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A SPECIAL ISSUE ON
PRE-MODERN ISLAMIC PALACES

guest edited by Gülru Necipoğlu

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Gülru Necipoğlú
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## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

**Gülrü Necipoğlu**  
*Harvard University*  
An Outline of Shifting Paradigms in the Palatial Architecture of the Pre-Modern Islamic World 3

### PART 1. PALACES OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND THE LATE-ANTIQUE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

**Irene J. Winter**  
*Harvard University*  
"Seat of Kingship"/"A Wonder to Behold": The Palace as Construct in the Ancient Near East 27

**Lionel Bier**  
*Brooklyn College, City University of New York*  
The Sasanian Palaces and Their Influence in Early Islam 57

**Slobodan Ćurčić**  
*Princeton University*  
Late-Antique Palaces: The Meaning of Urban Context 67

### PART 2. PALACES OF THE EARLY ISLAMIC CALIPHATES (SEVENTH–TENTH CENTURIES)

**Oleg Grabar**  
*Institute for Advanced Study*  
Umayyad Palaces Reconsidered 93

**Priscilia P. Soucek**  
*New York University*  
Solomon’s Throne/Solomon’s Bath: Model or Metaphor? 109

**Jonathan M. Bloom**  
*Richmond, New Hampshire*  
The *Qubbat al-Khadîr* and the Iconography of Height in Early Islamic Architecture 135

**Alastair Northedge**  
*Université de Paris—Sorbonne*  
An Interpretation of the Palace of the Caliph at Samarra (Dar al-Khilafa or Jawqaq al-Khaqani) 143

**D. F. Ruggles**  
*Ithaca College*  
Arabic Poetry and Architectural Memory in al-Andalus 171

### PART 3. PALACES OF THE SELJUQ SUCCESSOR STATES (ELEVENTH–FOURTEENTH CENTURIES)

**Yasser Tabbaa**  
*University of Michigan*  
Circles of Power: Palace, Citadel, and City in Ayyubid Aleppo 181

**Nasser Rabbat**  
*Harvard University*  
Mamluk Throne Halls: *Qubba* or *Iwân*? 201

**Scott Redford**  
*Georgetown University*  
Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces and Palace Imagery 219
PART 4. PALACES OF THE MONGOLS AND THEIR SUCCESSORS
(THIRTEENTH-EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheila S. Blair</td>
<td>The Ilkhanid Palace</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond, New Hampshire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard O’Kane</td>
<td>From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American University in Cairo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfram Kleiss</td>
<td>Safavid Palaces</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsches Archäologisches Institut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine B. Asher</td>
<td>Sub-Imperial Palaces: Power and Authority in Mughal India</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gülru Necipoğlu</td>
<td>Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION
AN OUTLINE OF SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN THE PALATIAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE PRE-MODERN ISLAMIC WORLD

By GÜLRU NECIPOĞLU

The palaces symposium held at Harvard on May 15–16, 1992, had as its aim, not completely to cover every known palace from the pre-modern Islamic world, but rather to focus on some examples that have recently attracted scholarly attention. Since the monuments discussed in this volume are spread over many centuries and regions, no attempt has been made to impose a common theme or mode of analysis. Instead the papers, which deal primarily, though not exclusively, with royal palaces, address a wide variety of issues raised by a specific building type.

A collection of papers on palace architecture is valuable because thus far Islamic architectural history has been dominated by research on religious monuments. This is understandable, given the small number of palatial structures that have survived. As competing symbols of power, royal palaces were often abandoned or destroyed by successive dynasties, unlike religious public monuments that generally continued in use after undergoing modifications to accommodate sectarian differences. The emphasis on religious architecture in scholarship also stems from the traditional view that the visual and material culture of the Muslim world was primarily shaped by religion, a view reflected in the use of the problematic term “Islamic” in qualifying art and architecture. The symposium papers reveal the limits of that view by exposing a palatial world of dynastic ideology, fantasy, and desire whose horizons, often rooted in pre-Islamic precedents, refused to be bound by religious culture.

Nineteenth-century Orientalists who believed in the timeless unity of Islamic art and architecture (a belief echoed in some recent scholarship) constructed the notion of a monolithic Islamic visual tradition composed of archetypal elements recycled in various combinations over the ages in different regional idioms until their final “degeneration” in the Western-influenced modern era. As a result, Islamic architectural history has tended to concentrate on the early medieval period, regarding subsequent developments as derivative rather than as reflecting a dynamic capacity for change and innovation. That is why until quite recently the modern era has almost entirely been ignored in the canonical scholarship as even less worthy of study than the “later Islamic” period extending from the mid thirteenth to the eighteenth century. The scarcity of studies on nineteenth- and twentieth-century palaces has consequently limited the scope of this volume to the pre-modern era.

The stereotyping of Islamic architecture as a static tradition also obscured the significant paradigmatic shifts over time by encouraging the taxonomic classification of building types according to formal, chronological, and geographical criteria with little attention to contextual meanings, intertextual allusions, and cross-regional synchronic patterns. “Difference” was downplayed to highlight unity, thereby denying historical change to the visual culture(s) of the Islamic lands. Until quite recently a symposium on palaces would have centered on the question of what makes a palace or a group of palaces “Islamic,” a question likely to generate a list of shared elements regardless of context. Today the search has shifted from identifying such unifying common denominators to interpreting the nuances of their differing syntactic combinations in specific settings.

The way in which the papers in this volume have been ordered accentuates changes in palatial paradigms without losing sight of longue durée patterns, some of which had pre-Islamic origins. The ancient Near Eastern and late-antique Mediterranean palaces covered in part 1 are followed by a chronological sequence of papers on palaces from the Islamic world, grouped in terms of four distinctive palatine paradigms corresponding to changing conceptions of the state and images of sovereignty. The first two are dealt with in part 2, the third in part 3, and the last one in part 4. I will here briefly comment on the individual papers, sketching some of the broader historical patterns into which they fit, and introducing relevant background information not covered in the volume itself to develop a fuller picture of the four paradigms.

Winter’s survey of ancient Near Eastern palaces
from the Early Dynastic through the Achaemenid periods analyzes the morphology, building technology, decorative programs, and functions of Mesopotamian palaces together with their possible contributions to Islamic ones. It shows that the horizontal spatial division of royal palaces into inner residential (bištānu) and outer administrative (babānu) courtyards (reminiscent of the Islamic separation of inner [andarān] and outer [bīrān] spaces) was complemented by an equally important vertical division of space. This was expressed in the prestige of upper stories, a pattern also typical of the early Islamic palaces whose iconography of height is discussed by Bloom.

As repositories of treasures, gifts, booty, archives, libraries, and workshops for industries such as textile-making, the Mesopotamian royal palaces described by Winter fulfilled functions similar to those of their Islamic counterparts. Unlike the smaller palaces of princes and governors the large royal palaces, from which the state was run, supported an extended household and provided a setting for court rituals and ceremonies, including the administration of justice, that would continue to play a central role in the Muslim era. Their monumental gates, official throne rooms, multistory façades, hunting parks, formal gardens, and pleasure pavilions also found parallels in Islamic palaces. Precisely because maintaining the productivity of the land through costly irrigation works was a major function of Mesopotamian kings, gardens became associated with royal pleasure, luxury, power, and territorial appropriation, associations that would be perpetuated well into the fourteenth century when Ibn Khaldun counted the planting of gardens, the installation of running water, and the construction of monumental palaces as being among the pleasurable “fruits of royal authority.”

Bier’s paper assesses the influence of Sasanian palaces on early Islamic ones. In it he argues that a realistic conception of Sasanian palace architecture still eludes us because we have uncritically accepted unreliable reconstruction drawings that have become almost “iconic.” The dearth of reliable archaeological data leads him to conclude that the architectural impact of Sasanian palaces on early Islamic ones was probably minimal, even though their symbolic and ceremonial inspiration was undeniably strong. Bier hypothesizes that luxury objects and Pahlavi texts on court ceremonial rather than a direct antiquarian study of Sasanian monuments influenced early Islamic palaces.

The reuse of some Sasanian palaces in the Islamic era may provide the missing link. As Bier acknowledges, the palaces in Firuzabad (Gur) and Bishapur were occupied during the Islamic period, and the Ilkhanid palace at Takht-i Sulayman (discussed by Blair) incorporated Sasanian remains. Such examples can be multiplied. According to Tabari, for example, the White Palace in Ctesiphon (the Sasanian royal residence located about a mile north of the great ceremonial iwan) was used as a temporary residence and a state prison in the seventh century. The Arch of Chosroes itself (popularly known as the Taqi Kisra or Iwan-i Kisra), whose demolition was begun in the eighth century by the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur, remained largely intact until the tenth century when a later Abbasid caliph, al-Mukaff, reused its materials in the Taj Palace of Baghdad. This introduces us to a recurrent theme in the volume, which is the use of spolia from earlier structures that had royal associations.

In addition to the palaces of the Sasanians which Bier’s paper deals with, I would like to draw attention to those of their Arab vassals, the Lakhmids in Iraq, which seem to have played an important role in indirectly filtering Sasanian influences to early Islamic palaces. These included the Khavarnaq, famed for its domed construction imitating the structure of the heavens, which was built in the Lakhmid capital Hira by the ruler Nūman (d. after 418) for his Sasanian suzerain’s son, Prince Bahram Gur. The palace, created by the Greek architect Sinimmar, who was then killed so that he could not build a superior structure to rival it, was praised in pre-Islamic Arab poetry as one of the wonders of the world along with its neighbor Sadir. This product of Hira’s mixed pagan Arab, Persian, and Byzantine culture foreshadows the eclectic combination of motifs derived from each of these three traditions in the Umayyad palaces whose decorative programs are analyzed by Grabar and Soucek.

The Khavarnaq continued in use during the early Islamic era; Tabari describes a banquet the Umayyad ruler ’Abd al-Malik held there after his victorious entry into neighboring Kufa following a rebellion. On that occasion he had toured the palace, inquired about who had built it for whom, and allegedly speculated on the theme of the mutability of fortune. Ibn al-Faqih reports that every governor who came to Kufa expanded or
renovated the neighboring Khavarnaq palace. According to Baladhuri the propagandist Ibrahim ibn Salamah added a dome to it in the early days of the Abbasid caliphate when the palace was given to him as a gift. Mas'udi provides additional evidence for the Khavarnaq's use by such early Abbasid caliphs as al-Saffah, al-Mansur, and Harun al-Rashid who used to go there to rest.9 The reuse of building materials from a Sasanian palace at Hira in the Umayyad governor's palace-cum-mosque complex at Kufa (638–39) and the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil's (847–61) introduction of a new type of audience hall in Samarra—called al-Hiri because it was inspired by a palace built by Nu'man's descendants in Hira—once again confirms the Lakhmids' import in the transmission of Sasanian influences.

The charging of Islamic palaces with heavenly associations can also be traced back to ancient Near Eastern precedents. Bier describes how the tenth-century Buyid ruler ʿAdud al-Dawla, who had rebuilt the round Sasanian capital of Gur, renaming it Firuzabad, and had dreamed of renovating the palace at Ctesiphon, had also built a palace near Shiraz whose 360 rooms were each painted differently. This building in Shiraz recalls the Haft Paykar palace of the Sasanian ruler Bahram Gur who was brought up in the Khavarnaq. The Haft Paykar had seven domed garden pavilions, each of them inhabited by a princess from the seven climes and painted in a different color corresponding to the seven planets. Bahram Gur would give audiences in a different pavilion each day of the week, varying the color of his robe to match the decor of that day's reception hall.10 ʿAdud al-Dawla is also said to have given daily audiences, each in a different room of his palace in Shiraz, whose halls equaled in number the days of the year. This type of cosmological symbolism, reflecting the auspicious felicity and power of the universal monarch protected by the heavens, enjoyed a continued life in Islamic palaces with their "domes of heaven," whose earliest known examples are discussed by Bloom.

Čuřič’s paper on late-antique palaces provides a background for the Mediterranean heritage of early Islamic palaces. Palaces proliferated in several cities during the Tetrarchy, when Rome had ceased to be the only center of imperial power; Čuřič outlines the characteristics of these third- and fourth-century Tetrarchic palatine complexes in Antioch, Split, Thessaloniki, and Gamizgrad (Romuliana) that culminated with the Great Palace in Constantinople. As cities began to undergo a process of irreversible decline, he argues, late-antique palaces and villas borrowed urban forms to acquire an aura of prestige. These included city gates that became closely associated with the imperial palace through colonnaded avenues marked at their intersection by tetrayslons, neighboring imperial baths accessible both to the court and the public, and an open space or hippodrome acting as a buffer zone between the palace and its urban setting.

