, and the salaries cost the state treasury dearly. It is apparent that the action in favor of the petition of the chief architect Sinan on behalf of Mehmed Agha overrode the earlier decree.

Finally we learn from the decree that a man well skilled in the 'ilm-i hendese was entitled to be employed by the state (devlet). This phrase demonstrates that the foremost patron of architecture in the Ottoman empire was the state itself.

The second document I shall consider here was sent a year later from the imperial court of Murad III to the chief judicial officer, or qadi, of Egypt. In this decree the degree of decentralization is made more explicit. This time, another government representative, the qadi, is held responsible for the architects. The decree responded to a request made by Sinan, the chief architect of Sultan Murad.


"To the qadi of Egypt...

"Sinan, the chief of architects at my Threshold of Felicity, has sent me a letter in which he states that Mahmud, son of Mehmed, who is entitled to a daily wage of twelve akçe and who holds the rank of şâû̇y in the aforementioned protectorate, is an architect [mi'mâr] and is a worthy master [ehil ustâ] and has been serving as architect in Egypt. However, several unworthy persons have taken to building houses for many people; these [builders], who are ignorant in the science of building (bînâ 'ilm 'inde mahâretlî olmâgîn)." Another decree in the same archives, from the year 993 (1585), issued from the council of Murad III to the council of Egypt, appoints a certain carpenter (durûdger) of the Çâvûşân corps (another local unit) to be mi'mâr. It seems that any member of a military corps with a master's rank or above and belonging at the same time to the organization of architects could be elevated to the post of architect, provided he was expert in the 'ilm-i hendese that was relevant to the 'ilm-i bînâ?

The primary duties of the architect were to explore building sites, estimate costs, prepare designs, and supervise construction. The architect and other craftsmen in the association were responsible for the building and repairing of bridges, forts, and roads and, in addition, for the routine maintenance of military structures and the construction of religious and civic buildings commissioned by the imperial and provincial courts. They were also on occasion employed privately to work for influential local patrons of architecture. In contrast, a craftsman who was privately employed was not permitted to work on official buildings.

The chief architect, as indicated earlier, whether attached to the imperial court in Istanbul or under the regulation of the court of Egypt, had under his control, in addition to the organization of architects, the supervisor of waterworks (su yollan nâşirî), whose duties included their construction and maintenance. This must have been a very important civic official, for he ranked immediately below the ultimate chief architect, and many of the decrees sent to Egypt from the imperial court concerned the maintenance of water operations in Mecca and Medina. As the Ottoman governor was the official administrator of the holy cities, the chief architect in Egypt was also responsible for all sorts of construction and repair jobs there, including the maintenance of waqîf properties founded in them by the Mamluk rulers.

Another instructive aspect of the decree concerning Mehmed Agha is the evidence it provides of the centralization of a wide-ranging bureaucracy. The architects in the provinces, as well as those of the capital, were under the direct authority of the ser or mi'mâr bâşî, but they were also under the supervision of the bâş mi'mâr, who happened to be Sinan in this case. In this document, the office of the chief architect interceded on behalf of an architect. Accordingly, the sultan, as the highest official in the empire, sent a command to his representative in Cairo where Mehmed Agha was located. This hierarchical system organizing imperial architects was replicated in all Ottoman provinces.

The document also indicates the high rank and salary that could be had by an architect of distinction. As a member of the military corps, architect Mehmed had already attained the title of agha, and it was recommended that he also be given the title of sancak beyi. In Ottoman Egypt the title sancak was equivalent to the Mamluk amir liwâ. The granting of the title would not have brought the recipient land or a post as governor, as was ordinarily the case in most of the Ottoman empire, but he was entitled to an annual salary (sâlyâne). The second document I shall consider here was sent a year later from the imperial court of Murad III to the chief judicial officer, or qadi, of Egypt. In this decree the degree of decentralization is made more explicit. This time, another government representative, the qadi, is held responsible for the architects. The decree responded to a request made by Sinan, the chief architect of Sultan Murad.
of building ["iṣlām-i bīnā"], have caused much damage and injustice to Muslims. Furthermore, these unskilled builders have not heeded the rebukes of the aforementioned Mahmud Çavuş. Therefore I command you to recognize Mahmud Çavuş as the official architect and forbid the employment of unskilled persons. Upon the receipt of this decree, be diligent in this matter; forbid the activities of the unskilled workers who have no possession of the knowledge of construction matters. You should refrain from allowing these men to infringe the rights of and do injustice to Muslims through their buildings, and warn those who do the contrary."

The relentlessly repetitious tone of the imperial decree draws our attention to the warning issued to the qādi of Egypt: protect the rights of Muslims who hire craftsmen for their buildings. One wonders whether the decree was prompted by the aggravated private citizens of Cairo, or by the architect Mahmud who felt he did not have enough clients. Whatever the original reason for the decree, it elucidates several issues concerning architects in late-sixteenth-century Egypt.

The imperial chief architect in Istanbul was again in the position of regulating and arbitrating in construction matters throughout the empire. This time he intervened in the plight of the "private sector" and concerned himself with the career of a not-too-high-ranking architect in the province of Egypt. He communicated the details of the case to the sultan, who responded accordingly. The decree sent to the judicial officer indicates that it was his office that considered the affairs of the "Muslim population" and the craftsmen who worked for them, even though the latter group may have been of the military class. What is more unusual is that members of the military corps worked for private citizens. The craftsmen who were at the same time "men of the sword" were not in the exclusive service of the state. It is not unreasonable to surmise that the competition among "architects" was quite fierce.

The wages paid to architects, including the chief architect, fluctuated according to the financial situation of the Ottoman state. To supplement the salary of the chief architect, arpašk (lit. land producing barley) from the crown lands was deeded to his office.38 Whenever an architect in the service of the empire or one of its provinces requested permission to work for private employers, the permit had to be given by the chief architect, and the office of the qādi controlled the hiring of the architects.39 The judicial officer was also responsible for enforcing building codes, such as restrictions placed on the height of buildings or on the width of the projecting bay windows (sah-ninšin).38 The officer controlled civic buildings, including public toilets, and whenever he found buildings in need of repair, he informed the corps of architects.39

From the decree we can gather information about the financial situation of the architect Mahmud Çavuş in Egypt. Since the daily wage of twelve akçe paid to him was very modest for the time, it is likely that he was permitted to work for private patrons in order to supplement his income.40 As indicated by the expense books of the construction of the Suleymaniye Mosque complex for the years 962 to 965 (1554 to 1557), a trained worker such as a master mason was paid twelve akçe daily.41 During the construction of the Suleymaniye, the workers of the apprentice (acemiğašlan) group were paid less; a skilled worker received about eight akçe and an apprentice between one and three akçe. Undoubtedly, they lived in barracks while working on the sultan's mosque. Considering the high rate of inflation that occurred toward the end of the century, it is not surprising that Mahmud Çavuş of Cairo needed to supplement his daily wage.

The architectural scene in the late sixteenth century in Egypt appears with greater clarity in the light of these two documents, especially with regard to the social and administrative position of the architects.42 The information gleaned from the decrees allows the following conclusions:

1. The architects and craftsmen working in Egypt in the late sixteenth century came from diverse ethnic groups, and those who were of the elite hāssā, or imperial group, held military ranks and belonged to various corps. A few might have belonged to the Yeniceri trained in Istanbul, but the majority served in the locally created corps of the Çerākis (Circassians), the Muteferrika, and the Çavuşan, all of whom were trained in Egypt.

2. Many of the architects and craftsmen located in the provinces and specializing in various aspects of construction were registered in the office of the imperial chief architect in Istanbul. When required, additional architects and skilled workers could be summoned to the capital, or even moved from one province to another, to work on official commissions and the waqf foundations of former royalty, including the Mamluks.43 It seems that appointments to or promotions within the organization of architects were made through the intervention of the chief architect's office. The final decision was made in the imperial court of Istanbul whence originated the ultimate commands for
the master craftsmen in Cairo. The centralization of the government offices and of those operations controlled by them conforms well with what we know about the bureaucratic structure of the Ottoman empire.

3. The officers to whom the decrees were issued were the governor, the qadi, and the treasurer (defterdar). It is noteworthy that the qadi, a man of the pen and member of the ulema, would be asked to oversee matters pertaining to architects, who belonged to the military corps, and to architecture. Presumably, the qadi would have acted to protect the rights of the members of the organization of architects as well as those of the patron.

4. Qualified master builders within the military ranks, according to the decrees preserved in the Ottoman archives, relied on the protection of the imperial chief architect. However, advancement through the ranks to the position of agha or sancak beyi was a real possibility for architects. Recommendations for advancement seem to have been initiated by the chief architect in Istanbul.

In both decrees the salaries of the architects are mentioned. The salaries and the manner in which the wages were paid to the masters varied according to their military rank. They were permitted to take supplemental jobs in the private sector, whereas a self-employed master builder was restricted to private jobs, and even then employing members of the organization of architects was to some extent forced upon private citizens by government officials.

Tantalizing questions arise from even the preliminary and cursory analysis offered here concerning the relationship of the provincial architecture to that of Istanbul, the imperial seat of the Ottomans. Did the office of the chief architect in Istanbul prepare the designs and plans for the structures to be erected elsewhere in the empire, given that the organization of the royal architects was highly centralized, rigid, and controlled by a number of court-appointed officials? In other words, was the architectural image to be projected in the provinces prepared in Istanbul and then implemented through various agents? If that was the case, to what degree was the image successfully projected? What were the circumstances that influenced the variations in architectural styles and types in Ottoman provinces? What conditions or issues in the administrative organization determined the degree of stylistic independence in the architecture of a province?

These questions and others might be answered, at least in part, through systematic research carried out in the Ottoman archives of Istanbul, Ankara, Cairo, and elsewhere. In addition to the decrees preserved in the Muhimme Defterleri, designs (resm) for several buildings have been preserved in the Topkapi Palace archives. The Ottomans kept meticulous register books of the surveys (keşf) of building sites, of expenditures (masraf) for building activities, of the titles and land surveys (tapu), and, of course, of the deeds of pious foundations, all documents that await the attention of the art historian. The art historian can greatly benefit from the cooperation with the archivist and the historian in solving the puzzles of Islamic architecture in the Ottoman lands.*

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NOTES

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1. The documents are decrees (hukm-i serif), copies of which are preserved in the Muhimme Defterleri [Register books of important papers] of the Ottoman court, and are located at the Prime Minister’s Archives in Istanbul. The first of the two has been published in modern Turkish transliteration (Ahmet Refik, Mimar Sinan [Istanbul, 1931], p. 53). I would like to acknowledge my debt to the General Director of Archives of Turkey for allowing me to work in the archives, and to Dr. Hüsamettin Aksu for his assistance in reading both documents.

2. The best work to date on Ottoman architecture in Europe, outside the boundaries of modern Turkey, is Ekrem Hakki Ayverdi et al., Avrupa’dan Osmanlı Mimari Eserleri: vol. 1, Romanya ve Macaristan (Istanbul, 1977); vol. 2-3, Yugoslavya (Istanbul, 1981); vol. 4, Bulgaristan, Yunanistan Arnavudluk (Istanbul, 1982).