The late-antique phenomenon outlined by Čuřič has a parallel, I believe, in early Islamic times when palatine cities proliferated during Umayyad and early Abbasid rule. The Umayyad administrative center of ʿAnjar, founded by al-Walid I in 714–15, for example, recalls the small towns of the Tetrarchy with its two arcaded main streets intersecting at a tetrapsylon, and its bath house outside the palace precincts. Its layout adapts such late-antique models as Dioctetian's camp in Palmyra and Antioch, sites close to the power base of the Umayyad rulers in Syria, to new functions. When the Abbasid capital moved to Iraq, the influence of ancient Mesopotamian royal cities increased, but al-Mansur’s Round City of Baghdad, founded in 762, is not so different in conception from the palatine cities of the Tetrarchy. This fortified palace-city, which functioned as an administrative royal center for the caliph and his trustworthy clients, also borrowed urban forms, such as axial ceremonial avenues, a buffer zone around the central palace acting as a magdan, and four city gates closely associated with the palace—from their second-story domed audience halls the caliph could survey the four directions of his universal empire. The scholarly controversy about the appropriate terminology for Tetrarchic palatine complexes, which according to Čuřič have variously been referred to as palaces, fortified chateaux, villas, or cities, reflects an ambiguity in form and function that also characterizes Baghdad, where the traditional distinction between city and palace was similarly blurred.

The papers in part 2 of the volume deal with the first two palatine paradigms of the early Islamic period. The first one consisted of urban palace-cum-mosque complexes that proliferated during Umayyad and early Abbasid rule between the seventh and eighth century. In it the dār al-imāra (palace of government), with or without a qubbat al-khadr, was juxtaposed to the congregational
mosque, forming a single unit. The second paradigm that emerged during the ninth and tenth century was characterized by sprawling extra-urban palatine complexes no longer attached to congregational mosques. This important change in the spatial relationship between the palace and the mosque, initiated in ninth-century Samarra, marked the increasing seclusion of the Abbasid caliphs from their subjects, as the tribalism of the Umayyads gave way to a sacred absolutism that in many ways revived ancient Near Eastern concepts of kingship. The dar al-imāra was now replaced with the dār al-khilāfa (palace of the caliphate), which architecturally and ceremonially projected the new caliphal image first adopted by the Abbasids and subsequently by the Fatimids and the Umayyads of Spain. The second paradigm therefore coincided with the hegemony of three rival caliphates that had divided the Muslim world into Sunni and Shi‘ī states in the tenth century. The palaces of the caliphs and their vassals shared a common vocabulary subtly manipulated to differentiate competing dynastic and religious identities.

The relatively accessible and visible Umayyad caliphs had moved back and forth between the juxtaposed spaces of their palace-cum-mosque complexes that expressed their dual role as monarchs and religious leaders. According to Mas‘ūdi, Muawiya used to give audiences five times each day, first to the poor and the general public as he was seated at the minbar of his mosque’s masjīda after having led the canonical prayers, and then in his royal audience hall at the adjoining dar al-imāra where he received the grandees in a hierarchical order according to their rank. Ibn Khaldun writes that the first four caliphs and the Umayyads “did not delegate the leadership of prayer” because they considered it to be an exclusive caliphal privilege. It was first the Abbasid and then the Fatimid caliphs who “chose men to represent them as prayer leaders,” reserving for themselves the leadership of prayer on Fridays and religious holidays for the “purpose of display and ostentation.” This change in ritual explains the physical separation of the caliph’s palace from the congregational mosque in the second paradigm, a separation now mediated by elaborate processions between the two realms on Fridays and religious holidays. The pompous parades of the secluded caliphs, not so different from those of their Byzantine rivals, had a continued life in many later Islamic courts.

Abbasid court ceremonial had a decisive impact on other caliphal courts. Mostly hidden behind the high walls of their palaces, the secluded Abbasid caliphs gave public audiences only twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, entrusting the administration of the state to their viziers and a large bureaucracy that further screened them from their subjects. The tenth-century Buyid secretary Hilal al-Sabī‘ describes how the Abbasid caliph, wearing a coarse black robe and headgear, sat during these public audiences on his elevated throne (sidillā), veiled behind a curtain that would periodically be lifted to reveal him in splendor. Adorned with the insignia of the Prophet’s sword, staff, and holy mantle, he projected a sacred image as the Prophet’s legitimate successor. He displayed in front of him the Qur’ān of ‘Uthman, a potent symbol of religious orthodoxy. The Abbasid caliph’s public image impersonating the Prophet was not so different from that of the Byzantine emperor who acted as Christ’s vicegerent on earth. Both the Abbasid and Byzantine palaces were sacred realms with heavenly associations whose ceremonial had a distinctively religious coloring. By the tenth century the Fatimids and Umayyads of Spain would articulate their claim to caliphal status by emulating Abbasid palace architecture and ceremonial which they put their own stamp on through differences in detail.

The Abbasid caliph’s public audience hall in the Dar al-Khilāfa at Baghdad communicated with a large courtyard known as al-Salam, whose ceremonial is described in Hilal al-Sabī‘s tenth-century book of ceremonies. There was a special protocol for entering and proceeding through this courtyard where only the caliph could ride on a mule and only a few privileged dignitaries were allowed to sit on a chair. To guarantee silence, officers armed with bows were stationed there “to prevent and shoot down any crow that flew or croaked,” while serried ranks of perfectly still slave soldiers were lined up on both sides behind ropes stretched “to prevent commotion, inconvenience, mingling, and overcrowding, and to enable the caliph to see and recognize from afar whoever is admitted.”

Al-Sabī‘ describes a reception the Abbasid caliph al-Tāfṣir gave there in 977 to the Buyid ruler Adud al-Dawla who walked “between the two rows, and no one behind the ropes stirred” until he arrived at the door of the caliph’s raised throne (sidillā) whose curtain was pulled open. Adud al-Dawla then climbed the threshold and kissed the ground twice in the middle of the
sidillā's raised platform where he was allowed to sit on a square chair placed on the right side of the caliph's throne, a place normally reserved for the princes. Then he was invested with a robe of honor and a crown in a hall behind the sidillā, after which he returned to the caliph's presence and left from a revolving door that opened from the sidillā to the royal gardens along the Tigris where he departed from a private gate.17 Besides the curtained sidillā, apparently a domed baldachin throne, the sources also mention grilled ceremonial windows with curtains (shubbāk) behind which the secluded Abbasid caliphs used to watch official proceedings and some public ceremonies. Despite differences in religious orientation, the Fatimid caliphs adopted ceremonies that closely mimicked Abbasid ones, including the use of such curtained sidillās and ceremonial shubbāks.18

A famous reception given in 917 by al-Muqtadir at the Dar al-Khilāfa of Baghdad for an embassy sent by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogénitos helps us visualize the ceremonial of the earlier caliphal palaces in Samarra described by Northedge, some of whose features were repeated in Baghdad when the Abbasid court moved back there in 892.19 For this reception the palace complex in Baghdad was decorated with lavish furnishings for the two months during which the ambassador and his retinue were kept waiting. On the reception day the caliph's slave soldiers were lined up along the processional avenue that led to the palace, while thousands of chamberlains, slave pages, and eunuchs were stationed on the roofs, upper chambers, courtyards, gateways, passages, and audience halls of the palace. After being conducted in a stately procession through the avenue filled with spectators, the envoys passed from successive courtyards, where they mistook various dignitaries for the caliph, until they were finally conducted into his presence through a vaulted underground passage. The sight of the caliph enthroned in majesty "overcame and overpowered" them. Then an order was given to conduct them through the palace.

The long itinerary included the royal stables; the zoological gardens; the New Kiosk with its artificial pond (thirty by twenty cubits) of white lead "more lustrous than polished silver" containing four boats and surrounded by a garden whose palm trees were decorated with rings of gilt copper and flanked by orchards; the Tree Room, where a silver tree of moving branches on which were perched gold and silver singing birds stood at the center of a domed round pond, accompanied by figures of mounted horsemen holding lances that turned "on a single line in battle formation," and the Pavilion of Paradise decorated with rugs and precious armor. After touring twenty-three separate palaces, out of breath the ambassadors finally returned to the presence of the enthroned caliph now accompanied by his five sons. He gave them a letter, and they were led out from a private gate to the riverfront where boats took them back to their lodging. This description gives us an idea of the sequential order in which the vast palatine complexes of Samarra and their Fatimid or Spanish Umayyad counterparts would have been experienced by official visitors, filled with awe and amazement at the theatrical displays.20

The papers in part 2 cover some, but not all, of the early Islamic palaces built between the seventh and tenth centuries. Grabar reconsiders the known examples of Umayyad palaces. Much like the earlier scholars of late-antique palaces criticized by Čurčić, who regardless of major differences in siting, scale, and layout had sought to define unifying typological or iconographic formulas, Grabar criticizes himself and others for trying to fit all surviving Umayyad palatine structures into a single pattern. He also suspects that attempts to correlate these palaces with an Umayyad ceremonial life have too often dealt with the "virile sensuality" of al-Walid II "who was in many ways an eccentric." Since this Umayyad prince spent most of his life in exile in his "desert castles," while his uncle ruled as caliph, his dolce vita is not typical of the life of the caliphs in such capitals as Damascus and Rusafa, whose palace-cum-mosque complexes housed official public ceremonies punctuated by the rhythm of the five daily prayers in addition to private majlis.21

Judging from the admittedly problematic archaeological remains of Kufa and Anjar, it seems clear that such urban palace-cum-mosque complexes featuring monumental courtyards with axially aligned gates and throne rooms differed considerably from the less formal "desert castles" or villas. This difference confirms Grabar's point that trying to fit all surviving Umayyad palatial structures into a single type regardless of scale, function, patronage level, and urban or extra-urban context is a major methodological error. Grabar invites Islamicists to make a fresh start after having deconstructed the faulty assumptions of previous studies on Umayyad palaces. He
GÜLRU NECIFOĞLU

recommends detailed monographic studies yielding individual hypotheses about particular palatial monuments.

In the last part of his paper Grabar turns to the problems of interpretation posed by the idiosyncratic decorative programs of some Umayyad palaces. In the case of the royal bath house of Qusayr Amra, once attached to a palatial residence, he notes the predominance of images representing women which may provide a clue to who the bath’s patron was. Could this bath have been built for the household of a royal consort and her son, the mother of the “amir” or prince to whom good wishes are offered in an inscription? Was the amir, possibly the young child bathed by naked women in several paintings, an heir to the caliph represented enthroned on the central throne apse of the bath hall? Such questions can only be resolved with the kind of detailed monographic study Grabar recommends.

Although Grabar finds Qusayr Amra’s kaleidoscopic array of pictorial themes bewildering, he does not dismiss the possibility that iconographic analysis may eventually yield a coherent interpretation. Since many of the bath’s paintings draw upon a visual repertory of subjects with late-antique and Sasanian precedents, such as hunting, bathing, gymnastics, allegorical female personifications, and the enthroned ruler, it would be valuable to determine how its decorative program was related to that of late-antique or Byzantine imperial baths, some of which probably survived in the Umayyad territories. Soucek, for example, refers to a monumental Byzantine bath in Tiberias which may have influenced the iconography of the Umayyad bath house in the Khirbat al-Mafjar palace.

The throne apses of such Umayyad royal baths as Qusayr Amra and Khirbat al-Mafjar can be compared to those of Roman imperial baths decorated with the image of the ruling emperor. The ekphrasis of a royal bath built by the emperor Leo VI (886–912) at the Great Palace of Constantinople testifies to the use of such imperial imagery in Byzantine bath houses as well. It was adorned with statues, relief sculptures, and representations of the emperor as “the earth ruler on the proconch,” accompanied by the empress and allegorical female personifications. The edifice, “aglow like the vault of heaven,” also featured a dome depicting the emperor’s cosmic kingship. This description recalls the enthroned cosmic ruler represented on the apse of Qusayr Amra, with the seas under his feet and the vault of heaven above, flanked by half-naked female figures in the Sasanian style bearing fertility symbols under an arcade whose roundels contain personifications of the classical earth-goddess Gae holding a cloth filled with fruits, also associated with fertility and abundance. Another bath in Gaza or Antioch, only known from a sixth-century description, also featured a “dome of heaven” like Qusayr Amra, suggesting that we are dealing with a now lost Mediterranean tradition of bath-house decoration against which the novel combination of motifs encountered in the Umayyad context has to be interpreted. That bath domes continued to be decorated with heavenly bodies after the Umayyad period is revealed by Redford’s reference to a Rum Seljuq bath house with painted astrological imagery on its dome in the Alara castle near Alanya.