3. In recent years several studies examining the role of the Ottoman architect have appeared in Turkey. One of them (Metin Sözen, ed., Türk Mimarisinin Gelişimi ve Mimar Sinan [Istanbul: 1975]) is a collection of papers on the influence of Sinan on Turkish architecture.

4. Two works on Sinan, Tezkire’t-ül-Ebniye and Tezkire’t-ul-Bunyan, a brief biography and a list of his structures, were written by Mustafa Sa’i Çelebi, probably shortly after Sinan’s death; they have been the source for all later biographies. A complete bibliography on Sinan and his works is M. Sözen, Türk Mimarisinin (1975). Another Ottoman writing on architecture is by Cafer Çelebi, Risale-i Mi’mariye (Treatise on architecture), a seventeenth-century work on the architect of the mosque of Ahmed I in Istanbul. It has been partly published by Tahir ÖZ, Mimar Mehmed Ağa ve Risale-i Mi’mariye (Istanbul: 1965).


21. The governor of Egypt at the time was Ibrahim Pasha, who had sailed to Egypt in Rebi'ul-evvel 991 (April 1583) and remained there for sixteen months. Upon his return to Istanbul, he married the eldest daughter of Murad III, Ayşe Sultan, and in 1004 (1595) he became the grand vizier. Mehmed Süreyya, Sicill-i Osmani, 1 (Istanbul, 1308/1890): 97.

22. The ocaq or corps of the Çerkesler or the Çeraki was a unit peculiar to Egypt, consisting most probably of the Circassian mamluks (Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, p. 44).


27. Ibid., pp. 170-71.


30. Ibid., vol. 60, p. 10, no. 20, dated 1 Sevval 993 (26 September 1583).

31. One of Sinan’s pupils, the architect Da’ud Agha, was the sujullari nazarı with the rank of ısra; after the death of Sinan, Da’ud was promoted to agha and became the chief architect. Mehmed Erdogan, “Mimar Daud Ağa’nın Hayatı ve Eserleri,” in Istanbul Universitesi Türküyat Enstitüsü Türküyat Mecmuası, vol. 12 (Istanbul, 1935): 179-204.

32. A decree issued from the court of Suleyman to the Beylerbeyi Ali Pasha, governor of Egypt, concerns the repairs to be carried out on the waqf property in the Hijaz; Muhimme Defteri 6, p. 277, no. 586, dated 3 Cumaza’l-evvel 972 (7 December 1564).


37. Ibid., p. 171.

38. According to a decree (Muhimme Defteri, vol. 44, p. 108, no. 295, dated 996 [1587]) the sharif of Mecca was asked to see to the demolition of a number of bay windows on a certain street because the shopkeepers of the street had complained.

39. In another case, the chief qadi of Mecca was instructed to supervise the repairs to toilets built by Mamluk sultans Qaytbay and al-Ghuri near the Masjid al-Haram; Muhimme Defteri, vol. 67, p. 133, line 356, dated 999 (1590).

40. Turan, "Hassa Mimarlar," pp. 174-75. Çauş was an intermediary rank in the ulûfi or acemioglan unit of the janissary; they were paid daily wages (usaha), hence the title. The acemioglan (lit. “inexperienced youth”) were not educated at the ulifeli acemioglan unit of the janissary, but by the members of the Ottoman military elite. See Ismail Hakki Uzuncarşılı, Osmanlı Teşkilatında Kapaklı Ocaklar (Ankara, 1943): 5-141.


43. For example, men were brought from elsewhere to work on construction projects in the Hijaz; they came mainly from Egypt and, when additional men were needed, from Syria.

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THE MUGHAL GARDEN: GATEWAY TO PARADISE

Properly speaking, Mughal, which means "Mongol," is in this context a misnomer. "Mughal" refers here to the name of the dynasty founded by Babur after the Battle of Panipat in 1526, which endured, in attenuated form, until 1857. Queen Victoria feloniously crowned herself Empress of India in 1876, at the adroit suggestion of Disraeli, but the style persisted even under alien rule.

First of the Great Mughals—the name applied to the six brilliant emperors who filled the 180 years after 1526 with their glittering achievements—was Babur, who was Mongol on his mother's side and Turkish on his father's. Babur was sixth in the line of descent from Tamerlane, while his mother was descended of Chengiz: thus the blood of Asia's two greatest conquerors conmingled to produce a third, the conqueror of India. Like his near contemporary, Mehmed II, conqueror of Constantinople, Babur was no mere simple soldier but the highly complex product of a complex civilization at its zenith. His Memoirs, which have been translated into English by Annette Beveridge, are accounted a literary masterpiece. Lane-Poole, in his biography of Babur, published in 1900, says:

The line of Emperors who proceed from Babur's loins is no more. The very name of Mongol has lost its fame on the banks of Iaxartes; the Turk is the servant of the Russian he once despised. The last Indian sovereign of Timur's race ended his inglorious career at Rangoon almost within our own memory; a few years later the degenerate descendants of Ghengis Khan submitted to the officers of the Tsar. The power and pomp of Babur's dynasty are gone; the record of his life—the litterata scripta that mocks at time—remains unaltered and imperishable.1

These Memoirs are eminently quotable: "Then" says Babur, "in that charmless and disorderly Hindustan, plots of garden were laid out with order and symmetry, with suitable borders and parterres in every corner and in every border rose and narcissus in perfect arrangement."2 Babur is referring to his own activities as landscape gardener, but before touching on these a quotation from Yeats's The Statues might throw some light on the subject:

No! Greater then Pythagoras, for the men
That with a mallet or a chisel modelled these
Calculations that look but casual flesh, put down
All Asiatic vague immensities
And not the banks of oars that swan upon
The many-headed form at Salamis.
Europe put off that foam when Phidias
Gave women dreams and dreams their looking-glass.

What Yeats is doing here is to oppose the rational mind of Europe to the vague, nebulous philosophy of Hinduism ("All Asiatic vague immensities"), and the reason for citing him here is because across four centuries his verses echo Babur's complaint about that "charmless and disorderly Hindustan," which, to make tolerable, he had to plant with gardens exhibiting "order and symmetry." This is precisely the function of art: art organizes reality; by imposing order on the undifferentiated chaos of experience it succeeds in raising it to a higher level of significance, producing in the process, beauty. What emerges from this and other passages in the emperor's Memoirs is the image of Babur as muhandis (geometer/architect/engineer), Babur as Cartesian almost. The civilization of which Babur was the vehicle was the Timurid civilization of Central Asia. The sensational conquests of his great ancestor over a century before had brought together Central Asia, North India, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Asia Minor in a single empire with its capital at Samarqand, and subsequently Herat. To his metropolis, Tamerlane transported artists and craftsmen from all over Asia, and there under Arab, Persian, Central Asian, and even Chinese influence Islamic civilization assumed its decisive form.

One art which flourished notably at the Timurid court was the art of landscape design. We know the names of the gardens which adorned Samarqand in the fifteenth century—the Bah-i-Naqsh Jehan, the Bagh-i-Shimal, the Bagh-i-Bihist, the Bagh-i-Boland, the
Bagh-i-Naw, the Bagh-i-Channar, the Bagh-i-Dilkusha, the Bagh-i-Dulday, and the Bagh-i-Jehan-numa—but not the reality, because gardening is of its very nature the most transient and evanescent of art forms. Contemporary accounts exist though, notably by the Spanish ambassador Clavijo. The garden type that we think of today as characteristically Islamic is in fact the Timurid garden. What Islamic gardens were like before Timurid times we have little means of knowing and, save for the Hispano-Arab garden, no examples. The scant evidence suffices, however, to prove that a basic pattern prevailed from the shores of the Atlantic to the Bay of Bengal. This tradition, in its Timurid expression, bifurcated, going south to produce the Persian garden and east to produce the Mughal garden. The attempt to introduce the lush gardens of Central Asia into the dusty plains of Hindustan produced a hybrid, or mutation; and this mutation, the Indo-Islamic garden, is still a living art form, as evidenced by the garden Lutyens’s coadjutor, W. R. Mustoe, of the Horticultural Department, designed for the Viceroy’s House in New Delhi, as well as by the new garden in the Lawrence Gardens (Jinnah Bagh) at Lahore.

The reason the Timurid garden could not be transplanted without suffering transformation is very simple. Central Asia is mountainous country, and the Timurid or Persian garden is laid out on a gentle slope so the water moves through gravity; alternatively, it is disposed on a graduated series of terraces, a solution the Mughals were to adopt wherever feasible, as in Kashmir. In a very penetrating passage, Wilber writes:

The basic fact was that the gardens of Herat and Samarqand could not be transferred to the Indian plains. The climate was not suitable for orchards and vineyards, which require a cold season to establish a dormant state in the plants and trees. In the mountainous regions the fine gardens had been the outgrowth of the bustan, or orchard, and the concept of the gulistan, or flower garden, matured at a later date. Lacking the possibility of producing dense, productive orchards, the Indian gardens developed towards great open spaces and wide expanses of water.129

Nevertheless, certain elements were exportable: the chaharbagh, or fourfold plot; the water channels and irrigation system, which, linked to the fourfold plot, produces a formal geometrical grid pattern capable of indefinite extension; also, the disposition of the garden on terraces and disparity in level between the elements of the grid and the flowerbeds they enclose. Most of these components are present in what is practically the only one of Babur’s gardens in India to survive, the Ram Bagh, which still exists, albeit more than a little disheveled, on the banks of the Jumna at Delhi. It was in this garden that Babur was buried in 1530, his remains being subsequently translated to Kabul according to his wish.

Since the Ram Bagh is not only the earliest Mughal garden extant but one of the very first ever to have been constructed, despite subsequent modification we may take it as prototypal. Here the paved walkways (khayaban) are raised some ten feet above the level of the beds, and since the original planting has perished the reason for this may appear somewhat obscure. Susan Jellicoe contends that the height above the flowerbeds varied according to what was intended to be planted in the garden: thus some gardens were quite shallow while others, like Akbar’s garden at Sikandra (plate 1), were very deep.4 It is essential to understand that the Islamic garden was intended to be looked down upon.5 But in the latter example steps flanking the abshars, or water chutes, down which the water cascaded from the causeways show that the parterres were designed to be generally accessible. Thus the Indo-Islamic garden operated simultaneously on two levels: visually, on the upper level, as a living carpet; and, sensually, on a lower plane, as a place of shade and intimacy and cool repose. It could only operate visually as a floral carpet or tactually as a refuge from the scorching heat provided the planting was dense. The large painting on linen showing an aerial view of Jehangir’s garden at Shahdara at Lahore, now in the library of the Royal Asiatic Society, reveals just how dense the planting was (plate 2).6 Unfortunately our image of a Mughal garden today is formed by the visual clichés of India Tourist Office posters of the Taj Mahal. We forget the old photographs show it looking quite different, before Lord Curzon gave the neglected gardens the semblance of an English lawn. As such, the cost of maintenance is prohibitive, which is why, apart from the Taj and the Shalimar and Jehangir Baghs in Lahore, no Mughal garden today is properly maintained. Had we but the sense to revert to the Mughal system of gravitational irrigation, whereby the beds are periodically flooded, then the trees and shrubbery would protect the grass with their shade.7 Volwahsen writes:

A modern irrigation system could only temporarily stop such vast lawns being scorched by the blazing sun. A genuine Mughal garden, forming an architectonic unit with the mausoleum, could not be maintained today, for the simple reason it would need too much water. As a
result the harsh silhouette of the building stands in too sharp contrast to the green lawns. It was originally envisaged that above a swirling mass of flowers, fruit trees and fountains, situated at different levels, the white dome of the tomb should stand forth, supported by the façades, with their red and white casing; in this way there would be a masterly transition from the many-coloured diversity of the garden to the simple symbolism of the marble dome. It helps if we try to imagine the Taj as it was originally intended to be seen: one would catch glimpses of the dome above fronds and branches; and with the oranges hanging like globes of fire amidst the rich green foliage against the peerless white dome the effect of such beauty must have been almost painful.

Transition in level in a Mughal garden is effected by the *abshars*. Since the Muslim mind apprehends reality in terms of pattern, the surface of the water chute is inlaid with chevrons to emphasize the movement of the water, or carved in a fish-scale pattern to produce a rippling, corruscating effect; in a word, the water becomes a liquid arabesque. Thus the water links dynamically the two levels; the upper, or tectonic; the lower, or vegetal. Jellicoe stated at the Dumbarton Oaks symposium in 1974 that in a Mughal garden the water is perhaps even more important than the soil. It is difficult to quarrel with this conclusion: the mobile qualities of water modify the different spatial relationships that exist between the various parts of the garden, emphasizing and, at the same time, loosening the rigidity of the plan. The soil is static, as is the stonework, while the water and the plants are kinetic, but in the garden their relationship becomes symbiotic. Where the causeways intersect there can be either a pool or fountain, or both combined, or a *chabutra*, a stone or brick platform. The *chabutra* serves to provide an elevation for the throne, raising its occupant above the level of common humanity. Alternatively, it may serve as a plinth (*kursi*) for a
baradari, or open-sided pavilion. Bara means twelve and refers here to a three-by-three module in which four walls are each pierced with three doors. The lateral openings can be converted into windows by the insertion of jalis, perforated stone or marble screens which admit light and air but temper the brilliance of the former by filtering it. As the light penetrates a jali it projects the same image in shadow on the floor or opposite wall, so that, like water passing over an abshar, light becomes a medium for pattern. The pavilion crowns the axes triumphantly, so that the axes intersect within the baradari; at the precise point where they cross is the spot on which the fortunate owner of such a demesne often elects to be buried.

Properly to understand the notion of burial in a garden, we have to sit it within an eschatological framework. Islam conceives of paradise as a garden, the Koranic term being al-janna, i.e., the Garden, the garden par excellence. Burial in a garden amounts to a material anticipation of immaterial bliss, and the closer the garden approximates the Koranic model the more effective is the analogy. A Mughal garden, populated
with nard-anointed houris and the air balmy from the perfume of too many flowers, must have approximated the divine archetype pretty closely. So much for the principle, but with reference to the particulars of the custom one could hardly do better than quote from Fergusson:

The usual procedure for the erection of these structures is for the king or noble who intends to provide himself with a tomb to enclose a garden outside the city walls, generally with high, crenellated walls, and with one or more splendid gateways; and in the centre of this he erects a square or octagonal building, crowned by a dome, and in the more splendid examples with smaller, dome-roofed apartments on four of the sides or angles, the other four being devoted to entrances. This building is generally situated on a lofty square terrace, from which rise four broad alleys, generally with marble-paved courts, ornamented with fountains; a mosque is an essential adjunct; the angular spaces are planted with cypresses and other evergreens and fruit trees, making up one of those formal but beautiful gardens so characteristic of the East. During the lifetime of the founder, the central building is called a Bara-dari, summer house or festal hall, and is used as a place of recreation and feasting by him and his friends.

At his death its destination is changed—the founder’s remains are interred beneath the central dome. Sometimes his favourite wife lies with him, but more generally the family and relations are buried under the collateral domes. When once used as a place of burial its vaults never again resound with festive mirth. The care of the building is handed over to priests and laquers, who gain a scanty subsistence by the sale of the fruits of the garden, or the alms of those who come to visit the last resting-place of their friend or master. Perfect silence takes the place of festivity and mirth. The beauty of the surrounding objects combines with the repose of the place to produce an effect as graceful as it is solemn and appropriate.11

Elsewhere I wrote of such places that when “a mausoleum stands in isolation within a funerary garden the effect is incomparable: aesthetically and conceptually, it transports the beholder to the frontier of emotional experience.”12 The funerary garden is Islam’s answer to the grim realities of death. Horace Walpole, extolling the beauties of the mausoleum at Castle Howard, said that it “would tempt one to be buried alive”; and of the cemetery of the Acattolicci in Rome Shelley wrote that it “might make one in love with death, to think that one could be buried in so sweet a place.” The latter sentiment is closer to the Islamic: wandering about in these places, sense impressions proceeding from colors, sounds, and perfumes, and even such things as the sight of parakeets flying among the trees, crowd in upon one and so work upon the mind that death comes to seem attractive even. In a bid at a further dimension of experience, odoriferous plants such as jasmine figure prominently in the overall planting scheme, as the sense of smell is notoriously evocative, the merest suggestion of a particular scent being sufficient to set in motion an entire train of associations.

Certain phrases in Fergusson’s description call for comment. Burial under collateral domes explains the ground plan of the Taj, which goes back to a Central Asian prototype, whose lineal descendant in Persia is the Hasht Bihisht palace in Isfahan. The model for the Taj was of course Humayun’s tomb,11 but the plan of Frisay al-Daula’s tomb, which belongs to another type, the tiered mausoleum, incorporates the same provision for subsidiary burial. It is highly probable that such buildings were intended as dynastic mausolea, exactly like Augustus’s mausoleum at Rome. The reference to the economics of the garden makes an important point: horticulture was unknown in India before the Muslim invasion, and the funerary garden is necessarily an autarchic concept, since its purpose is to perpetuate a memory indefinitely. Every tomb requires a magosir, or custodian, who, with his family, lives off the produce of the surrounding garden. The idea of the garden as something ornamental and functional came in with the Renaissance; the ancient world had no conception of the garden as presently understood. Islam remains faithful to the older and Roman idea of the hortus.

At one time such gardens proliferated outside every Mughal city; they stretched along the banks of the Jumna at Agra and Delhi, while in Lahore they flanked the banks of the Ravi and lined the Grand Trunk Road as it approached the walled city (plate 5). For Kashmir, where three great royal gardens survive, sources give the somewhat improbable figure of 777.12 Funerary gardens are also to be found at Allahabad and Auranagabad. But perhaps the best place to see the sort of thing Fergusson is thinking of is Agra, where on the

Plate 3. Agra. Funerary gardens lining the left bank of the Jumna. View taken from the gateway of the Taj.
outskirts of the city magnificent masterpieces of Islamic architecture crumble to decay. In one case the floor of the pavilion has collapsed, and one can look straight down into the vault, disclosing the burial, marked by a ta'wiz. In Agra, to a degree inconceivable in Delhi, which was ruined by the transfer thither of the capital from Calcutta, the visitor is particularly conscious of departed glory: washed by the tides of history, these waters have since receded with the result that the wrecks of former grandeurbestrew the environs (plates 4-5).

The reason why gardens were located on the banks of rivers is simple: water was raised to the level of the enclosure wall by a Persian wheel standing on the bank; thence by an aqueduct the water was conducted to the garden, where it ran along the top of the wall in a system of terra-cotta pipes. This procedure produced the head of water necessary to work the fountains.

Over the entrance to Akbar's garden at Sikandra is written: These are the gardens of Eden: enter them to dwell therein eternally, which shows that Islam views history as a circular process of restoration. Once inside this garden, one is aware that more than one tradition has been at work. The basic scheme is the fourfold plot introduced by Babur: a square or rectangular area is divided into four quadrants by two axes (or the principal axis in the case of a rectangular area) which carry the water for the irrigation of the garden under gravitational pressure from the raised walks. Depending on the area to be enclosed the quadrant can be divided or subdivided indefinitely so that the same module is repeated on different scales. Viewed in Jungian terms, this approximates to a mandala, an archetype that predates Islam.

In Persian ceramics datable approximately to 4,000 B.C. the world appears as a bowl divided into quadrants, with the Spring of Life at the center, whose waters flow out to fertilize the four quarters of the globe. This is the basic plan of the Islamic garden, except that in the latter a pavilion has supplanted the spring. This pre-Islamic, but Islamized, scheme has much in common with another, which is Vedic: in Aryan villages two diagonal thoroughfares intersected at a spot marked by a tree, underneath which the elders sat; the quarters served to separate the castes. In Hindu mythology this tree, the Tree of Knowledge, with Naga, the holy watersnake, coiled around its roots, springs from a mound; the mound is the Mount of Meru, down whose slopes, from a hidden spring, water runs out to the four cardinal points. The same tree appears as a stone umbrella (chahtri) atop Buddhist stupas.

At Sikandra the entire garden is laid out on a cosmic cross, with the four entrances facing the cardinal points and the tiered tomb at the center replacing the mountain. Other artificial mountains like Anghor Vat and Borobudur are similarly oriented, but that is because
the Buddha faced east at the moment of the enlightenment: here it is because the qibla axis, the determinant of burial in Islam, is due west (plates 1, 6).