The ekphrasis of Leo’s bath concludes with the observation that it provided an “awesome sight”: “The manifold beauty of the bath has the grace of healing; it takes away men’s sickness and grants strength.” This passage provides yet another parallel to the Islamic tradition of decorating bath houses with figural imagery that would have been inappropriate in other contexts. The use of painted figures in baths is legitimized in some hadith collections and in a text by al-Gazuli because of their therapeutic value: “In good baths you also find artistically painted pictures of unquestionable quality. They represent, for example, lovers and beloved, meadows and gardens and hunts on horseback or wild beasts. Such pictures greatly invigorate all the powers of the body, animal, physical and psychological.” While this passage explains why figural images were tolerated in baths, it does not clarify Qusayr Amra’s royal iconography, which deserves additional study.

Soucek’s paper addresses the problems of interpretation posed by the idiosyncratic decorative program of yet another Umayyad bath house attached to the palatial complex of Khirbat al-Mafjar. She argues that the bath hall as a whole, but especially its façade and porch, represented an attempt to translate into visible form Umayyad legends about Solomon’s flying throne and bath which she reconstructs from early texts. Comparing the bath’s decoration with the Solomonic iconography used in some later Mughal and Qajar palaces, Soucek concludes that such context-specific imagery has to be interpreted through textual and visual sources most directly related to each case. She presents a suggestive body of circumstantial evidence that not only links the bath
hall with Solomon, but also with al-Walid II. Sourcek’s new reading of the elusive Umayyad bath house, whose meaning has puzzled so many scholars, confirms Grabar’s observation that the future of studies on Umayyad palatial architecture rests on detailed monographic works sensitive to the iconographic specificity of individual monuments and capable of presenting familiar buildings in a different light.

Bloom’s paper addresses the iconography of a group of early Islamic palaces known to have had a qubbat al-khadrā', a term usually understood to mean a green dome, but interpreted by him as a "dome of heaven," an imperial symbol with a long tradition in the Near East and Mediterranean worlds. Starting with the earliest remaining astronomical domes at the bath houses of Qusayr ʿAmra and Khirbat al-Mafjar, Bloom turns to the public audience halls of Umayyad and early Abbasid palace-cum-mosque complexes in Damascus, Rusafa, Kufa, Wasit, Hashimiya, and Baghdad, all of them crowned by a qubbat al-khadrā' and characterized by high second-story domed reception halls visible from a great distance. Bloom argues that the ninth-century Abbasid palatial complexes in Samarra represented a major shift from verticality to horizontality as second-story audience chambers lost their ceremonial function and externally visible “celestial domes” were replaced by vaulted iwans.

Northedge’s paper on the caliphal palaces of Samarra refers to several substructures that once supported upper stories, such as the triple-arched Bab al-ʿAmma of Amra originally topped by a second-story audience hall reached by a ramp, which he compares to the majilises crowning the gates of al-Mansur’s Baghdad. This suggests that horizontal sprawl did not always exclude verticality. Nevertheless, texts no longer mention the qubbat al-khadrā’ in describing the public audience halls of Samarra, a recognizable sign of imperial power that conferred added visibility to the palace-cum-mosque complexes it crowned. Mas’udī’s reference to an upstairs throne room in the Jaffari palace built by al-Mutawakkil north of Samarra, where al-Muntasir was enthroned in 861, suggests that second-story audience halls continued to be used alongside iwans. This hall’s throne was surrounded by painted figures of a crowned ruler flanked by attendants, which recalls the painted dado of standing male attendant figures at the throne room of Lashkari Bazar in Bust, a palace complex built for the Ghaznavid rulers who were vassals of the Abbasids. Al-Muntasir’s audience hall also featured Persian inscriptions—the earliest textual reference to such inscriptions known to me—whose first extant examples were discovered in another Ghaznavid palace built for Masʿud III (1099–1115) in Ghazna. Such poetic inscriptions in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish continued to be used in many later palaces.

Northedge analyzes the Dar al-Khilafa built by al-Muʿtasim at Samarra in 836, which was occupied and modified by his successors until 884. On the basis of recent archaeological investigations he identifies the palace’s major components which he correlates with texts. One of these, a public palace with official-administrative functions where the caliphs gave their biweekly public audiences, featured a central cruciform domed reception-hall block, overlooking, on one side, gardens with pavilions along the Tigris and, on the other side, a great public courtyard (corresponding to the al-Salam in Baghdad) that culminated in a polo maydan and racecourse. Another unit enclosed within a massive buttressed wall functioned as the private residence of the caliph and his women, containing royal apartments, caliphal mausolea, and a prison for important personages. Northedge also refers to some of the court ceremonies held in Samarra, including the caliph’s triumphal processions.

Ruggles describes the Madinat al-Zahra near Cordoba, founded in 936 and completed around 976, as an architectural frame for the Umayyad ruler ʿAbd al-Rahman III’s new role as caliph. This palatine city had only a short life; Ruggles concentrates on the fame it acquired after it was sacked in 1016. She analyzes poems that show how the ruined site had acquired legendary status as a memento of the glory of a bygone “golden age,” inspiring poets and travelers to contemplate the past. Nostalgia provoked by ruins was, of course, a topos, but Ruggles interprets the Madinat al-Zahra poems as more than mere topos, charged as they were by the particular historical context of Muslim Spain’s Christian reconquest. She shows that the palace’s memory was kept alive not only in literature but also in the architecture of many later Andalusian palaces that emulated it as a model.

The Madinat al-Zahra was largely inspired by Abbasid models, reinterpreted through the lens of Umayyad dynastic memories. Like Samarra, built to isolate the caliphal court and slave army from Baghdad, this suburban palace-city was built outside the capital Cordoba, with which it was
nevertheless intimately connected. Being close to each other, the two were linked together by ceremonial processions when foreign embassies would be conducted to the Umayyad caliph’s presence from Cordoba between two rows of slave soldiers. From the gate of Madinat al-Zahra to the caliph’s audience hall richly robed dignitaries stationed at regular intervals were once again mistaken for the caliph until the ambassadors finally encountered him, seated on the ground at the center of a sand-strewn courtyard, wearing coarse clothes, with a Qur’an and a sword in front of him. His pious humility echoed the Abbasid caliph’s sacred persona. According to al-Maqqari the Umayyad caliph, too, “was obliged to maintain a certain distance and not to mingle to an excessive degree with the people, nor to show himself in public”; his splendid seclusion paralleled that of the Fatimid and Abbasid caliphs.

The view-commanding royal quarters of Madinat al-Zahra’s uppermost terrace, fronted by large fishponds amidst formal gardens criss-crossed with water channels, have elsewhere been compared by Ruggles to the riverfront belvederes of Samarra and Lashkari Bazar. One of the royal reception halls featured a gold dome and a huge mercury-filled tank stirred to create the illusion that the hall was revolving, no doubt another example of a “dome of heaven” recalling those of Nero’s Domus Aurea and the Throne of Chosroes.

The legendary palaces and garden pavilions of the Abbasid caliphs, immortalized by the popular imagination of the Thousand and One Nights, had a far-reaching influence from the Umayyad court in the west to that of the Ghaznavids in the east. The audience halls, garden pavilions, majlises with T-shaped triple iwans, and the triple gates of the Samarran palaces described by Northedge would be reinterpreted in the ninth- and tenth-century palaces of Baghdad and in the courts of other contemporary dynasties. The T-plan Samarran majlis was only one of the building types that spread from the Abbasid court to Egypt, Syria, and Sicily. Originally imported to Samarra from Hira by al-Mutawakkil (847-61), it had a central royal iwan, flanked by two subsidiary halls and fronted by a tripartite portico with three doors, the one at the center wider and taller than those at the sides. Mas’udi says that the royal iwan represented the center of the army and that the two wings alluded to its right and left flank in battle formation. Tabbaa suggests that the cruciform audience halls and four- iwan plans of Abbasid palaces may similarly have corresponded to the caliph surrounded by his four groups of guards, a correspondence testifying to the intimate link between architectural forms and the structure of court ceremonies.

In addition to the brick or mud-brick palaces in Samarra described by Northedge, there was also a considerable Abbasid tradition of temporary architecture. Tha’alibi, for example, tells of a cool summer pavilion created for al-Mansur (754-75) made of wet canvas stretched over a dome-shaped wooden frame; “after that, the practice arose of using a suspended matting of woven reeds, and the use became general.” Ma’mudi also describes a domed wooden pavilion, covered in tent-like fashion with silk brocade, next to a fishpond of al-Mansur’s paradise al-Khulal palace in Baghdad, from which the caliphs used to gaze at the Tigris river. Tabari mentions a double-domed canvas-covered wooden pavilion built for Harun al-Rashid, which suggests that such temporary palatial structures were occasionally translated into more durable materials. Movable tent-like wooden pavilions, also referred to by the thirteenth-century Seljuq historian Ibn Bibi, would become particularly important in the semi-nomadic Mongol and post-Mongol courts where new tent-like pavilion types were invented.

Regional interpretations of Abbasid palatial building types appeared in Ifriqiya, Algeria, and Sicily during the reign of the Aghlabids (800-909), and in Egypt during the rule of the Tulunids (868-905), both of them dynasties founded by former Abbasid army officers. Ahmad ibn Tulun (868-84), who held onto his power using a large slave army based on the Abbasid model, built in his capital Fustat a palace and Friday mosque in the Samarran style, with a large hippodrome (maydan) for polo matches in between. The troops would gather on Fridays at the Ibn Tulun Mosque to which the ruler ceremonially rode from his palace in the manner of the Abbasid caliphs. A triple-arched triumphal palace gate facing the maydan was used during parades when Ibn Tulun rode alone on horseback under its middle arch with his army marching through the two smaller side arches. This recalls the triple-arched Abbasid gates and the tripartite layout of the T-plan majlises, whose structure also corresponded to the caliph and the two flanks of his army. Like its Abbasid models, the Tulunid gate was crowned by a second-floor audience hall whose windows provided a view of the maydan and the city.
Ahmad’s son Khumarawayh (884–96) enlarged the palace complex, creating there a garden featuring rare fruit trees whose trunks were coated with sheets of gilt copper, lead-lined channels with jets of water, and plants forming decorative patterns or inscriptions. In front of a royal hall known as the Golden House, where Khumarawayh had set up wooden statues of himself wearing a crown and surrounded by a female entourage, was a fifty-cubit-square lake filled with mercury, no doubt inspired by Abbasid precedents. There Khumarawayh used to take naps; to cure his insomnia, he floated on an air mattress tied to four silver columns, guarded by his loyal blue-eyed lion. Like their Abbasid counterparts the outlying gardens of the Tulunid palace featured belvedere pavilions providing a view of the city and the Nile.

The palace of the Fatimid caliphs (909–1171) in Cairo, founded in the second half of the tenth century, also reinterpreted Abbasid models that the Fatimids had first encountered when they conquered the Aghlabid territories in North Africa. Their earlier capital in Ifriqiyya, al-Mansuriyya, was a round royal city with a palace at its center built by the Fatimid caliph al-Mansur (946–53) on the model of the Round City of Baghdad (founded in the eighth century by his namesake al-Mansur), a potent symbol of caliphal authority. Like its successor in Cairo, this palace complex was a collection of separate structures, including one called al-Khavarnaq which was built in the middle of a large pool fed by many water channels.

Towering height was a distinguishing feature of the mountain-like Fatimid palace in Cairo whose high walls pierced by several gates screened the secluded caliphs from public view. It is described by the mid-eleventh-century traveler Nasir-i Khusraw as follows:

The sultan’s palace is in the middle of Cairo and is encompassed by an open space so that no building abuts it. Engineers who have measured it have found it to be the size of Mayyāfāreqīn. As the ground is open all around it, every night there are a thousand watchmen, five hundred mounted and five hundred on foot, who blow trumpets and beat drums at the time of evening prayer and then patrol until daybreak. Viewed from outside the city, the sultan’s palace looks like a mountain because of all the different buildings and the great height. From inside the city, however, one can see nothing at all because the walls are so high. They say that twelve thousand hired servants work in this palace, in addition to the women and slavegirls, whose number no one knows. It is said, nonetheless, that there are thirty thousand individuals in the palace, which consists of twelve buildings.40

Nasir-i Khusraw continues to describe the subterranean passages of the Cairene palace that joined together its separate buildings; one of them connected the harem to a suburban garden outside the city.41 Such underground passages were also typical in the Abbasid and Spanish Umayyad courts. In the Fatimid palace, where nobody except the caliph was allowed to ride, there were also several ramps from which the caliph could mount on his mule to elevated belvederes that we know existed in Abbasid and Aghlabid palaces as well.