It would be a mistake to think that all Mughal gardens were destined sooner or later to be places of sepulture. The garden in Islam embraces living space for the quick as well as the dead; indeed Islam conceives of a palace only as a series of pavilions interspersed with gardens linked to one another within an overall horticultural scheme. In an idealized, bird’s-eye view of an eighteenth-century palace at Lucknow in the David Collection at Copenhagen, one sees plainly the interlocking functions of palace and garden: each has invaded the other’s space; a mutual compenetration is the result (plate 7). In the Anguri Bagh, or grape garden, in the Fort of Agra, within each of the four parterres there is an intricate pattern of small interlocking beds outlined by sandstone curbs; each bed was reserved for a specific bloom, and with the curbs to control the situation, the limit of each color appeared clearly demarcated within an overall pattern of carefully calculated tonalities. Thus the Anguri Bagh was in reality a floral carpet spread at the feet of the emperor as he sat in the Khas Mahal and looked out over the courtyard. This garden also retains some of its original fence (in red Mathura sandstone), the only one of its kind to survive in India, or indeed anywhere, although at one time it was ubiquitous, as we know from Clavijo as well as from miniatures depicting garden scenes, where the cinnabar paling forms a conspicuous feature.¹⁴

A particularly attractive garden of the type under discussion figures in a manuscript of the Khamsah of Nizami, dated 1595. Laila and Majnun are shown carousing in a temporary pavilion atop a Mughal fort tower overlooking a chahar-bagh, with a fountain and four dwarfed cypresses planted in confining basins and with fruit trees trained to grow around the trunks. Taking artistic license with his subject, the artist has made the wall invisible so as to afford us a glimpse of an underground pump worked by two oxen which feeds an external cistern. From there the water is conducted to a pavilion, which is the distribution point (taqsim) of the water system of the entire palace; the visible arrangement of tanks and channels is only part of the picture (plate 8).
As observed earlier, the pleasure garden ultimately becomes a funerary garden, with the baradari adapted to its new function. The second type remains to be discussed. A good example, complete with baths and towers for the ladies of the zenana to look out over the countryside, is the Shalimar Bagh at Lahore. Unfortunately this garden is now entered from the top instead of the bottom, by a postern of British date giving onto the G.T. Road. The real entrances are on the lowermost terrace, which means that today the terraces are visited in the reverse order and the aesthetic effect is lost, because one is meant to walk up to an abshar, not come upon it suddenly from above. A huge abshar connects the second and third terraces, and its waters flowed out underneath the imperial throne, cooling the person of the monarch as they did so, for the royal passions must have been not a little inflamed by the gyrations of the nautch-girls on the dancing platform. This platform stands in the middle of the huge tank which occupies the whole of the second terrace (plate 9). Connecting the second terrace with the third is a sawan bhadun, more sensational still. This takes the form of a waterfall falling down three sides of a roofless ‘room,’ which is open on the fourth side. The walls are composed of serried rows of niches in each of which, during festivities, a candle burned behind the falling water. The candles were coppedhorred so that sight, sound, and smell bombarded one’s senses simultaneously, producing a multisensory response.

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 the Mughal regime was too impoverished to command gardens on this scale, but a century before the final debacle Qudsia Begum, wife of Emperor Muhammad Shah and mother of the unfortunate Ahmad Shah, laid out her own garden, the Qudsiyya Bagh, just outside the Kashmir gate at Delhi, in 1748. As observed before, Mustoe designed a stunning garden, not improved, I think, by Lutyens’s intervention, at the viceregal residence in New Delhi. On a more modest scale, a small garden has been recently laid out adjacent to the Great Mosque of Delhi for the burial of Abu’l-Kalam Azad, to whom the spot was endeared on account of its associations, namely the site of the execution of the exalted Sarmat. Based on the intersection of two asymmetrical axes, with two arches intersecting over the tomb, this garden is a modern reinterpretation of the traditional funerary garden, complete with lily pond and solemn cypresses lining the approach to the grave. Recently in Pakistan an attractive garden in the Mughal style was laid out in Lawrence Gardens at

Plate 8. Miniature depicting domestic garden, dated 1595. (Photo: by permission of the British Library.)

Such gardens are of necessity restricted by the domestic scale as well as the exigencies of urban planning, but extra muros there exist gardens of vast extent intended for only temporary occupation. An excellent little booklet by Dr. Dar, Director of the Lahore Museum, entitled Some Ancient Gardens of Lahore, distinguishes four kinds of garden: (a) gardens attached to palaces or havelis; (b) gardens which serve as substitute royal residences, for the emperor to put up at when on a journey; (c) funerary gardens surrounding purpose-built mausolea; and, lastly, (d) pleasure gardens with baradari in the middle, the commonest category.
Lahore. Some might argue that the time and energy expended might have been better used to restore one of the ruined historical gardens in which that city abounds. In Mughal times there were some fifty gardens in Lahore, of which one was the largest garden in the world. This was the circular (gol) garden at the foot of the city walls. Probably no more than a dozen of these sites can be traced today and only two—Jehangir’s garden and the Shalimar Bagh—are relatively intact. The gardens, and particularly the Gol Bagh, which encompassed the town with a five-mile belt of greenery, were the lungs through which the city breathed, for Lahore, unlike other Indo-Islamic cities, never knew the courtyard house and in Shah Jehan’s time the city must have been a healthier place than it is today. The Chauburji garden, second in size only to the Shalimar—the Gol Bagh being sui generis—is still restorable, the site being yet unbuilt upon, unlike the Gol Bagh, which existed as late as 1947.

What hopes can be entertained for the future of the Mughal garden, both for the survival of the art form and the conservation or restoration of historic examples? Today, as a result of overpopulation and urban development policies, whose rationale is sometimes difficult to fathom, it would perhaps be no exaggeration to say that the monuments of Lahore are under greater threat than at any time since Ranjit Singh. Across the frontier in India the situation is no better. A few years ago an expert on Japanese garden design, one Mr. Mori, was called in by the federal government to advise on a suitable site in the nation’s capital for a Japanese garden. Unbelievably, the site settled on was an already existing garden, the Roshanara Bagh, the work of Aurangzebe’s favorite sister, Roshanara Begum. Plans allow for the construction of a restaurant on an island, a pond, waterfalls, brooks, shelters, rockwork and Japanese-style landscaping—all on a Mughal site! Conservationists do not get much of a hearing in Third World countries; and it is only by ventilating the issues the problems of conservation raise in publications such as this that timely steps can be taken to avert tragedy such as that which threatens to overwhelm the Roshanara Bagh.

London, England

NOTES

1. Stanley Lane-Poole, Babar (Oxford, 1899), pp. 15-16.
4. This was the response to a point raised by the present writer at the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium on Islamic gardens, Washington, D.C., April 1974. For Susan Jellicoe's paper, see "The Development of the Mughal Garden," in Elizabeth MacDougall and Richard Ettinghausen, eds., _The Islamic Garden_ (Washington, D.C., 1976), pp. 107-29.

5. This much was clear to Clavijo when visiting a garden near Samarkand in the fifteenth century: "... e por medio estas calles y arboles iban unos andenes que travesaban toda la huerta; y en medio desta dicha huerta estaba un cerro alto de tierra que fue echada a mano allí en derredor de vergas de madera; y destas calles iban otras muy comarcadas que se podrian bien andar por ellas e mirar toda la huerta...." ("... and among these causeways and trees were pathways which crossed the entire orchard; and in the center was a high hill composed of earth thrown up by hand within a palisade of wooden stakes; and linked to these walkways were others, lined with trees, _from which the whole orchard was visible ...""). For the purposes of this study, I have made my own translations from Clavijo using the Madrid edition of 1943, Rodriguez González de Clavijo, _Embajada a Tamerlan_, ed. Francisco Lopez Estrada (Madrid, 1943); Eng. trans. by Guy le Strange, _Embassy to Tamerlane_, 1403-1406 (Broadway Travellers Series, Cassell: London, 1928). Le Strange (p. 216), working on the St. Petersbourg edition of 1893, has produced a somewhat different version of this passage.

6. A well-researched paper by J. P. Thompson, "The Tomb of the Emperor Jahangir," _Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report_, 1910-1911, pp. 12-30, establishes clearly what was on the second story of Jehangir's tomb: a simple platform enclosed by jalis, with a cenotaph, or duplicate tomb, in the middle. On the RAS painting the area in question is covered by a label reading "Maqbarat-i-Badshah Jehangir" (burial place of Emperor Jahangir). If this label could be removed there is little doubt that it would disclose a _ta'wiz_, thereby vindicating Thompson's hypothesis. This brilliant piece of research is not nearly so well known as it deserves to be, witness the visual blunder perpetrated by Volwahsen on p. 85 of _Living Architecture: Islamic Indian_ (London, 1970). The painting is presumably of the Ranjit Singh period, as it was donated to the society on November 17, 1849 by General Sir Claude Martin Wade, who had been in Lahore from 1823.

7. We must rely for evidence not only on paintings and the miniatures, which are a more reliable guide to how these gardens looked in their prime than is any extant garden, but on carpets. Garden carpets from Persia show a _chenar_ (Oriental plane) planted in each corner so that it might protect the more delicate plants with its plenteous shade. Thus four chenars, one to each corner, would account for a significant area of each flowerbed, the more so since the corners were often finished off diagonally. It is probably to these trees that Clavijo (p. 154) alludes with the phrase, "... e avia unos arboles grandes e may alios que hacian muy grand sombra...." ("... and there were some large and very tall trees which produced very great shade ..."). Also, referring to yet another garden, Clavijo (p. 163) says: "... esta huerta es grande mucho, e en ella abia muchos arboles frutales e de ofros que hacian sombra...." ("... and this orchard is very big, and in it there were many fruit trees as well as others producing shade ..."), see le Strange, _Embassy to Tamerlane_, pp. 216 and 227.


11. Volwahsen also points out ( _Living Architecture_, pp. 83-84) Khan Khana'm's tomb in Delhi.


13. I hasten to disclaim any originality for these comparisons, which are almost all to be found on pp. 45-46 of Constance Villiers Stuart's _Gardens of the Great Mughals_ (London, 1913). Mrs. Stuart, whose pioneer work in this field is beyond praise, would seem to have got many of these ideas from the Mafi Sahiba of Bharatpur, to whom she acknowledges her indebtedness in the Preface (p. xi).


16. This garden is the object of an as yet unpublished study by Dr. Vivian Rich of Victoria, B.C., Canada (personal communication). There is, however, a feature ("This Stupendous Creation") published with lavish illustrations in _House and Garden_ (British edition), March, 1985, pp. 144-47.

17. Lest this be deemed a notional figure, begotten of exaggeration and a partial imagination, I subjoin a list lifted from Dr. Dar's booklet:

_Pre-Mughal Gardens_: Bagh-i-Malik Ayyaz; Bagh-i-Zanjani, Bagh Shah Tama'il; Bagh-i-Qutb al-Din Aibak; Bagh-i-Shah Kakuchiisti, Bagh-i-Daulatabad.

_Mughal Gardens_: (i) Babur and Humayun period: Naulakha Bagh; Bagh-i-Kamran. (ii) Akbar period: Bagh Dilafroze; Bagh-i-Khan-i-Azam; Bagh-i-Andjan; Raju Bagh; Bagh Malik Ali Kotnal; Bagh Mirza Nizam al-Din Ahmad; Bagh Zain Khan Kokaltaish. (iii) Jahangir period: Bagh Mirza Mu'min Ishaq Baz; Bagh Shams al-Din; Bagh-i-Anarkali; Bagh-i-Dilkusha (funerary garden of Jehangir). (iv) Shah Jahan period: Fa'īd Bagh; Bagh Bilanal Shah, Shalimar Bagh; Bagh Hoshiar Khan; Bagh-i-Badr al-Din Shah 'Alam Bukhari; Bagh-i-Hadrat Sayyid Mahmud; Chauburji Bagh; Bagh-i-Asaf Jah; Bagh-i-Nur Jehan; Parviz Bagh; Mushki Mahall (funerary garden of Nawab Mian Khan); Bagh Abu'l-Hasan; Bagh Khwaja Ayyaz; Bagh Nusrat Jang Bahadur; Bagh-i-Ishan; Bagh 'Ali Mardan Khan. (v) Aurangzebe period: Gulabi Bagh; Bagh-i-Mahhabat Khan; Bagh Shah Chiragh; Bagh-i-Andjan; Raju Bagh; Bagh-i-Mahabat Khan; Bagh Shah Chiragh; Bagh Mullah Shah Badakshi. (vi) Late Mughal period: Bagh Begum Jan: Badami Bagh; Bagh Pir Muhammad Adali; Bagh Mir Manno (or Bagh Nawab Jan); Bagh Sayyid 'Abd Allah Khan; Gol Bagh. (vii) Other Mughal gardens: Bagh-i-Dilkusha; Bagh-i-Dilaram; Bagh-i-Dilamiz; Anguri Bagh; Anar Bagh (Dar, _Ancient Gardens of Lahore_, p. 6.).
The colonial condition brings into sharp focus the problems of continuity and change within a society. Those problems are illustrated especially well in architecture and town planning, for, as Thomas Karsten wrote in *De Taak* in 1920, "Architecture is a very social art, bound by many links to materials, to industry, to working methods." He described the general condition of contemporary architecture in the Indies as "lacking intensity ... confused ... and lacking unity," which he ascribed to a lack of unity in society.

Herman Thomas Karsten, born in the Netherlands in 1885, had studied architectural engineering at the Technische Hoogeschool in Delft and graduated in 1909. He went to the Indies for the first time in 1914. In the same *De Taak* article already quoted he went on to say, "The schism, no, the absolute, inevitable, insoluble duality, lies in the essence of the colony: the contrast in tradition, degree of development and aims between dominating European and dominated indigenous life. ... A successful architecture must express a unity of the spiritual and material needs. ... [The colonizer's need] to satisfy what is inborn and learned from the West goes against his need to adapt to the environment, to nature, the primary source of all emotion.”

Karsten then pointed out that the colonizer's assertion of Western style leads to his growing isolation. By imposing "the imperialistic Western ideas of the East working for the West," the colonizer confirms the existence of that split which eventually stimulates the rebellion of the colonized, with "every *tukang* (workman) potentially a member of "a rebellious proletariat." In these conditions indigenous skills become "spiritual weapons"; every building asserting foreign domination can provoke a reaction and may be "a step toward an Indies architecture of their own.”

What was the situation in what is now known as Indonesia at the time Karsten was writing? For the first two hundred years (1597-1799) of Netherlands influence over the East Indies, control was in the hands of the United East Indian Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, often referred to as the VOC), a trading company which initially regarded the archipelago as merely a base for fortified outposts protecting interests in spices and other tropical products. There was little penetration to the interior, little alteration of the existing indigenous power or of social and material organizations. Most remaining physical evidence of those early days comprises fort ruins, old helmets, and weapons. The forts and a few churches strongly reveal their Dutch origins, as can be seen in the ruins in Banten of the seventeenth-century Fort Speelwijk and in the restored church in Fort Rotterdam in Ujung Pandang (formerly Makassar) of about the same date (plates 1 and 2).

The writings of early Dutch travelers such as Van Linschoten and Bontekoe reveal a deep interest in the Indies as exotica, as a setting for adventure, but no suggestion of possible links between the two widely differing cultures and no awareness that Indies culture might offer a variant of the human condition; the Dutch clearly regarded it as an example of the ways of a totally different species.

The disintegration of the VOC brought true colonial status to the Indies, and in the nineteenth century, especially after the 1811-16 British interregnum under Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Stamford Raffles, the Netherlands government set about developing a policy for administering the islands. By the beginning of the twentieth century the many factors contributing to the rapid development of the Netherlands Indies included legal changes ensuring land-use reforms, a growing demand from industrializing Europe for raw materials, expansion of transportation—especially the growth of railways and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869—and the pressures of population growth. In these genuinely colonial conditions, Indies architecture of the nineteenth century tended less to reflect its Netherlands roots, as the structures of the transitory VOC traders
had, and more to stress the ideas of grandeur commensurate with ruler status. The buildings typifying this period did not draw on the consciously Dutch revivalism of architects like P. J. H. Cuypers (1827-1921), nor the bourgeois homogeneity of urban Amsterdam, Delft, or Haarlem, but rather on the general European search for monumentality which was so often expressed in the Neoclassical idiom. The Immanuel Church (formerly Willemskerk) built in 1839 by J. H. Hoost in Batavia (now Jakarta) and the mid-nineteenth-century Justice Building in the same city are among many examples of monumental colonial buildings of this type (plates 3 and 4).

By the early twentieth century the very expansion which indicated prosperity had entailed rising costs and shortages of housing and land in the chief commercial and administrative centers of Batavia, Surabaya, and Semarang, as well as in smaller towns like Bandung,
Magelang, and Malang. The administrative and fiscal functions in these towns became too complex to be dealt with by a single centralized authority, and a systematic Policy of Decentralization began in 1905 with the establishment of the first autonomous municipalities. These changes were stimulated as well by the changing view in the Netherlands of the responsibilities implicit in colonial administration, a new attitude shaped by the Ethical Policy of the Dutch government.

Awareness of the intrinsic values of Indonesian culture developed along with the growing self-consciousness of the expanding Dutch community. It was at this point in Indies history that two architects with a sensitive and profound understanding of the Indies and its development began working in Java. Their ideas strongly influenced theories of architecture and town planning and to a lesser degree also affected their practice. Thomas Karsten has already been mentioned. The other was Henri Maclaine Pont.

Maclaine Pont arrived on the scene first in 1911. It was in fact a return for him, as he had been born there in 1884 in Meester Cornelis, now part of Greater Jakarta. As was usual for children of well-to-do Dutch families, he had been sent back to the Netherlands for secondary and tertiary education. While studying architectural engineering in Delft he met Karsten. After graduating in 1909 and practicing for two years in the firm of Posthumus Meyes in Amsterdam, Maclaine Pont went to Java to design the headquarters of the Semarang-Cirebon Steamtram Company (Semarang-Cheribon Stoomtram Maatschappij) in the coastal town of Tegal (plate 5).

This building, though European in character, with strong Berlagian influence, already shows environmental concessions unusual for office buildings of the time. Its east-west siting minimizes sun exposure; the integration of upper balconies and lower arcades on its long façades diverts direct sun from the core walls; ventilation spaces rise unimpeded in the stairwells of the three towers to connect through pierced metal grilles with permanent openings in the attic; overhead openings in the interior walls ensure continuous air circulation throughout the building. These measures effectively mitigate the intense heat of the coastal region.

Writing in the periodical Nederlands Indie Oud en Nieuw in 1916, Maclaine Pont explained why he had designed the building with a "vivid silhouette which changes continuously in the eye of the passer-by," and had carefully planned its relationship with the alun-alun.

This large open space, found in all unmodified Javanese towns, is central spiritually as well as physically to the original urban structure; Maclaine Pont's awareness of such local values shows a sensitivity to social setting rare for a Netherlander in that period (fig. 1).

After completing the Tegal project, Maclaine Pont established a private practice in Semarang, and as work increased he invited his former fellow-student at Delft, Karsten, to join him. Karsten, who had been working in Berlin, caught the last train out of Germany before mobilization. He arrived in Java toward the end of 1914.

The partnership lasted only two years, partly because of personal difficulties between the two men, and partly because ill health necessitated Maclaine Pont's return to the Netherlands in 1915. He remained there until 1919, selling his share of the practice to Karsten in 1916.

The design of the building which brought Maclaine Pont back to Java reveals an important development both of his ideas and of Dutch social policy in the Indies. The moral impetus of the Ethical Policy and the growing shortage of skilled labor and management encouraged the expansion of education among the Javanese. These pressures were intensified by the isolation which the First World War imposed on the Indies despite Netherlands neutrality. In 1916 a few enterprising Dutchmen formed a committee for Indies Preparedness (Indië Weerbaar) that aimed at the self-reliance of the Indies. This was not a movement for emancipation from Dutch rule; pleas for political independence did arise from the nineteen-twenties on, but these usually reflected a wish for autonomy within a general Netherlands commonwealth, and not the goal of the small emerging Indonesian nationalist group.

Another influential body created by these trends was the Royal Institute for Higher Technical Education in the Netherlands Indies (Koninklijk Instituut voor Hooger Technische Onderwijs in Nederlands Indië). In 1918 it commissioned Maclaine Pont to design the buildings for the technical institute (Technische Hoogeschool) in Bandung, later known as the Bandung Institute of Technology, or ITB. It was the first university-level institute for the training of Indonesians. Its syllabus and structure were modeled on the Technische Hoogeschool in Delft, and it quickly acquired the reputation for excellence that it holds to this day.

HELEN JESSUP
In the years between building the Tegal office in 1911-12 and returning to Europe in 1915, Maclaine Pont traveled widely in Java and studied indigenous architecture; he felt it important to express indigenous cultural values in the Bandung design. Through this choice of style, the buildings he designed, and his prolific writings, he affirmed his faith in the ability of Indonesian architecture to provide a basis for future development.

The curving roofs of the institute, completed in 1920, invoke the tensile roofs of the Minangkabau region in Sumatra (plate 6). Their layers give the effect, as Maclaine Pont put it in a 1924 comment on the building, of being “set on a lotus cushion.” The massiveness of the top roof, he pointed out, is relieved by the strips of leaded glass set into the lower portion of the spaces between roof layers, their irregular glinting “sparkling at a distance” (plate 7). Like the curved roofline, the multilayered roof derives from an indigenous tradition which Maclaine Pont traced from the pillared halls depicted in the bas reliefs on the Indian-derived ninth-century temples of Central Java, through the East Java temples of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, to the still-functioning pendopos (open pillared reception halls) built by Javanese princes of later centuries (plate 8).

Maclaine Pont’s knowledge of indigenous architecture was greatly expanded between 1920 and 1923, when he traveled continuously in Java and Sumatra as technical inspector for the Public Health Service. His interest spanned the entire range of buildings from the monumental to the vernacular. His passion for the history of the Majapahit kingdom, which had controlled much of Java from the end of the thirteenth to early in the sixteenth century, led him to examine the ruins of the great buildings that had formed its capital at Trawulan, in East Java, and to question their origins and the concepts that lay behind them.

In *Djawa* he wrote, “Architecture is the environment man creates for himself from subjected nature, to create conditions ... to make possible his own attitude to life, to bring about the required atmosphere and permit the demands of status.” He reasoned that a people’s attitude to life can be entirely self-created and isolated, inherited from earlier generations, copied from other peoples, or imposed from outside by foreign

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Figure 1. Tegal, West Java. Site plan showing relationship of Cirebon-Semarang Steamtram Company’s office to alun-alun, 1912. Architect: Henri Maclaine Pont. From *Nederlandsch Indië Oud en Nieuw*, no. 1 (The Hague, 1916-17).


Plate 7. Bandung, West Java. Institute of Technology, 1918-20, showing leaded-window details.