The Cairene palace was the stage for the court ceremonies and rituals of the infallible imam of the Shi‘ī Isma‘ili community, venerated as a semi-divine descendant of the Prophet. It was composed of two palaces separated by a public maydan known as the Bayn al-Qasrayn (i.e., Between the Two Palaces). The greater Eastern Palace featured individually named separate halls, sometimes jointly referred to as “brilliant palaces” (al-qusūr al-zahirā) since they emanated the divine radiance of the Shi‘ī caliph. This recalls Winter’s reference to some ancient Near Eastern palaces as being filled with the same kind of “radiance” as the ruler whose kingship had “descended from heaven”; a similar concept informed the design of the Mughal imperial palaces discussed by Asher and myself. The Fatimid Eastern Palace contained the reception halls and residences of the caliph, his slave attendants, and his numerous harem guarded by eunuchs. Some were installed with automata, common in contemporary Islamic and Byzantine palaces; one of them featured statues of singing girls who bowed and stood up to greet the caliph as he sat on his throne.42 In addition to several royal belvederes surmounting the palace’s outer walls was a domed audience hall crowning its main entrance, the Golden Gate, where the Fatimid caliph could survey the public maydan below behind a grilled window (shubbāk).43 Primarily intended for recreation, the smaller Western Palace with garden pavilions that overlooked an orchard was connected to its companion by a subterranean passage. Like the Abbasid and Spanish Umayyad palaces, the Fatimid palace in Cairo also featured a collection of caliphal tombs in its sacred royal precincts.

In 1049 Nasir-i Khusraw attended a banquet there, one of many that the Fatimid caliph gave
on the two great Islamic holidays, in addition to his regular biweekly public audiences. He describes the Eastern Palace as being composed of twelve free-standing structures and a royal audience hall connected to the kitchens by a subterranean passageway:

There were twelve square structures, built one next to the other, each more dazzling than the last. Each measured one hundred cubits square, and one was a thing sixty cubits square with a dais placed the entire length of the building at a height of four ells, on three sides all of gold, with hunting and sporting scenes depicted thereon and also an inscription in marvelous calligraphy. All the carpets and pillows were of Byzantine brocade and buqalamun, each woven exactly to the measurements of its place. There was an indescribable latticework ballustrade of gold along the sides. Behind the dais and next to the wall were silver steps.44

The 60-cubit one must have been the Great Iwan (also called al-Aziz, the Glorious) built by the caliph al-Aziz in 980 for the public audiences the Fatimid caliphs held on Mondays and Thursdays. Its elevated throne (sidilat) crowned by a domed baldchin was closed on three sides; its fourth, open side overlooked the audience hall through a ceremonial grilled window (shubbâk) draped with a curtain, which during public audiences was lifted to reveal the ruler enthroned in majesty.45 Similar palaces of smaller dimension were built by the vassals of the Fatimids in North Africa and by the Normans in Sicily.46 The twelfth-century Norman palaces of Palermo, which preserve the memory of now lost Aghlabid and Fatimid prototypes, are the few extant examples of a once widespread early medieval palatine tradition that originated in the Abbasid court.47

Part 3 focuses on a third palatine paradigm, which emerged in the early eleventh century and culminated with the hegemony of the Great Seljuqs and their successors in Iran, Iraq, Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt. In it urban citadel-palaces proliferated. In a recent article Bacharach interprets this phenomenon as expressing the separation between the ruler and the ruled, not in terms of the "horizontal distance" that characterized the previous arrangement, but rather as a "vertical distance" that permitted a greater interaction between the two. He argues that citadels became the focus of government primarily because of the alien origins of the new military leaders and changes in military technique at the time of the Crusades. He notes that these rulers were forced to protect themselves in citadels from the urban mobs, but at the same time "sought to span the gap between themselves and the populace by sponsoring foundations that serviced the population."48

I would like to add that not only the Turkish and Kurdish rulers of the east (including the slave sultanes of Delhi) but also the Berber rulers of the Maghrib and Spain moved their palaces into urban citadels at a time when the Muslim world, splintered into numerous independent military states, was troubled by internal warfare and the external threat of Christian or Mongol conquerors. The new political configuration of the eleventh century is described by Ibn Khaldun:

When the character and appearance of the caliphate changed and royal and government authority took over, the religious functions lost to some degree their connection with [the powers in control], in as much as they did not belong among the titles and honors of royal authority. The Arabs later on lost all control of the government. Royal authority fell to Turkish and Berber nations.49

It was in this context that the sprawling extra-urban palatine complexes of the caliphs and their vassals gave way to the much smaller defensive urban citadel-palaces of modest principalities which no longer enjoyed the support of thousands of slave troops. This is recognized by Ibn Khaldun: "The ancient dynasties had many soldiers and a vast realm. . . . We live in a time when dynasties possess small armies which cannot mistake each other on the field of battle. Most of the soldiers of both parties together could nowadays be assembled in a hamlet or town."50 In the rapidly shrinking Byzantine world, modestly scaled citadel-palaces also replaced the monumental palatine complexes that had reflected late-antique and early Byzantine imperial ambitions.

The citadels of the Seljuq successor states, which often featured a palace complex with administrative and residential facilities, baths, barracks, and a prominent mosque, reflected a shared ethos despite regional variations. Their elevated tower pavilions and belvederes with grilled windows provided an outlet for the ruler’s commanding gaze. With the exception of the Rum Seljuq citadel in Konya, whose royal mosque was attached to dynastic tombs, the citadel-palaces of the Zangid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk rulers no longer contained mausolea. Following the example of the funerary madrasa built by the Zangid ruler
Nur al-Din in Damascus (1172), the new pattern that emerged in the post-Seljuq eastern Islamic world was the proliferation of domed mausolea attached to charitable public foundations, mostly madrasa and khanqah complexes, which were often lined up along a processional avenue linked to the citadel-palace. These public buildings not only served to glorify the military rulers and provide an income to their progeny, but also to legitimize them in the eyes of the public, the ulama, and the Sufi shaykhs. Their annexed mausolea departed from the traditional pattern set by the caliphal palaces which had enshrined a private collection of family tombs. That pattern was only perpetuated in North Africa and Spain (e.g., the Nasrid dynastic tombs inside the Alhambra and the Saadian necropolis adjoining the Badia Palace inside the Qasba of Marrakesh). 51

The Ayyubid citadel in Aleppo, the Mamluk citadel in Cairo, and the Rum Seljuq citadels of Anatolia, discussed in the papers of Tabbaa, Rabbat, and Redford respectively, were all built by dynasties steeped in the cultural heritage of the Great Seljuq sultanate whose legitimacy rested on the military support it gave to the orthodox Sunni Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. Until its sack by the Mongols in 1258 the caliphal capital Baghdad continued to play an undisputed role in providing cultural inspiration and religious legitimacy to the military rulers of the splintered Seljuq successor states in an age of “Sunni revival” that would increasingly turn to Sufism on the eve of the Mongol invasions. This pattern was perpetuated by the Mamluks who stationed a line of Abbasid caliphs in Cairo (1261-1517) to legitimate their rule. Even the Turkish slave sultanates of Delhi continued to seek investiture from the Cairene caliphs, demonstrating the vitality of the Abbasid legacy until it abruptly came to an end with the Ottomans terminated Mamluk rule in 1517.

Religious orthodoxy and the official homage paid to the Abbasid caliphs played a central role in shaping the architecture and ceremonial of the citadel-palaces built by the Seljuq successor states. The definitive split between the caliphate and the sultanate in this period brought about a radical separation of the religious and royal functions that were once united in the person of the early caliphs. This explains the unprecedented emphasis of the new military rulers (who had no religious claim to legitimacy other than the investiture they received from the Abbasid caliphs) on the ancient Near Eastern theme of royal justice. This was expressed by the creation of a new building type, the dār al-‘adl (palace of justice) whose origin is difficult to pinpoint. It may well have had Seljuq precedents in Iran and Iraq, but no archaeological evidence remains there to confirm such a hypothesis. Its earliest known example in Syria was built outside the Damascus citadel by Nur al-Din Zangi in the 1150s to provide a setting for the mazālīm court (antonym to ‘adl, justice) where the oppressed could_redress their grievances. The same practice was perpetuated by the Ayyubid rulers who frequented their dār al-‘adl at the foot of the Aleppo citadel, described by Tabbaa, twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays. The Mamluks inherited this institution from their Ayyubid masters. While the early Mamluk ruler Baybars I (1260-77) held his biweekly mazālīm sessions in a dār al-‘adl located just below the Cairene citadel, subsequently this function acquired a more elaborate ceremonial and a more monumental architectural setting (dealt with in Rabbat’s paper) when it was moved to the Great Iwan inside the citadel. 52

The mazālīm court was not a new institution, but the Seljuqs and their successors emphasized the systematic administration of justice by the ruler to an unprecedented degree by placing the dār al-‘adl in a highly visible public space outside the citadel walls. 53 Both ceremonially and architecturally this building expressed the growing accessibility and visibility of the new military rulers whose royal image differed from the religious persona of the caliphs, almost too sacred to be seen. According to the early thirteenth-century historian Ravandi, the Great Seljuq ruler Malik Shah (1072-92), for whom the Siyāsāt-nāma was written by his grand vizier Nizam al-Mulk, no longer secluded himself from the people by a curtain in the manner of the caliphs, but rather spoke face to face with his subjects. Tabbaa quotes Nizam al-Mulk’s discussion of the mazālīm court where the ruler is advised to hold such a court twice a week to hear without any intermediary the complaints of his subjects. 54 He interprets the Ayyubid dār al-‘adl beneath the Aleppo citadel as an outgrowth of this type of mirror-for-princes literature.

Tabbaa shows that the Aleppo citadel was linked to its urban setting through several functions. He interprets its tall minaret dominating the city’s skyline as a symbolic declaration of the triumph of Islam against the crusaders, affirming the role of the Ayyubids as the guardians of
orthodox Islam. The same interpretation can be extended to the prominent mosques in the citadels of Konya and Cairo discussed, respectively, by Redford and Rabbat. Tabbaa also observes that elements with royal associations derived from a prestigious past (e.g., four-iwan courtyard, tripartite throne-room façade, *shādirān* fountain with a muqarnas hood, and muqarnas portal) were recombined at the citadel palace in Aleppo to form a new type. This was an abbreviated version in miniature of the caliphal palaces of ninth-century Samarra and tenth-century Baghdad that had come to represent a “distant Golden Age.”

The fifteenth-century author Khalil al-Zahiri describes the citadel-palace in Cairo, which monumentalized its Ayyubid models, as follows:

This palace has no equal in area, splendor, magnificence, and height. Around it are walls, moats, towers, and a number of iron gates which make it impregnable. It would take a long time to give a detailed description of the palaces, rooms, halls, belvederes, galleries, courts, squares, stables, mosques, schools, markets, and baths that are found in the palace.

Rabbat’s paper deals neither with the whole Cairene citadel, nor with the ceremonial that governed its internal layout and its interaction with the city outside. Instead it focuses on a particularly famous building, al-Nasir’s Great Iwan, also known as the Dar al-Adl, which functioned as a stage that provided an “unobstructed view” of the sultan during his biweekly *mażālim* sessions, the review of troops, coronations, *iqṭā‘* distributions, and the reception of ambassadors. The openness of this columnar hall with a single wall at the back, which Rabbat interprets as reflecting the accessibility of the Mamluk ruler’s justice to all, recalls the many-pillared Chihil Sutun halls with porches open on all three sides, whose earliest known examples in Timurid palaces are mentioned by O’Kane. Such open, pillared halls with only one wall at the back may well have had a pre-Timurid Iranian origin; they continued to be widely used as public audience halls (*divān*) in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal palaces discussed in my paper.