Plate 9. Dieng Plateau, Central Java. Small temples, 8th century, showing importance of temple surroundings.

powers. As societies become more sophisticated and powerful, he claimed, they need to assert their power and status and will usually choose inherited forms even if they express them in new materials. The old forms will "remain as the basic element of the new formal language."

Maclaine Pont tackled the question of purity of form, of the authenticity of a style in which disparate elements are blended, and said: "The invading people ultimately have an eye for the culture of the conquered and may prove receptive to it.... Then no clash, no demonstration of supremacy is necessary, and the peoples draw together.... It depends on the fervor with which they maintained their own culture during the suppression whether the old form-language returns to so-called 'grand' architecture.... [If there is] a living architectural tradition, a mighty new architecture can arise, heterogeneous and not pure in style. It is wrong to demand purity of style before acknowledging an architectural tradition."

He went on to say that constant contact between peoples leads to the exchange of skills, expansion of outlook, strengthening of organizational abilities, and so to progress. Compared with Karsten, he had a longer focus on the difficulties posed in colonized states by the absorption of new cultural elements. From this historical perspective he could view the colonial situation more sympathetically, as merely the latest of recurrent invasions of the Indies. Like Karsten he understood the problems caused by the early Dutch regime, and criticized past policies when the Dutch had "supported the weakest and worst administrations within indigenous society and thereby made themselves indispensable until they gradually gained control." He acknowledged that current policies had moved from "the protection of the indigenous which smothered initiative" to a movement toward education for self-sufficiency.

Given the rapid growth of Indies society, the choice of architecture that should dominate public building was one the formulators of the new policies had to make immediately. Maclaine Pont claimed that if the style chosen were indigenous and "broadly based, relevant to the entire people," then the old formal language would emerge again as a basic element, though he conceded that if the Javanese still had a tradition "suitable for their outlook on life, and the climate," it would also have to prove suitable for current economic and construction requirements and public health standards, or at least be adaptable to satisfy them. To find out if there was such a tradition Maclaine Pont drew on his knowledge of the vernacular and domestic end of the architectural scale and examined its style, its structure, and its common roots with grand architecture.

The Hindu ruins on the Dieng plateau and in the Prambanan area, combined with further evidence from the bas reliefs, led Maclaine Pont to conclude that early life had been carried on in the open air, with small open shelters providing protection and privacy, not with walls but with enclosing courtyards linked by portals, an organization which persists to this day in the puras (family enclaves) of Hindu Bali. The shift in emphasis from the interior of the temple to its surrounding space—on terraces, as at Borobudur, or on precincts, as at Loro Jonggrang in Prambanan, and later at Besaki in Bali—was seen by some archaeologists as a degeneration of Indian form (plate 9). For Maclaine Pont it was an advance, evidence of the Javanizing of Hindu and Buddhist style, perhaps even a syncretic adaptation of the kabangans, or sacred natural terraces, of animist times. That this spatial organization, after modifying Hindu and Buddhist structures, survived and influenced the plans of sultans' tombs in the early days of Islam in Java, determined the layout of the Javanese kratons (palaces), and even affected the form of the typical Javanese mosque through the incorporation of the surambi, or open front area, further convinced him that the tradition was pervasive and persistent (plate 10).

Maclaine Pont believed that not only had the old forms depicted in the ninth century persisted in the forms of Sumatran village houses (plate 11), a type...
which he called the Greater Sunda type, but that the construction techniques had survived through a social tradition known as *sambatan*. This was an exchange of time and labor on what housing experts today call a "mutual self-help" basis, where the cutting and treating of materials and their shaping into building components were carefully coordinated with the agricultural calendar. Communal erection of dwellings from largely standardized parts was quick and required almost no cash outlay. Maintenance was taken care of by an obligatory annual *desa* (village) cleaning routine in which everyone was required to take part.

In the early twentieth century two regulations threatened this efficient and independent system just at a time when the housing shortage was becoming acute. The first was a ban on *sambatan*. In principle this was a well-intentioned effort to stamp out what remained of the feudal obligations that had been part of the old Culture System (*Cultuurstelsel*) imposed by earlier Dutch regimes and which required the peasants to supply labor and material to the landowner, who in turn supplied the foreign overlord. Eliminating *sambatan* threatened the entire structure of village life, by making rural and urban village (*desa* and *kampung*) construction dependent on cash for labor and materials at a time interest rates were high. By undermining the mutual dependencies which made for social integrity, the authorities were also ensuring the decline of traditional buildings skills.

The other destructive regulation was also made with good intentions. Serious outbreaks of plague had forced the health authorities to attempt to control rat-breeding. In their opinion the best way to do this was to eliminate the nesting space offered in cut bamboo, the basic material of vernacular housing. A ban was therefore placed on its use, which had many effects, all bad. First, new housing had to be constructed from timber, a scarcer and more expensive material and, unlike bamboo, often not locally available. Second, wood construction techniques required skills that were often lacking among the village population, so carpenters had to be hired; this further encouraged the decline in traditional skills and exacerbated the cash-flow problem. Third, the repairs frequently necessary in the existing buildings, made as they were from nonpermanent materials, could no longer be carried out, and this led to a decline in village maintenance which in turn worsened the health situation. The new regulations also stultified housing construction at the very time it needed to expand. The result was ever more serious overcrowding, which also contributed to the decline in health standards.²⁰

Clearly the rat problem had to be solved, but Maclaine Pont was convinced he could prove that, not the materials themselves, but the way they were prepared and fastened was responsible for the rat-breeding havens. He experimented with new methods to eliminate the breeding spaces created by traditional joints and showed that proper harvesting and treatment of bamboo could improve its resistance to insect infestation. His ideas were presented many times, both by him and by Karsten, but were first introduced at a housing congress in 1922, where he claimed that the blanket regulations against traditional housing materials were counterproductive and unjust and that they contributed to the growing apathy and helplessness of the population. In addition, Maclaine Pont pointed out, merely maintaining the status quo would inevitably lead to their deterioration.²⁰

Besides suggesting simple modifications to construction techniques which would not basically alter traditional form, Maclaine Pont advocated the systematic organization of *sambatan*, because it would help retain local autonomy, and he felt that only decentralized efforts would be effective in dealing with local problems. He also urged financing for training local craftsmen at a basic level. Maclaine Pont recognized that higher education was important, but he believed that technical-school diplomas encouraged the Javanese to ignore the manual aspects of their profession, leading to a decline of skills.

To encourage higher standards he recommended competitions and exhibitions of work in local markets. He advised stimulating awareness of their own history among the Javanese, who had not been totally divorced from it, thanks to the popular *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) plays, whose stories, characters, and forms originated in Hindu-Javanese times and developed in the Majapahit and early Islamic eras. Finally, he urged the establishment of a semi-official body with representatives from the villages, the health service, regional and central governments, and the departments of education, agriculture, and public works to advise on the provision of adequate credit arrangements and examine all aspects of housing.

Maclaine Pont's research and writing were concerned with the whole scope of Javanese architecture. He examined its origins, traced its survival in the face of successive national upheavals, analyzed its structural essence, and demonstrated the vital role it
could—indeed, had to—play if a coherent modern society was to emerge. His ideas were received with interest at Decentralization Congresses and cultural conferences, and in the several journals to which he frequently contributed. The ITB buildings are perhaps still the best example in Indonesia of a successful adaptation of an old idiom to new requirements, in which both are convincingly blended through the unique spatial vision of a distinguished architect.

Between 1924 and 1943 Maclaine Pont lived and worked in Trawulan, pursuing archaeological and historical research into the Majapahit period on behalf of the Majapahit Society. Although this took him away from architecture and town planning, he continued to insist in his writing on the continuity and applicability of the Javanese architectural tradition. During those years he experimented with tensile roofs in a series of trial structures which served as storage and display areas for a rapidly growing collection of Majapahit terra-cotta fragments. He not only directly applied the principles of the Greater Sunda roof and the gajahan roof found in East Java (plates 12 and 13) for an entrance portal and a storage building, respectively (plate 14), but also adapted their structural principles to create cupolas with interior spaces unencumbered by support members. The earliest of these, built in 1928, had a span of seven meters. It successfully withstood a tornado and an earthquake, convincing Maclaine Pont that for local conditions its flexible roof arches were technically superior to rigid Western-style constructions. The ideas were developed in several more buildings, until by 1931 he was able to build a hexagonal cupola with a free interior span of 24.6 meters (plate 15). It was 12.9 meters high at the keypiece of the pre-curved laminated teak beams, and had a superstructure in Batak style giving it a total height of 19.4 meters. This large cupola became the main display area for a field museum. Originally calculated to last for ten years, it more than established the validity of the roof design which Maclaine Pont described as “equilibripetal”; despite a total lack of maintenance it survived until the early nineteen-sixties.
Both the architecture and the collection of the field museum became quite famous and led to Maclaine Pont's being asked in 1936 to design a church for a small group of Roman Catholics in Pohsarang, in East Java. With the support of the parish he attempted to apply Javanese structural principles to new functions. The ground plan of the church (fig. 2) derives from Hindu-Javanese terraced plans, as found at Borobudur (fig. 3), and linked courtyards like those found in Javanese kratons and Balinese puras and temple compounds, besides observing Christian traditions. The main part of the church is a cupola whose four arches and superstructure gables represent the four evangelists, but also derive from Batak tradition (plate 16). Leading to the cupola is a catechism hall in Greater Sunda style. The relationship of the two was described by Maclaine Pont as resembling the Ark of Noah coming to rest on Mount Ararat after the Great Flood; it also resembles the relationship of the surambi to the interior part of the mosque form.
Surrounding these linked buildings are smaller buildings in Sunda style which integrate the church with village life by providing shelter for foodsellers and gamelan musicians (plate 17). Two external shrines, as well as a bell tower (plate 18), borrow the Majapahit niche as seen in Candi (temple) Brahu (plate 19); in an external courtyard stations of the cross are executed in terra-cotta bas relief inspired by Majapahit temple carvings. The gateways are split portals (plate 20) in which Maclaine Pont referred not only to the legend of Shiva’s escape from prison through the bursting of the walls of his cell, but also to the gateways in ruined temples and palaces which span ten centuries of Javanese architecture and are found in such widely placed sites as the ruins of the sultan’s palace in Banten in the west, the Kesepuhan kraton in Cirebon, the ruined palace of Ratu Boko near Prambanan, and the remains of Candi Wringin near Trawulan in the east (plate 21). Maclaine Pont further intended the split portal to suggest the rending of the temple veil in Jerusalem at the moment of Christ’s death on the cross.

Another example among the many multiple symbols occurs in the ascending terraces. The challenge presented both physically and spiritually by the ascent has implications of kahiangans, the Hindu-Javanese temples of central Java, perhaps even the rigors of the Hajj, in addition to suggesting Calvary. Interior carvings on the altar and baptismal font also fuse Christian and Majapahit themes and motifs, so that the church is a living monument to the distinctive syncretism of Indonesia.23

Technically Maclaine Pont further refined his theories of what he called “Indonesian Gothic” in the cupola arches and their anchoring A-yokes, for which he invented a patented ball-foot whose flexibility increased the roof’s ability to withstand torque as well as shifting lee and luff pressures at times of high wind and earth movement (plate 22). The building is still in use, although a recent restoration deployed rigid roof-braces which deform the subtle droop of the original curving roof planes.
One characteristic of the building that should not be overlooked is the excellent air circulation. By ventilating through overlapping glass panes in the upper sections of the cupola, Maclaine Pont ensured constant updraft; the roof’s deep overhang protects the building from direct sun, so that it remains cool even at noon on humid days with temperatures in the high eighties. According to visitors to the field museum, the high, louvered windows and broad roof overhang in that building had a similar cooling effect.

The Pohsaran church was Maclaine Pont’s last architectural project in the Indies, though back in the
Netherlands after the Second World War he tried for decades to establish the importance of his constructions for public housing, airports, and other large buildings. Although the public remained indifferent, his church offers living proof that the Javanese architectural tradi-

tion can be successfully integrated into a changing society. 23

Karsten’s ideas about the importance of the Indonesian architectural tradition developed along lines similar to Maclaine Pont’s, but, since town planning and public housing present more opportunity for the concrete expression of theories than does archaeological research, his ideas became more widely known in Indonesia. He maintained an interest in urban theory and construction throughout the world, traveling whenever possible to compensate for the dearth of written information (which he constantly deplored) and always assessing the relevance to the Indies of the ideas promulgated by such planners as Abercrombie, Berlage,
Ernst May, Gropius, the American designers of Manila, and the Japanese restorers of Tokyo.25

Like Maclaine Pont, Karsten had come into contact with indigenous architecture early in his Indies career. He was chosen as the architect for an extension to the Mangkunegaran kraton in Solo,26 and between 1917 and 1920 he designed residential quarters and made other modifications to it. Its Pendopo Agung, or chief reception hall, built in 1810, is one of Java’s finest (plate 23). The extension was also to include a small pendopo for less formal entertaining. Karsten insisted to his client prince that he must agree to designs that would retain the character of traditional architecture, while taking advantage of new lighting, plumbing, drainage, and flooring techniques to adapt the form to contemporary living (plate 24). His success with his employer led to his being retained for a further six years (1937-43) to restore the Pendopo Agung and extend the residential quarters, notably by adding a dining hall.

Commissions for wealthy clients did nothing to soothe Karsten’s socialist conscience, but he did recognize that projects like the building of the Pratjameseno, as the small pendopo was called, were important to the survival of the Javanese style and Javanese culture more generally. In 1920, in an essay on the significance of cultural conventions, he wrote, “A building is not good in and of itself, but only in terms of its environment, its function.”27 He was an exponent of functionalism, and it is not surprising that when Berlage, the rector of Netherlands architects, visited the Indies in 1923, Karsten paid tribute to the seminal ideas expressed in his Over Stijl in Bouw- en Meubelkunst of 1904. He described them as formative for his own thinking, and referred to Berlage’s distinction, similar in some ways to Theosophist principles, between the Constructive, which may be equated with the general, springing from the mind, always the same, and therefore Eternal, and the Form, the Aesthetic, which is specific, springing from the feelings, and Temporary. Berlage claimed that the harmony of the two should be the final aim of Style.28 In a 1924 lecture in the Hague, Berlage assessed the emergence of an Indies architecture and mentioned Karsten and Maclaine Pont as the
require Western methods,” but “only in the hands of indigenous architects will the development be safe, for which we can only show the way.”

His formula for an interim development guided by Westerners required “the conscious subjugation to the factual demands that nature poses, to the climate, to the light, to the scale [and] studying the indigenous art which demonstrates this adaptation.” He cited the Javanese sense of rhythm in building groups, the harmony between building and landscape, the technical skill with local materials like bamboo. In the same article Karsten called on architects attempting to solve urban problems to pay attention to local character; ignoring it he regarded as “sinful.” Nevertheless he eschewed erecting “a barrier to keep the eastern and tropical character intact.... One would enter a dead end if influence from outside is not a danger, rather it is an enrichment, provided the...construction forms are...transposed in the tone of the country itself.”

In 1920 Karsten had made a theater model for an architectural exhibition. In 1921, in Djawa, he discussed the model as part of a plan to create a building type for indigenous theater. Traditionally, the performing arts were usually presented at courts under the patronage of ruling princes. Karsten argued that over the centuries performance and setting had become indissolubly connected, and described the importance of the pendopo, with its intimate relationship between performers and viewers, for wayang kulit (shadow puppet), wayang orang (plays with human actors, sometimes masked), and traditional dance performances. Given the expansion of contemporary audiences, the courtly pendopo was no longer an adequate setting in terms of space and visibility. The Western theater, on the other hand, with its separation of performer and audience and its insistence on the creation of a new reality, the transporting of the watcher into another world, through illusion, was unsuited to Eastern drama, where the spectator offered “a quiet and adoring receiving...of the higher reality.” The traditional drama, linked to the mysticism which pervades Javanese epic, was “precisely the fantastic and nonmaterial drama which would give young authors the opportunity to stimulate their people...much more deeply than they could with the more matter-of-fact Western drama, where always too much needs to be said.”

For Karsten these social implications were as important as the integrity of the art.

If the pendopo could be adapted to solve its problems of limited space and sightlines (“unacceptable in growing social equality”) without losing its connections be-


Two architects who had contributed most to “a coming Indies architecture which is just as important as the development of modern Dutch architecture.”

Until 1920 Karsten’s projects, apart from the Solo kraton work, had not been indebted to the Indonesian idiom, although they had dealt with climatic conditions and the practical demands of town planning. His office building for the Nilmuij Insurance Company in Semarang, for example, like Maclaine Pont’s Tegal office building, provided for shade and air in a way rare for the time (plate 25). Like Maclaine Pont, Karsten believed that only an architecture rooted in indigenous culture could hope to satisfy the requirements of a developing society whose identity lacked definition. At the same time he conceded in a lecture (probably at the Batavia Society) that “the new needs, at a faster pace,
between performer and audience, Karsten felt that the drama would gain an appropriate forum for development. Anyone who has watched Javanese or Balinese dance-drama both in its traditional setting and on a Westernized stage can testify that the latter inevitably imposes spurious feelings of pantomime and irrelevance on the art. While Karsten’s plan was not carried out in its entirety, a modified structure was built in Semarang in 1921-22 (plate 26). The Sobokartti, as the theater is called, is an ideal setting for dance-drama; ignored and allowed to grow shabby over the decades, it was recently saved from demolition by the municipality.32
Similar principles underlay Karsten’s modifications to an old house on the alun-alun in Yogyakarta (plate 27). In the speech he made at the 1935 opening ceremony of the building, known as the Sonobudoyo Museum, he argued that it was important for a museum’s structure to reflect the culture whose objects it displayed. Pleading as always the mutual dependence of culture and society, he presented the museum as a center not merely for displaying objects but also for performances of music, dance, and wayang, for meetings, for research, and for education. He worried lest the adaptation of an originally European house to Javanese style be misinterpreted as “a misplaced and unreal imitation putting it in the role of a forgery.” Were the
style a "closed dead one," he argued, one could not take liberties with it. But since the Javanese style was a living one, it had enough vitality to be the starting point for further development. On this principle he built a pendopo to serve as entrance and performance space, and gave the complex of buildings the overall appearance of a kraton.

Again Karsten deplored the European role in the project, saying: "Western direction should not be necessary; however, here one sees the vicious circle: the indigenous architectural world, weakened by colonial circumstances, does not have the energy to rise on its own. In these circumstances, one does the best thing possible: first, help the architecture get back on its feet and prove its usefulness, then later, when its continuation at a higher level is assured, let a struggle for its purity follow."

In a completely different field, Karsten managed to apply traditional construction techniques to new materials and new types of buildings. He used steel and galvanized iron to invoke traditional form for such contemporary uses as a railway station in Solo (plate 28). Similar adaptations were made for the Pasar Gede (central market) in Solo in 1929, for the Semarang abattoir, built in 1928-29 and described by the town's veterinarian as "a sun of hygiene, and the 1928 headquarters of the Sisters Railway Company" (plate 29).

In all these buildings the style is no mere decorative gesture to local idiom, no romantic invocation of the past, but the practical application of traditional forms to contemporary social needs.

Since town planning and public housing (Volkshuisvesting) were Karsten's chief interests, even a brief survey of his work must include some account, albeit selective and simplified, of his ideas and influence in these fields, which he regarded as inextricably linked.

In a 1937 comparison, in the Semarang Journal of the Association for Local Affairs, between Javanese towns in former times and at the time of writing, Karsten outlined four basic tendencies in contemporary urban development. He stressed that these four needed in turn to be viewed in the light of two basic local circumstances, namely, the tropical setting and the colonial social structure.

The first tendency he discerned was toward general urban expansion. The second was the growing importance of mechanical factors such as roads, pipes, electric lines, telephone wires, and the like. The third lay in the assertion of individual expression, which Karsten considered a product of the Western philosophical pursuit of liberty and rationalism. The fourth, running directly counter to the third, was what he described as the ordering tendency. This inferred central authority, and was seen by Karsten as springing from the collectivity central to Eastern philosophies, where the requirements and rights of the individual were subsumed under the
needs of the whole. He believed that this tendency was now also apparent in the West for the first time, as a healthy product of recent socialist thinking. Through this possible rapprochement of the social philosophies of East and West he had reached a basis for optimism about future developments in colonial countries, a point of view he would have deemed untenable in his earlier years.

Karsten’s involvement with planning often required master-plan work, particularly as adviser for Malang and Magelang. He and Maclaine Pont had begun such planning quite early, in extension plans for the
Candi area in Semarang and for the Darmo area in Surabaya. Sometimes these projects also involved preparing plans for public housing projects within these areas, as with Karsten’s plans for the Kawarasan complex in Magelang. Sometimes the plans were for projects organized by housing associations such as the N. V. Volkshuisvesting in Semarang. These were partly modeled on the Netherlands associations such as Eigen Haard, which had sponsored such successful projects as the Spaarndammerplantsoen development in Amsterdam. “Town planning,” Karsten wrote in 1931, “is the art of correct relations; it is the art of giving every social expression its due, its correct position with regard to its meaning, and bringing together all those parts and units into the correct relation to one another.”

As far as general planning was concerned, Karsten advocated rational expansion; industrial complexes were to be zoned near main transport lines. A strong pattern of highways was to redirect through traffic; these arteries were to afford clarity of view and differentiated structure to accommodate different speeds and sizes of vehicles. The main routes had to avoid residential and shopping areas, which were to be zoned in small groups, each having access to green areas, recreation facilities, schools, shops, mosques, and churches, so as to minimize internal traffic and reinforce neighborhood integrity. Regulations governing building lines and height limits were to be enforced, and attention paid to planting and streetscape. The Kawarasan complex embodies these principles well (plate 30), as does the Darmo area in Surabaya, laid out according to Maclaine Pont’s plans of 1914 (fig. 4). The plans have much in common with the well-known plans for South Amsterdam made by Berlage in 1915 (fig. 5).