Rabbat links the Great Iwan’s “basilical” plan, with its central aisle culminating in a green-tile-covered wooden dome supported on twelve columns, to Umayyad and early Abbasid public audience halls crowned by a *qubbat al-khādrī‘*. The green domes of this Mamluk audience hall and of the citadel’s neighboring mosque reveal that at least in these instances the term *qubbat al-khādrī‘* did indeed mean “green dome,” suggesting that perhaps its two meanings were not mutually exclusive. Rabbat speculates that the Great Iwan’s layout, unusual in Fatimid audience halls, may have represented a deliberate revival of forms associated with the *dār al-imāra*-cum-mosque complexes of the early caliphates. If so, the Great Iwan once again exemplifies the post-Seljuk nostalgia for a caliphal golden age, also shared by the Ayyubids and the Taifa kings of Spain who had idealized Madinat al-Zahra’ through poetry and architectural imitations that culminated with the Alhambra.

The Mamluk citadel-palace in Cairo, like the Alhambra, represented the culmination of the third paradigm. Its buildings did not invent new types, but monumentalized and reinterpreted existing ones either directly inherited from the Ayyubids or, as Rabbat argues, selectively revived from older models whose prestigious royal associations were used to bolster the exalted self-image of the Mamluk sultanate, the last bulwark of the long-lived Abbasid legacy.

Redford’s paper interprets the palaces of the Rum Seljuqs in Anatolia and the dissolution of their palatial imagery after this dynasty was defeated by the Mongols in 1243. In addition to the courtyard-centered citadel-palace type already encountered in the papers of Tabbaa and Rabbat, Redford identifies another prevalent type that existed side by side with citadels, the suburban palace featuring garden pavilions and kiosks which he links to later examples from Timurid and Safavid Iran. The Anatolian Seljuk suburban palaces whose view-commanding pavilions were often accompanied by tents foreshadowed Mongol-Ikhanid, Timurid, and Safavid semi-nomadic patterns addressed in the papers of Blair and O’Kane. Redford highlights the “Persianate aspirations” of the Rum Seljuqs whose self-image was inspired by the *Shāhānšāh* and medieval Persian mirror-for-princes literature. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition on the Konya city walls of *Shāhānšāh* inscriptions and Persianate reliefs with spoliated figural Roman sculptures exemplified the hybrid syncretism of the Rum Seljuqs who ruled in a recently conquered frontier land. Redford argues that the Anatolian palaces and their decorative programs had a predominantly Iranian Seljuq inspiration, even though no archaeological evidence remains in Iran.

Redford shows how the royal imagery once confined to the private setting of palaces began to
burst out during Alaeddin Keykubad’s reign (1219–37) into the public sphere, appearing on city walls, city gates, and public baths. This dissolution of the boundary between the private and public domains represents a curious reversal of the late-antique phenomenon of Tetrarchic palaces appropriating prestigious urban forms. Redford notes that the urban citadel-palace of the Blachernai in Constantinople and the walled suburban palaces that complemented it were not so different in conception from those encountered in the Rum Seljuq territories during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He also draws attention to the cross-cultural interchange between the neighboring Byzantine and Rum Seljuq courts, exemplified by a twelfth-century Persianate pavilion in the Byzantine palace of Constantinople, the Mouchroutas, which featured a muqarnas dome and figural tiles showing “the Emperor himself, seated on the floor in the manner of a Seljuq monarch.”

This recalls the use of Islamic building types, muqarnas vaults, and figural paintings side by side with Byzantine mosaics in the contemporary twelfth-century Norman palaces of Sicily, testifying to the relative fluidity of medieval cultural boundaries that would increasingly harden during the early-modern period.

Part 4 covers the palaces of the Mongols and their successors in the east which constitute a fourth paradigm characterized by the coexistence of two palatine types: urban citadel-palaces and suburban garden palaces. These two were, however, transformed in terms of scale, spatial organization, architectural vocabulary, decorative programs, and functions. The new paradigm, initiated by the Ilkhanids in the second half of the thirteenth century and elaborated by the Timurids, culminated in the early-modern imperial palaces of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals, all of whom shared a common nomadic imperial heritage. That heritage would engender distinctive dynastic palace idioms which synthesized Islamic, Turco-Mongol, and East Asian elements first seen in the Mongol palaces of Yuan China. The fourth palatine paradigm had no impact on the eastern Islamic lands which perpetuated older traditions that culminated in the Alhambra. As Oleg Grabar once put it, “The Alhambra stands at the end of a historical development and is, despite all its perfection, a formal dead end.” It would continue to provide a model for the later palaces of Spain and North Africa which largely remained cut off from new developments in the palatial architecture of the post-Mongol eastern Islamic world.

The Mongol sack of Baghdad had brought about a radical split in the Muslim world, separating the tradition-bound Arab-speaking realms of the Mamluk sultanate and the Maghrib from the Persianate Turco-Mongol sphere in the east, extending from Anatolia all the way to China. Noting this linguistic-cultural split Ibn Khaldun wrote:

When non-Arabs, such as the Daylam and, after them, the Saljuqs in the East and the Zanatah and Berbers in the West, became the rulers and obtained royal authority and control over the whole Muslim realm, the Arabic language suffered corruption. But when the Tatars and Mongols, who were not Muslims, became the rulers in the East, this element in favor of the Arabic language disappeared, and the Arabic language was absolutely doomed. No trace of it has remained in these Muslim provinces: the Iraq, Khurasan, the country of Fars [southern Persia], Eastern and Western India, Transoxania, the northern countries, and the Byzantine territory [Anatolia]. . . . The sedentary Arab dialect has largely remained in Egypt, Syria, Spain and the Maghrib.

While the memories of a glorious past continued to be evoked in the Arab lands, in the post-Mongol eastern Islamic world new cultural orientations would forever transform palatial architecture. If Cairo, referred to by Ibn Khaldun as “the mother of the world, the great center (iwan) of Islam, and the mainspring of the sciences and the crafts,” was the dominant cultural center of the fourteenth-century Arab world, it was Tabriz (followed in the fifteenth century by Samarqand and Herat) that assumed that function in the east. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries these cities, too, would be eclipsed by the new cultural capitals of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals (Istanbul, Isfahan, Agra, and Delhi) where distinctive architectural idioms clearly demarcating the territorial boundaries of each empire were created.

Unlike the Seljuq successor states the Mongols and their successors no longer sought religious sanction from the Abbasid caliphs to legitimize their rule. The Ilkhanids derived legitimacy through their noble descent from Chinghiz Khan and their adherence to the Chingizid yâstâ, a body of dynastic laws and customs. After converting to Islam, they sought to balance secular dynastic tradition (‘urf) with Islamic law (sharī‘a), a balance that each of the Mongol successor states
would redefine according to its own theory of dynastic legitimation. The relative sense of unity that had prevailed in the Muslim world since the “Sunni revival” of the eleventh century was followed during Mongol hegemony by the rising fortunes of Sufism that temporarily bridged the gap between Sunnism and Shi‘ism from the late thirteenth through the fifteenth century. This unity would be shattered in the sixteenth century with the adoption of Twelver Shi‘ism as the Safavid state religion, creating an early-modern pattern of competing ideologies not so different from the rivalry of the three tenth-century caliphates.

The two dominant post-Mongol palatine types, urban citadel-palaces and suburban garden palaces, were imperial in scale unlike their relatively small predecessors. They embodied a new self-confidence, different from the backward-looking revivalism of the third paradigm. Although references to the Islamic and pre-Islamic past continued to be made, these were now balanced with bold departures from inherited models. What largely disappeared from the post-Mongol palaces of the east was the fabulous aura of the caliphal palaces which the shrunken medieval Muslim states had sought to emulate with reduced means “like a cat that by blowing itself up imitates the lion.” The new palaces no longer thrived on bewildering effects, such as mercury-filled pools and automata. In them the symbolic language of tents in vast garden enclosures with only a few architectural accents took on an unprecedented prominence reflecting the ethos of imperial nomads.

The new ceremonial practices introduced under Ilkhanid rule included the qūrtilāy (an assembly of nomadic tribes gathered to elect or acclaim the new ruler in tents where great feasts took place) and the greater participation of royal women in public celebrations. Far from remaining secluded, the new semi-nomadic rulers hosted lavish banquets for the tribal chiefs of their feudal clan confederations that no longer relied on centralized slave troops. Feasting, already important in the Seljuk period when Nizam al-Mulk had regarded it as indispensable for the ruler to keep an open table for tribal followers, continued to be emphasized by the Ilkhanids, Timurids, and Safavids as part of their tribal-nomadic legacy. This shared legacy would, however, be transformed in the Ottoman and Mughal courts where festive royal banquets with freely circulated wine gave way to different ceremonies.

Blair’s paper on Ilkhanid palaces starts with a discussion of the court’s annual migrations between winter and summer camps in giant tent cities. In an attempt to delineate what a “typical Ilkhanid palace” might have looked like, Blair focuses on the Takhti Sulayman (Throne of Solomon) palace, the only partially excavated palace from that period. Built by Abaqa in the 1270s, before the Ilkhanids had converted to Islam, it occupied the site of an ancient sanctuary where the “Sasanian emperors were crowned” and incorporated forms and royal myths from Iran’s pre-Islamic and Islamic past. Accompanied by narrative paintings, its Persian inscriptions from the Shāhnāma, recalling the ones quoted on the Rum Seljuk city walls, legitimized the present “through identification with the past.” The Shāhnāma would continue to inspire the royal imagination of the post-Mongol dynasties, founded by Turkish-speaking rulers who adopted Persian as their court language, just as the Turkic Ghaznavids and Seljuqs had done before them.

Blair hypothesizes that the Takhti Sulayman’s layout, composed around a spacious four-iwan court containing an artificial pond in the middle, was similar to that of other Ilkhanid palaces such as the one in Sultaniyya, known primarily from texts. Its function as a “hunting lodge” complemented by its use as an encampment site for the Mongol hordes recalls the suburban Anatolian Seljuk lakeside palaces described by Redford whose architecture was supplemented by tents when the assembled armies would encamp there. Both Blair and O’Kane refer to another extra-urban Ilkhanid royal complex, Ghazan’s summer palace in Ujan at Azerbaijan where the audience hall was a golden tent pitched at the center of a walled chahar bagh garden featuring pavilions, towers, and a bath. Portable domical tents with a wooden skeleton were also used in the Mongol imperial palaces of Shangdu and Dadu, built for Khubilai Khan in the early thirteenth century. The domed tent of the Mongol ruler Göyük (1246–49) “resembled the green cupola [i.e., dome of heaven] and a model of the highest vault, where the designs from the abundance of embroidery and the beauty of the colouring appeared as a sky with the lights of the stars shining as lanterns.” Similarly the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan Khan’s imperial tent, which took 200 men 20 days to erect, had a dome decorated with shiny stars and colored jewels resembling the celestial dome. These examples show that “domes of heaven” continued to be interpreted as cosmological metaphors of the heavens and paradise.
The legacy of Mongol and Timurid imperial tents discussed by Blair and O’Kane would be perpetuated in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal courts. The Timurid historian Khwandamir, for example, describes an elaborate tent of the Mughal emperor Humayun whose structure also alluded to the heavens. It had “twelve compartments corresponding to the Signs of the Zodiac” and a large central tent resembling “the empyrian heaven which covers the lower heavens” that enclosed the twelve smaller tents surrounding it on all sides. This description recalls the twelve pavilions or sarayeha that surrounded the monumental royal iwan of the Sultaniyah palace whose heavenly associations were highlighted in the sources, a layout also reminiscent of the twelve free-standing halls Nasir-i Khusraw saw at the Fatimid palace. The preoccupation with tents in the post-Mongol period created an intimate dialogue between permanent and impermanent palatial structures, generating new pavilion types and spatial schemes that translated the organizational principles of imperial encampments into more lasting materials.

O’Kane’s paper correlates palace design in the Iranian world during the Ilkhaniid, Timurid, and Safavid periods with the rhythms of pastoral nomadism that regulated court life well into the twentieth century. He highlights the nomadic legacy of these Persian courts that “set them apart from their Mamluk, Ottoman, and Mughal contemporaries” who built their palaces in urban citadels. By contrast the semi-nomadic rulers of the Iranian world, who regarded life in citadels to be “claustrophobic,” preferred to move about in tent encampments, temporarily settling in suburban gardens with pavilions. O’Kane describes the elaborate tents used in court ceremonies, their royal symbolism, paradiplomatic associations, and the great banquets they housed, together with the few architectural remains of Timurid palaces. In the last part of his paper he interprets the Safavid royal palace in Isfahan as a mixture of nomadic and urban ideals that brought together the Timurid suburban garden ensembles “within a tighter framework.” He links the absence of fortified walls in this palace and the court ceremonies enacted there, particularly the shah’s banquet receptions inside garden pavilions, with the Timurid heritage.

O’Kane’s paper brings us into the early-modern period covered by the last three papers on the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal courts. The seminomadic Safavid pattern of mobility he discusses was paralleled by the Mughal court’s movements among several capitals, in addition to seasonal visits to royal garden encampments in Kashmir. This mobility was reflected in the creation of several Safavid and Mughal capitals, each furnished with its own palace. Unlike the Ottomans, these two dynasties did not seek to establish a single fixed capital where all rulers would concentrate their cumulative architectural patronage and where all of them would eventually be buried. In Istanbul the Ottomans would merge Turco-Mongol, classical Islamic, and Roman-Byzantine imperial traditions, creating a sedentary empire that replaced tribal ties with an impersonal centralized bureaucracy and an army dominated by household slaves. The Ottoman sultans would in many ways revive the secluded persona of the caliphs by mysteriously appearing behind the grilled ceremonial windows (shubbâkh), as described in my paper.

The persistence of the citadel-palace type in the Ottoman and Mughal capitals can be explained by the survival of earlier traditions in each region. The imperial scale of these citadel-palaces reflected the expanded size of the extended royal households they supported. They accommodated a series of spacious courtyards with official and residential functions, in addition to extensive outlying royal gardens whose waterworks and pavilions re-created the atmosphere of a suburban landscape inside the citadel walls. They were supplemented by several neighboring suburban garden palaces that could be visited for brief periods for amusement and hunting.

In the Ottoman and Mughal citadel-palaces traditional iwan, T-plan majlis, and multi-story qaṣras or qītā as gave way to predominantly single-story structures of light construction reminiscent of tent forms. These palatial complexes represented a post-Timurid synthesis with their sprawling layout guided by the organization of imperial tent encampments. They appropriated large spaces, making their point not through dominating verticality, but through their horizontal expanse and numerous buildings that reflected a complex institutional organization maintained by a large staff. Axially planned symmetrical four-iwan courts so prevalent in the condensed format of medieval citadel-palaces were now replaced with a looser arrangement of free-standing or attached modular buildings organized around a succession of courtyards that culminated in royal gardens with pavilions. The monumental mosques
that once had dominated the skyline of medieval citadel-palaces built in the age of the “Sunni revival” also vanished, together with the ceremonial homage paid to the now extinct Abbasid caliphate, but the administration of royal justice continued to play a central role in the court ceremonial of the early-modern empires. The palace precincts which featured small private chapels were often connected to their urban setting by processional avenues punctuated with dynastic monuments.

The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal palaces continued to allude to pre-Mongol palatine traditions, both Islamic and pre-Islamic. The Safavids and Qajars not only elaborated the Shāhnāma’s image of kingship, but also ceremonially visited such ancient ruins as Persepolis (popularly known as the Throne of Solomon or Throne of Jamshid) as the Buyids had done before them.39 Displaying spolia from Persepolis at the gate of the Isfahān palace was only one of the ways in which the Safavid rulers expressed their connection to the pre-Islamic Persian royal tradition, also reflected in their use of the title “shah” (which the Ottomans appropriated after defeating the Safavids in 1514).

Pre-Islamic traditions of kingship also provided inspiration for the Mughal and Ottoman courts. Just as the Mughal emperor Humayun imitated the architecture and ceremonial of Bahram Gur’s heavenly Hafiz Paykar palace in his seven-domed palace at Dinpanah in Delhi, so ancient Near Eastern and Hindu concepts of divinely illuminated kingship were used to bolster the semi-divine royal image of the Mughal emperors Asher and I discuss. The Ottoman uses of the past were not limited to the Byzantine imperial heritage, but also included the ancient Near East. Süleyman I, for example, promoted his image as the “second Solomon” and had painters of miniatures record his visit to the famous Sasanian castle of Qasr-i Shirin while he was on a military campaign in Iraq. His painters also depicted Süleyman drinking wine from the Iranian king Jamshīd’s magic ruby cup that reflected the whole world, a symbol of universal rule presented to the sultan on the eve of a campaign directed against the Safavids.41 A similar preoccupation with Solomon and Jamshīd in the Qajar and Mughal courts emerges from Soucek’s paper, which shows how legends about the two were often inextricably interwoven.

Kleiss’s paper on Safavid palaces argues that Safavid pavilion types exhibited a remarkable continuity with those of pre-Islamic Iran, a continuity he traces from the Achaemenid and Sasanian periods well into Qajar times. He describes different Safavid palatine structures including pavilions attached to urban royal palaces, countryside villas, royal caravansaries with four-iwan courts lined up along the road between Isfahān and the Caspian Sea and free-standing pavilions on the same route serving as way stations around which tents would be pitched. Kleiss also discusses the building materials, vaulting techniques, and decoration of these Safavid pavilions.

Asher’s paper analyzes how elements with royal associations manifested themselves in the sub-imperial palaces of Mughal India. Noting that only one-fourth of the Mughal empire’s subjects were Muslim, Asher points out that maintaining imperial authority in the hinterlands required a careful balancing of fluctuating relations between the ruler and the nobles who governed the provinces. Like their imperial models the sub-imperial palaces, therefore, played an important role in the “flow of Mughal power as well as the execution of justice.” The governor’s and prince’s palaces analyzed by Asher exhibited differing combinations of local and imperial motifs to reflect the relative status and political aspirations of their patrons.

My paper compares three imperial palaces, the Topkapi in Istanbul, the Safavid palace in Isfahān, and the Mughal Red Fort in Delhi, to highlight the different ways in which their architecture and ceremonial framed the gaze in representing the monarch’s official public image. The relative visibility and invisibility of the monarch had informed palace design from ancient times onward. Winter writes, “traditions of visibility and sight-lines, both of and by the ruler, can become significant indicators of cultural and national attitudes toward authority and the person of the ruler.” From the urban palace-cum-mosque complexes where the accessible Umayyad caliphs made regular public appearances punctuated by the five daily prayers; the sprawling palatine complexes of the Abbasids, Fatimids, and Spanish Umayyads where the sacred caliphs remained in studied seclusion; and the citadel-palaces of the Seljuk successor states that embodied the growing accessibility of the just ruler in his dār al-‘adl, to the palaces of the Ilkhanids and Timurids where tribal followers were entertained by the ruler in banquets, the palace paradigms we have encountered thus far reflected differing attitudes toward the ruler’s visibility. So did the three
palaces compared in my paper whose ways of staging the monarch’s public appearances were rooted in different concepts of absolute monarchy and theories of dynastic legitimacy. These three palaces were composed of similar units, but their syntactic combination and ceremonial articulation differed considerably. My paper accentuates these contextual differences that come into clearer focus through a synchronic comparative analysis.

As Winter warns the reader at the very beginning of the volume the official rhetoric of the early-modern palaces still remained largely confined to “royal voices,” often concealing the dialectical interaction between the ideal monarchical order portrayed in ceremonies and actual practice. The official images of kingship constructed in these palaces would remain effective well into the eighteenth century when new palatine paradigms, increasingly influenced by European models, were formulated to accommodate changing customs and conceptions of the state just before the emergence of modern nation states.
Notes

1. In addition to the papers presented at the symposium, this volume includes a new contribution by Scott Redford who was unable to attend the meeting.

2. For the early-medieval bias in the field, see Oleg Grabar, "Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art," Muqarnas 1 (1983): 1-14. He writes: "We have a vision of Islamic art in which the earliest monuments create the norms by which the whole artistic span is defined" (p. 8).


4. The first three paradigms have recently been outlined in Jere L. Bacharach, "Administrative Complexes, Palaces, and Citadels: Changes in the Loci of Medieval Muslim Rule," in The Ottoman City and Its Parts, ed. I. A. Bierman, R. A. Abou-El-Haj, and D. Preziosi (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1991), 111-28. To these I added a fourth paradigm while I was organizing the symposium.

5. He also writes, "Gardens and irrigation are the results of sedentary culture. Orange trees, lime trees, cypress, and similar plants having no edible fruits and being of no use are the ultimate in sedentary culture, since they are planted in gardens only for the sake of their appearance, and they are planted only after the ways of luxury have become diversified," Ibn Khaldu'n, The Muqaddimah, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols. (New York, N.Y., and Princeton, N.J., 1980), 2:295; 1:339.


12. Mas'îdî, Les prairies d'or, 5:74. The same pattern was followed by the Umayyad caliph Sulayman, Les prairies d'or, 5:398-99.


17. Rusûm Đar al-Khilâfah, 64-69.

18. One such gilded window grille (shubbâk), originally installed in the đar al-khilâfa of Baghdad, behind which the caliphs sat in state, was sent together with other captured caliphal insignia to the Fâtimid caliph in Egypt by the amir al-Basâsiri, who in 1055-56 had deposed the Abbasid caliph al-Qâ'im bi-Allah; it was reinstalled at the Fâtimid grand vizier's palace in Cairo; see Ghada Hijjawi Qaddumi, "A Medieval Islamic Book of Gifts and Treasures: Translation, Annotation, and Commentary on the Kitâb al-Hadâya wa al-Tuhaf," Ph.D.

20. According to al-Šābī, the caliphal palace in Baghdad, which was estimated to be a city as large as Shīrāz, "contained, among other things, farms and farmers, private livestock and four hundred baths for its inhabitants and retainers." He adds that its population in al-Mukaffa's reign (902–8) included 20,000 domestic servants (dāriyyah ghillān), and 10,000 black and Slav servants; in al-Mu'tadī's reign (908–32) it had 11,000 black and Slav servants, thousands of chamber servants (huwrī ghillān) in addition to 4,000 free and slave girls; see Hilāl al-Šābī, Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfah, 13–14.

21. The Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs held private majlis with wine and music where they would undress before close attendants and boon companions behind a curtain, following a custom initiated by the Sasanian monarchs; see al-Jāḥīz, Le livre de la Couronne, trans. Charles Pellat (Paris, 1954). These private audiences should not be confused with their more formal public counterparts.

22. Fikret Yegûl writes, "The idea harks back, also, to the Kaiserpalast, or the imperial hall, of the Roman bath-gymnasium complexes in which the ruling emperor (not in person but in image) was honored in a central apse, at the end of the royal axis," Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1992), 348–49. For Roman-Byzantine baths in Antioch and Syria, see Baths and Bathing, 324–39.


27. At the Balkuwara palace (849–59) in Samarra, each court was built slightly higher than the preceding one, until one reached the central throne room on the highest platform which commanded an unhindered view of the whole palace complex, the Tigris, and the distant irrigated landscape extending along the river's opposite shore.

28. Maṣūdī, Les prairies d'or, 6:290. See also Sheila Blair’s paper in this volume.

29. The palaces in the Lakhmid capital Hira remained an example of vanitas vanitatum as late as the tenth century when they inspired the Abbasid poet al-Sharīf al-Radi to compose two elegies; see Shahid, "al-Hira," 3:463. Similarly a song-poem the Abbasid musician al-Mawṣili recited to the caliph al-Mu'tasim during the inauguration of his palace in Samarra began with a "romantic remembrance of the old dwelling places and how their vestiges were effaced"; Qaddumi, "A Medieval Islamic Book of Gifts and Treasures," 136. The ninth-century Abbasid court poet al-Buhtūrī also composed nostalgic poems lamenting the ruins of the Iwan-i Kārā and of al-Mutawakkil's Jaffari palace, demolished by the caliph's successor in 861; see al-Buhtūrī, Diwan, trans. A. Wormhoudt (Oskaloosa, Iowa, 1975), 25–27, 36–38. Much later, when the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II toured the ruins of the Byzantine Great Palace and the neighboring Hagia Sophia after having conquered Constantinople in 1453, the dilapidated state of these monuments allegedly led him to muse on the transitoriness of worldly power; see Gülru Necipoğlu, Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1991), 3. A similar reaction was provoked by the ruins of Hadrian's villa in Pope Pius II, whose memoirs record his visit to that site in 1461; Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope: The Commentaries of Pius II, trans. F. A. Gragg (New York, 1959), 193. I owe the last reference to John Pinto.