While he was applying the best of current European planning ideas, Karsten was at the same time espousing

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the protection of what the haphazardly expanding towns still possessed of their original Javanese nucleus. The traditional Javanese town focused on the alun-alun, and thereby had a plan in harmony with the ideas of such planners as Camillo Sitte, whose work had been discussed by Berlage and had influenced many European planners. It was therefore possible to plan city centers where Eastern and Western traditions blended comfortably.

At the detailed end of the scale, in his Preliminary Advice for a public-housing congress in 1922, Karsten entered vigorously into the debate about the type of housing most suitable for crucial kampung renewal schemes. Two issues were at stake. The first concerned the choice between open or closed construction. The former, whose detached houses were a continuation or adaptation of the house types in the spacious, semi-rural kampungs of the older cities, seemed at first glance preferable in matters of ventilation, light, and privacy. Karsten pointed out, however, that in fact the rapidly increasing density of the cities had changed this. Between 1900 and 1925 the population increase in Batavia had been 130 percent, in Surabaya 80 percent, in Semarang 100 percent, in Bandung 325 percent, and in Malang 140 percent. This compared startlingly with the overall population increase in Java as a whole of only 27 percent. With the resulting urban congestion, the advantages of open construction were virtually nullified as the spaces between the houses were reduced to "messy slits." Badly planned closed construction led to problems of air circulation and light and gave few opportunities for planting, besides creating boring streetscapes with monotonous façades. Karsten felt that imaginative planning could overcome most of these difficulties, however, by producing better internal and external spaces; density could then enable construction and municipal service costs to be reduced.

This conclusion entailed consideration of a second controversial issue, namely, whether to make the structures permanent or nonpermanent. The latter included traditional desa and kampung techniques using bamboo structural elements, gelek and atap (split and woven bamboo and palm leaf) walls and roofing, and offered cheap, quickly erected, spacious and airy houses. If adapted according to Maclaine Pont’s suggestions, these readily available materials could both satisfy
health requirements for plague control and profit from the traditional village sambatan. On the other hand, Karsten acknowledged that where density required close construction these materials were unsuitable. Contiguous houses needed solid dividing walls, both for mutual strength and for privacy, better fire-proofing, and sturdier roofing; these in turn increased costs at a time when prices were already high and housing shortages acute. Karsten argued that some brick construction standards, based on Netherlands conditions where multistoried buildings and severe winters had determined the regulations, were unrealistically high. To cut costs, he pleaded for experiments with concrete blocks, which were larger than bricks and quicker to erect, thus reducing labor costs, and being less porous saved also on plastering. He insisted on central information pools, so that builders would be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of solutions already tried in other areas.

Savings in building costs, together with denser and therefore more economical services, would enable closed permanent construction to compete financially with open nonpermanent construction, and would require less maintenance. Karsten’s Preliminary Advice urged its application in dense urban centers, whereas traditional forms and materials were to be maintained in more spacious kampungs and desas. For both, he insisted on good form, denying that this was “external gloss, an addition like an extra bedroom.” On the contrary, it was “the external expression of the dwelling’s being. Normal man is sensitive to this expression…. May we be indifferent to the emotional value of the environment in which a greater part of the people lives daily, where, for the greater part, the emotional life of a man takes place?… Housing construction whose form, internal and external, is neglected out of indifference or prejudice means active cooperation with the impoverishment of the people’s spirit as much as neglect of the economy leads to that of their purse, and that of hygiene to that of their body.”

Like Maclaine Pont, Karsten was much admired in professional circles during the nineteen-twenties and -thirties, and is mentioned by such later writers as the planner Thomas Nix as one of the most influential and intelligent planners of his time. Some of his ideas continued to be expressed by those who had been guided by him before the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. Professor Jacques Thijssen, an engineer with the Bandung Municipality who returned to Java after the Second World War, was influenced by Karsten’s theories, as were Indonesian planners like Soesilo. The plans of Kebayoran Baru, in Greater Jakarta, though not carried out until after the war, were affected by his ideas, although Karsten himself had already died in a Japanese concentration camp in 1945. The Town Planning Department of Gajah Mada University in Yogyakarta is currently making a careful study of Karsten’s master plan for Magelang, of which only a portion was carried out in his lifetime.

There are several reasons why, despite their far-sighted blending of idealism and practicality, their grasp of the roots of Javanese culture, and their understanding of the architecture Indonesian society would be required to produce in the modern world, and despite admiration from colleagues and a wide reading public, the ideas of Karsten and Maclaine Pont did not have a more marked effect. One is that each man, to some extent, preferred to work alone, disliking bureaucratic lumberings and the politics of ambition. Another is that they were both impatient and outspoken in dealing with official circles. If one adds to these personal characteristics the slowness with which any ideas running against the official tide can seep into major channels, and considers as well the suppression of Dutch influence during the Japanese occupation and the subsequent independence struggle, when the new republic needed to assert its own identity, one may surmise that it was possibly not so much a rejection as a mislaying and forgetting. For decades the local exigencies which Karsten and Maclaine Pont continuously stressed were neglected in favor of an uncritical adoption of Western urban ideas. It is encouraging to see that today some municipalities and agencies in Indonesia are expressing similar thoughts once more, giving hope that the ideas of Karsten and Maclaine Pont are not dead, but merely buried and dormant.

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NOTES

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2. In general the phrase, “the Indies,” refers to the Dutch concept of their colony, the Netherlands East Indies. When the word “Indonesia” is used, it refers either to the present Republic of Indonesia or to the concept of cultural and political identity that developed with indigenous nationalism in the last decades of the colonial period.
3. The Dutch word *hoge school* refers to a tertiary institution, in this case the Technical University at Delft.

4. Jan Huysgen van Linschoten, *Itinaria*, translated into English by 1598; Willem Ijsbrandzoon Bonetko, *Journals van de Gedenkwaardige Reizen van Willem Ijsbrandzoon* (1618-1625) (Journals of the memorable journeys of W. I. Bonetko [1618-1625]), 1646; the writings of both men were well known.

5. In 1870 the Agrarische Wet (Agrarian Act) brought stability to plantation agriculture by providing for seventy-five-year leases of uncultivated land; this protected the indigenous population from uncontrollable alienation of land and safeguarded adat (traditional) land rights.

6. Both Catholic and Calvinist politicians and writers had been critical of Dutch policy in the Indies during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, claiming that it was exploitative and inhumane. In 1901 a coalition government, supported also by socialists and radical liberals, was elected in the Netherlands. It proposed a new doctrine, referred to as the "Ethical Policy," whereby the government was committed to improving the lot of the indigenous people through improvements in their educational, legal, and economic position.

7. Hendrik Petrus Berlage (1856-1934) was one of the most influential architects of his time in the Netherlands, both through the example of his many buildings, notably the Exchange in Amsterdam of 1898-1903, and through his prolific writings on the philosophy of architecture.


9. The details of Karsten's years in Berlin are not known. Most of his personal papers were lost, either during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia from 1942 to 1945 or in a fire in his wife's family's house in the Dieng region of Central Java in 1946. Some of his children have memories of his life in Java, but their knowledge of his German years is limited to what they remember of conversations with him. Simon Karsten believes that his father worked in the studio of the architect and writer Muthesius from about 1910 until about 1913, but correspondence with a member of the Muthesius family suggests that this is unlikely.

10. Efforts to promote national identity had begun early in the twentieth century with the founding of the Budi Utomo movement in 1908. By the late nineteen-twenties there were militant demands for independence from leaders like Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta, and Sutan Sjahrid. These were suppressed, and the leaders were arrested and banished until the Japanese overcame the Dutch colonial government in 1942. Independence was proclaimed in 1945, but not conceded by the Dutch until the end of 1949.

11. ITB offered engineering and the basic sciences when it opened in 1921; Sukarno was in the first class of engineering students. A previous tertiary institution founded in 1902, the School for the Training of Native Physicians (STOVIA, School voor Opleiding van Inlandse Artsen), offered a nine-year training course in medicine, but its graduates needed some study in the Netherlands before they could obtain an official medical degree.

12. H. Maclaine Pont, "Bibliotheekgebouw, Memorie van Toelichting" (1924), an unpublished account of the ideas contributing to the structure of the library building, one of the two main buildings at ITB.


14. H. Maclaine Pont, "Javaansche Architectuur," *Djawa*, no. 3 (1923): 112. *Djawa* was a quarterly published from 1920 by the Java Institute, a cultural organization founded in 1918.

15. Ibid., p. 113.


17. Ibid., p. 117.

18. Ibid.

19. There were many factors contributing to the appalling conditions in urban kampungs. They had begun to deteriorate early in the twentieth century when they were excluded from the areas under municipal control at the time of decentralization. In the absence of a planning authority, land speculation was rife, population density increased, and construction standards were nonexistent.

20. H. Maclaine Pont, "Bijdrage tot de oplossing van de Technische Moeilijkheden van het volkshuisvestingsvraagstuk speciaal voor den Inlandschen bouw" (Contribution to the solution of the technical difficulties of the public-housing question special to indigenous building), *Volkshuisvestingcongres, 1922, Preadvies N° 4* (Public Housing Congress, Preliminary Advice no. 4), Semarang, 1922.

21. Decentralization congresses were held annually from 1910, each year in a different city, and were devoted to a specific urban problem. Reports, called Preliminary Advices, were prepared in advance by several experts in the subject addressed, and were subsequently published as Technical Proceedings of the Social-Technical Association.

22. The Majapahit Society was founded in 1924 with the encouragement of Dr. F. D. K. Bosch of the Archaeological Survey. Its purpose was to investigate the ruins of the Majapahit empire not only from an archaeological standpoint but also with the aim of exploring the sociological importance of a continuing cultural tradition.

23. The Indonesian tendency to absorb new ideas and beliefs without totally rejecting previous ones has given rise to local variations of all the major religions found in the archipelago. In many areas Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity have incorporated elements of animism and mysticism and the later Buddhism. Recognition of this tendency has contributed to the deeply felt doctrine of religious tolerance expressed in the national creed of Pancasila.

24. A fuller description of the Pohaarang church can be found in my "Four Dutch Buildings in Indonesia, IV, Henri Maclaine Pont's Church, Pohaarang," *Orientations* 13, no. 12 (Hong Kong, December, 1982): 22-34.

25. Karsten's ideas on international town planning are presented in "Stedebouwkundige Reisaantekeningen" (Town-planning journey notes), collected and reprinted from *Locale Belangen* (Semarang), no. 10 (16 May, 1931); no. 11 (1 June, 1931); no. 12 (16 June, 1931); no. 13 (1 July, 1931); no. 17 (1 September, 1931); no. 19 (1 October, 1931).

26. The Dutch attempted to rule the Indies by controlling the existing rulers rather than by substituting their own system. It was thought prudent, however, to split the major ruling houses of Central and West Java into minor factions, so that, for ex-