32. D. Fairchild Ruggles, "The Mirador in Abbasid


34. Maṣūdi’s description is translated and interpreted in Hazem al-Sayyed, “The Development of the Cairene Qaṣa’.” Annales islamologiques 23 (1987): 31–53: “And al-Mutawakkil originated in his days a construction that people had not known. And it is known as the biṭrī with two sleeves and porticoes (ṣumān wa ṣawwāq). . . . the portico had in it the seat (mijlis) of the king which is the chest (ṣadr) with the two sleeves (ṣumān) to the left and right. And in the two bayt that are the pair of sleeves would be his close attendants (ḥawāś), and in the right of the two of them is the clothing closet (ḥaṣānat al-kiswa) and in the left what is needed of drink. And the space of the portico is taken up/permeated by the chest (ṣadr) and the two sleeves, and the three doors are over the portico. And this construction was called to this day “the biṭrī with two sleeves” in reference to al-Hīrā. And the people followed al-Mutawakkil’s lead in this and it became famous to this end.”


36. The geographer al-Bakri (1068) describes the Aghlabid irrigation works and gardens in the suburbs of Kairouan, one of which featured a circular water tank with an octagonal tower in the middle, crowned by a belvedere pavilion with four doors; al-Bakrī, Description de l’afric septentrionale, trans. M. C. de Slane (Paris, 1965), 59–60. This recalls a similar belvedere tower built in early-tenth-century Baghdad, the Qubbat al-Himar (Dome of the Ass), referred to by Tabbaa in this volume, which was surmounted by a small domed pavilion that the Abbasid caliph could ascend on his mule from a spiral ramp to enjoy the view of the surrounding landscape.


38. In a building called a dār al-imāra, built adjacent to the Ibn Tulun Mosque’s maqṣāra, Ahmad used to change his garments, rest, and perform the ritual ablutions before presiding over the Friday prayer. This no longer extant structure must have resembled the brick royal annex with a four-iwan court and ablution halls discovered adjacent to the qibla wall of the ninth-century mosque of Abu Dulaf at Samarra, similarly designed for the Abbasid caliph’s use when he went to pray in his mosque. The latter is described in Creswell and Allan, A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture, 370–71.


43. Nasir-i Khusraw says the gate’s vestibule had platforms for the ministers and the grand vizier where they presumably held public audiences; Thackston, Nāṣir-e Khosrow’s Book, 46.


47. Composed of several interconnected tower pavilions, the multi-storied Norman royal palace in Palermo was surrounded by a belt of suburban
gardens called Terrestrial Paradise (il Genoardo, al-jannat al-‘ard). These gardens once featured villas and domed pavilions in the midst of water-tanks, criss-crossed by channels with jets of water, among which only La Zisa (al-‘aḍār, the Glorious), La Cuba (al-qubba, the Dome), and La Cubola (the Cupola) have survived, see Giuseppe Bellafio, Architettura in Sicilia nella età islamica e normanna (827–1194) (Palermo, 1990); G. Bellafio, La Zisa di Palermo (Palermo, 1978); Guiseppe Caronia, La Zisa di Palermo (Rome, 1987); G. Caronia and V. Noto, La Cuba di Palermo (Palermo, 1988); Ursula Staacke, Un Palazzo normanno a Palermo: La Zisa (Palermo, 1991).


53. In addition to giving public audiences on Mondays and Thursdays like the Abbasids, the Fatimid caliphs held mażālim sessions every evening at the sakifa of their palace in Cairo; see Sanders "Marāṣim," 6:518-20. Although the Abbasid caliphs seldom took charge of the mażālim court—they usually delegated that task to their viziers and watched the proceedings behind a curtained window—there seem to have been some exceptions. For example, al-Muhtadi (869–70) had built in Samarra "a great domed hall with four portals" which he called qubbat al-mażālim (dome of complaints) where "he sat and heard the complaints of his subjects, both high-born and low," Mas‘ūdī, Les prairies d’or, 8:2, and Mas‘ūdī, Meadows of Gold, 299. See also Nielsen, "Mażālim," 6:933–34; and A. K. S. Lambton, "Maţkama," EI2 (Leiden, 1991), 6:11-14.


55. The audience iwan in Aleppo with its muqarnas hood over a shādirwān placed at the back wall recalls a description of the Buyid ruler Samsam al-Dawla’s (983–98) throne room in Baghdad, where he sat on an elevated throne (ṣīdībā) under which ran a stream of water in a lead-plated channel; Ḥīlāl al-‘Ṣābi‘, Rusūm Dār al-Ḵiṭāfah, 20.


58. The sixteenth-century public audience hall at the Topkapi Palace was an Ottoman version of such an open, pillared hall; its form, too, is described in the sources as reflecting the free access to sultanic justice; see Necipoğlu, Architecture, Ceremonial and Power, 79–84.


60. The mid-thirteenth-century Mongol imperial palace in Karakurum, for example, was the creation of separate teams of Cathayan and Muslim builders who were asked to construct pavilions in their own respective styles and decorative modes; see Juwaynī, The History of the World Conquerors, trans. J. A. Boyle, 2 vols. (Manchester, Eng., 1958), 1:236–39; and Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, Chinese Imperial City Planning (Honolulu, 1990), 148–50. Such a deliberate mixture of styles finds a parallel in the construction of variegated garden pavilions at Samarqand to commemorate Timur’s victories over different kingdoms whose builders and artisans were transported there, and in the grouping of garden pavilions built in the Byzantine, Timurid-Turkmen, and Ottoman modes at the fifteenth-century Topkapi Palace; see Ahmad Ibn ‘Arabshāh, Tamrelane or Timur the Great Amir, trans. J. H. Sanders (London, 1936), 309–10, and Necipoğlu, Architecture, Ceremonial and Power, 210–17, 244–45, 249–50.


64. The verse about the cat and lion is cited with
reference to the caliphal ambitions of the Taifa kings of Spain in Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:469.


66. The function of Takht-i Sulayman as an encampment site was proposed by Roya Marefat in a paper she presented at the MESA meetings in 1991.


70. On one occasion the Safavid ruler Tahmasp I invited the exiled Mughal emperor Humayun in 1543–44 on a hunting expedition to Persepolis which lasted several days; Jauhar, *The Tezkereh al Vakīāl or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humāyūn*, trans. C. Stewart (New York, 1969), 66–68.

PART 1

PALACES OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND THE LATE-ANTIQUE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD
“SEAT OF KINGSHIP”: "A WONDER TO BEHOLD":
THE PALACE AS CONSTRUCT IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST
BY IRENE J. WINTER

By folk definition, the palace is where the ruler resides. In the successive kingdoms of ancient Mesopotamia, however—Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian—the palace was the seat of many activities: administrative, bureaucratic, industrial, and ceremonial as well as residential. In brief, it was an "institution," not just a "residence"; part of the state apparatus, not merely a container of state apartments.

The word for palace in Sumerian and Akkadian, the languages of ancient Mesopotamia, is composed of the Sumerian sign for "house" followed by the adjective "large, great" (é-gal). The Akkadian borrowing is not a literal translation (where Akkadian "house" = lûtu and "large" = rabû), but rather is formed from the Sumerian (ekallû), emphasizing the composite term as its own cognitive category. At base, the underlying adjective denotes scale, but may also be seen to reflect elevated (enlarged) status and function, such that a more accurate translation might be "the Great House," as opposed to merely "the big house." 1

In a Mesopotamian gloss, preserved in the year-name of an Old Babylonian ruler of the eighteenth century B.C. and written in Sumerian, a palace the king has just constructed for his highest administrative official is referred to as worthy of being "the seat of his own kingship" (ki-tuš nam-lugal-la-na), while a slightly earlier hymn in Sumerian speaks in the voice of a ruler, who describes how the foundations of his rule were made strong "in the palace of kingship, in my pure, good seat" (é-gal-nam-lugal-la ki-tuš-kû-du10 ga-gâ). These two references imply far more extended functions for a royal palace than merely the royal residence; the use of the abstract noun, "kingship," suggests that the palace is the center from which rule is exercised and in which the state is run.

I hope to demonstrate here that issues of morphology and decorative program are tied to this extended function. Were the collection of essays in this volume and the conference it preserves devoted to the palace in the ancient Near East, contributors would each be taking a particular region, period, function, or form—as has been done in the Islamic contributions that follow. Instead, I will attempt to cover a comparable subfield within a single paper. The service an overview of the ancient Near East can provide for Islamicists, whose areas of interest coincide in large measure with the major geographical units of the ancient Near East, is to offer a relatively broad survey of trends and a relatively detailed bibliography (see Appendix). This will permit a perspective on continuity and change across historical, cultural, and religious divides, and also the possibility of pursuing particular aspects through further reading. The highlighting of selected examples and aspects of ancient Near Eastern palaces will lay the foundations for inquiry into whether or not there are areas of significant overlap in the pre-Islamic and Islamic Near East, and I hope stimulate others to seek further continuities and observe meaningful changes as particular interests arise.

Regional divisions of the ancient Near East were no less distinctive in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural character than those in later, Islamic periods. The multiple functions of a Mesopotamian palace are thus not necessarily characteristic of royal residences in the neighboring city-states of northern Syria and southeast Anatolia, even though they were also referred to as ekallû. These "palaces" were considerably smaller in scale than their Assyrian and Babylonian counterparts, had their own characteristic forms, and do seem to have been simply residences. In an interesting turn-around, when the Assyrian rulers of the first millennium B.C. adopted and adapted that Western form, they did not also call it a palace—presumably on the principle that you cannot call two different things by the same name—and so coined a special term, bit-ilâni (on which, see below), in order to distinguish it from their own larger complexes. Wherever possible, I shall refer to these regional differences, particularly with respect to Anatolia and Syria-Palestine; but for purposes of time and space will leave out significant aspects of ancient Egypt, on the one hand, and ancient Iran, on the other. Throughout, I shall concentrate mainly on the Mesopotamian sequence—the most complete and perhaps also
the most developed we have for the ancient Near East.

In selected examples of palaces from the Uruk period to the Neo-Babylonian (from ca. 4000 to ca. 500 B.C.), focus will be on the three aspects referred to above: form and space, including technology; decorative program; and function. At the same time, the reader is referred to several recent specialized studies that present far more detailed descriptions, analyses, and illustrations than are possible here.\(^5\)

As is the case for much of the pre-modern Islamic world, the direct information we have about the ancient Near Eastern palace comes largely from often incomplete archaeological remains, amplified by textual reference. Unlike Islam, however, there is no living tradition—hence no contemporary practitioners or constructions to aid in interpretation or reconstruction. Our popular impressions of the pre-Islamic palace come from biblical references, on the one hand (as, for example, the description of Solomon’s palace in Jerusalem that follows the account of his temple, I Kings 7:1–12), and from British watercolor reconstructions of Assyrian palaces at Nimrud and Nineveh following excavations in the mid-nineteenth century, on the other.

In the latter, we see splendid, multi-storied structures, elaborately decorated. Because the ground plans and ground-floor sculptures were based upon excavated remains, they are generally reliable; however the rest of the elevation is largely invention: oftentimes a hodge-podge copied from other known ruins, such as Persepolis in Iran.\(^6\) It is also striking when one compares the restoration drawings of Nimrud and Nineveh, how very much they resemble the drawings done for the restoration of the façade of Buckingham Palace in the 1820s! One is forced to conclude that the draftsmen responsible for the Assyrian watercolors were themselves “(re-)constructing” palaces according to their own contemporary desires and imagination—in particular an imagination that saw the Assyrian “empire” in the mirror of the then contemporary British empire.

The account of Solomon’s palace does contain a good deal of useful information: from his lavish use of cedar in construction (7:3), to the presence of three rows of windows, suggesting multi-story façades (7:4), the relationship between portico, where the king sits in judgment, and inner courtyard (7:7), and the separate residence for his wife, pharaoh’s daughter (7:8).

This information has not received much attention, largely because, as is also the case with Islamic research, scholars have concentrated mainly on religious areas and buildings. Yet, not only for the Solomonic period but throughout the ancient Near Eastern sequence, to establish a new state, or capital, both a temple to the primary deity and a palace had to be constructed.

The Uruk Period (ca. 4000–3000 B.C.), in which the early stages of a complex social hierarchy and large-scale urbanization have been observed, is a logical starting point for examining the Mesopotamian palace.\(^7\) However, at the type-site of Uruk/Warka on the lower Euphrates, although archaeologists have recovered a large complex of buildings identified as temples, with characteristic tripartite plan, bent axis approach in the cela, altar, and podium,\(^8\) nothing clearly recognizable as a palace has yet been discovered. One anomalous structure has been excavated in the sacred (Eanna) precinct, levels V–IVa; known as building 11 or “Palace E,” it is square in plan, with a large central courtyard surrounded by banks of rooms (resembling more than anything the later Islamic four-iwan building type with very shallow iwans; see fig. 1).\(^9\) The plan is clearly distinct from that of a temple, so the building has been suggested as a possible palace. The problem is that we have no corroborating textual evidence for the building, nor even for the existence in the early texts of a title that clearly designates a ruler; so the building could well house “administrative” activities and still be related to the religious complex.\(^10\) How the Mesopotamian state and a designated ruler emerged is far too complex to discuss here, although most scholars agree that some sort of hierarchical organization in governance must have been operative in the Uruk period. At the same time, since archaeological work at the site of Warka has concentrated on the sacred quarter, it is certainly possible that a palace exists in unexcavated areas. Only further fieldwork can help to determine whether we are faced with an accidental absence in the archaeological record, or a meaningful absence in the historical record.\(^11\)

The first buildings to be clearly identified as palaces date from the third phase of the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 2600–2430 B.C.), and coincide with the earliest textual evidence for titles denoting rule: Sumerian lugal, “king,” and ensi, “steward” or “governor,” a regional title equivalent to king in the hierarchy of governance. The best (and earliest) archaeological evidence comes
from Kish, the legendary city where kingship as an institution is said to have "descended from heaven." Although there seems to be a great deal of variation in overall plan, the two buildings designated as palaces contain a large number of rooms of differing size and shape, suggesting many functions, and all seem to share what is later a defining characteristic of palaces in Mesopotamia—a large central courtyard. Since this is a period in which autonomous city-states were distributed across the Mesopotamian alluvium, it is to be anticipated that each central city would have had its own palace, however incomplete the present evidence.

In the succeeding, Akkadian period (ca. 2334–2154 B.C.), political development within the period marks a significant change toward a centralized nation-state, incorporating formerly autonomous city-states within a single polity under the hegemony of Agade. Unfortunately, the capital of Agade has not been definitively identified or excavated. A number of other sites have produced large buildings dated to the Akkadian period and identified as palaces (e.g., Khaifaje, Tell Asmar, Tell al-Wilayah, possibly Assur), all of which have features in common: at least one central court, perimeter walls with a primary entrance, evidence of residential use together with other activities. The most complete palace plan preserved is that at Tell Brak, a site in the Habur region of northern Mesopotamia. The building is identified through bricks stamped with the name of Naram Sin, king of Agade (2254–2218 B.C.). As reconstructed, it is essentially square, ca. 80 meters a side, but incomplete to the south and southwest, and known only from foundations. Nevertheless, features preserved are common to other palaces: massive perimeter walls; single, monumental entrance on axis with large courtyard, surrounded by rooms; and at least three additional, smaller courtyards also flanked by banks of rooms (fig. 2). However, since Brak is a site at the very northern periphery of Akkadian political influence, this building is probably more a fortress-cum-governor's-palace/provincial administrative center than a royal seat. If we expand our definition of palace to include not only residences associated with the exercise of power by the highest absolute authority, but also by the highest local authority in any given political structure, then provincial governors and dependent local princes can certainly also occupy "palaces." Indeed, the Old Babylonian year-name cited above, which referred to the residence of a high-ranking official as a palace [égal], suggests that the extended administrative functions performed in such a building may be the most operative variable in defining the term, which should then be applicable to more than the royal seat, even within the capital. In any case, while the Brak building may well be called a palace, it is conceivable that the Akkadian kings' palace(s) back in Agade would have been larger, perhaps less regular, the exterior walls perhaps less massive, and might well have contained a greater variety of room types, correlated with a wider range of activities. In short, it is not clear that one can generalize from this plan to the capital, or for the period as a whole.

The recently excavated site of Tell Mardikh (ancient Ebla) in North Syria provides us with further evidence that palaces of this period (roughly the late Early Dynastic/early Akkadian period) were not merely residences, great houses of local hierarchical rulers, but were also centers of political and administrative activity. In the royal palace of level III/B1 were found hundreds of cuneiform tablets the contents of which range from treaties with foreign rulers to daily economic records, all carefully stored on shelves and in baskets within specially designated archives. While no extant southern Mesopotamian palace has produced such archives, this is likely to be a result of the palaces having been cleaned out and often razed to their foundations to permit subsequent building. The demonstrated epigraphical relationship between the Ebla tablets and texts found in non-palatial contexts in Mesopotamia, in conjunction with known political and military events that link the two regions, allows us to posit the existence of similar palace archives in contemporary and even earlier Sumerian and Akkadian palaces as well. That the practice continues into the early second millennium is evident from the accumulated tablets and sealings found in the palace at Tell Leilan in the Habur region of North Syria, the contents of which attest to a broad network of communications between related polities of the Old Babylonian/Old Assyrian period.

Happily, a relatively well-preserved palace has been excavated at Mari on the middle Euphrates, which was apparently in use over a number of reigns from the late Ur III/Isin-Larsa to the early Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000–1758 B.C.). It is in this palace, consisting of some three hundred rooms and courts, that all of the spatial configurations plus decorative schemes and
administrative functions that characterize later Assyrian and Babylonian palaces can be observed as part of a coherent complex of features. Clearly recognizable is the primary entrance into a large paved courtyard, with subsidiary rooms ranged around that space and an additional, smaller inner court (see plan, fig. 3). While not all scholars agree on the functions attributed to specific rooms or areas of the palace, there is no doubt that ovens and food-storage features indicate the residential nature of the building. Indeed, a small group of cuneiform tablets found in the northeast wing of the palace attest to the delivery of delicacies for visiting dignitaries. When that evidence is seen in conjunction with the later Assyrian administrative texts known as the Nimrud Wine Lists, it is clear that at any given moment the palace household included large numbers of individuals—members of the royal family, high court officials, eunuchs, guards, workers, and visitors—all of whom were being fed and provisioned from palace storerooms. In addition, a vast collection of administrative texts has been preserved in rooms around the outer court. The range of subjects covered by these texts makes it clear that the palace was engaged in administering the king’s own estates and production industries, as well as affairs of state.

The Mari palace also preserves for us the first appearance of a particular constellation of formal reception suites well known from palaces in later periods. At Mari, the reception room is set parallel to the northern end of the inner court (see fig. 3, court 106 and rooms 64 and 65). A central doorway connects the first room to the courtyard. There is evidence of a podium on the south wall opposite that central door. The podium was plastered and whitewashed, giving it special prominence, and could have been used either as a base for a statue, or, more likely, as a platform for the throne of the ruler himself, for those occasions that called for him to be in full view, and with a full view of the courtyard. The inner room included a second podium on the short, west wall, which then faced down the length of the room toward an elevated niche that, it has been suggested, may have contained an image of the local goddess, Ishtar. Identical suites, with the innermost room being the formal throne room and a throne base preserved along a short wall, are also to be found in Assyrian palaces of the first millennium (see below). What is more, evidence of a developed program of decoration in wall paintings is preserved at Mari that also echoes the decorative programs of later Assyrian palaces.

In the Mari palace, two sets of wall paintings were found fallen from the northern wall of court 106 that gives access to the throne-room suite. One set preserves what is likely to be a royal figure attendant upon a sacrifice; the other what seems to be a scene of investiture of a ruler, identifiable by his headgear and garment, by the goddess Ishtar, within an elaborate setting of trees and plants (see detail, fig. 4). This last scene was placed on the façade just to the right of the doorway entering the throne-room suite, and Khalesi has suggested that the space depicted in the painting in fact replicates the physical space of the inner throne room. Especially if this is so, but even if the iconography merely asserts the special selection of the ruler by the goddess in general terms, the presence of the “investiture” painting suggests that the façade of the throne-room complex serves as an important conveyance for statements of royal rhetoric and state ideology—a pattern we will see in both Assyrian and later Babylonian palaces.

A third set of paintings comes from room 132, a small chamber opposite the main entrance on the large court 131. The floor level of this chamber is raised slightly and the entrance emphasized by concentric semicircular steps that jut out into the courtyard. This special focus, in combination with the fact that the imagery includes the figure of a ruler pouring libations before a seated deity, has led to suggestions that the chamber is a small chapel. I find such a suggestion persuasive, particularly as both textual and other archaeological evidence attest to the presence of ritual spaces in other palaces. In Hittite Anatolia as well, the king and queen were expected to perform certain ritual acts daily, and Güterbock has adduced the likelihood of a sanctuary as a regular feature of the palace. A ritual function has also been attributed to certain suites within the Assyrian palace of Assurnasirpal at Nimrud; and in historical times, the association of a royal chapel with the palace is certainly well known. The Mari palace thus adds evidence for an important religious component to supplement the various aspects of the Mesopotamian complex.

Most recently, Margueron et al. and Pierre-Muller have published an additional series of paintings, unfortunately fragmentary, that apparently decorated a reception suite in a second story in the southeast wing of the same palace (above areas E, F, and room 120 on the plan, fig.
Its fragmentary nature and the difficulty of reconstruction notwithstanding, this group of paintings is extraordinary for containing in its repertory a number of motifs—ruler in combat with a lion, ruler victorious over a fallen enemy, and ruler receiving some delegation of approaching individuals—that find direct counterparts in the more complete decorative programs of later Assyrian palace reliefs. This implies an iconography of rule associated with palace decoration in use over at least a thousand-year period. Furthermore, the presence of a second story that includes a reception space fits well with both the Solomonic description cited above and later textual and pictorial evidence. In particular, in the eleventh-century B.C. Egyptian text of Wenamun, the Egyptian envoy who visits Byblos on the Mediterranean coast is received by the local prince in the upper chambers of his palace, from the windows of which one could see the sea. Both the texts and this new evidence from Mari suggest that we may be missing quite essential parts of Near Eastern palaces known only from ground floors or foundations, and we should therefore not try to distribute all palatial functions across the ground-floor plan as if that were the entirety of the building.

Recent analyses of wall construction at Mari suggest several rebuildings and a long period of use before Mari was conquered by Hammurabi of Babylon in his thirty-fourth year (ca. 1758 B.C.); Moortgat had earlier argued that the wall paintings in the palace reflected different phases as well. This raises an additional caution for the scholar, for, while it is important to emphasize the degree of continuity that exists from the second into the early first millennium B.C. with respect to some aspects of spatial configuration, decoration, and function, it is also the case that we cannot assume each palace represents a single, coherent program. It is only in the Neo-Assyrian period that we have a sufficient number of examples and degree of preservation to attempt fuller readings of attitudes toward rule and to assess experiences of authority—what I have called elsewhere “royal rhetoric”—as articulated in palace construction and decoration.

During the early second millennium B.C., the region around the upper Tigris, near modern Mosul, had established its political independence from the south. In the early first millennium, this area constituted the heartland of Assyria, from which, in a series of military maneuvers over a period of some three hundred years, the state expanded its territory until it reached from the Zagros in the east to the Mediterranean in the west, and from the Taurus in the north to Babylon and Egypt in the south and southwest. Over this period, virtually every successive ruler initiated the construction of a new palace, as the capital shifted from Assur to Nimrud, to Khorsabad, and finally to Nineveh. Although there are no explanations for these shifts in the several preserved Assyrian royal inscriptions, they have been understood as a function of statecraft. As with Solomon in Jerusalem, a new ruler established the authority of his reign in part through palace and other building campaigns.

The complete circuit of city walls has been traced at Nimrud and at Khorsabad, with enough preserved at Nineveh to suggest that a similar pattern prevailed (fig. 5). Essentially, rectilinear enclosure walls pierced by gates in all directions surrounded large areas. Set into and sometimes breaking the line of the exterior wall were two types of construction, often at different ends of the city: a raised citadel containing royal palace(s) and temples, and a building known in Akkadian/Assyrian as an ekal-nīṣaštā, a fortified palace, or arsenal, based on the general plan of a residential palace, but often larger in scale and with a simpler distribution of rooms around each courtyard.

The consistency of the Assyrian pattern highlights the difference from neighboring first-millennium citadels. In the Assyrian case, the royal palace and citadel are set into the rectangular perimeter wall, often overlooking a distinctive natural feature in the landscape, like a river; in the capital cities of the principalities of North Syria and southeast Anatolia to the west, as in the kingdom of Sam'al at Zincirli, the pattern is rather to contain the citadel and palace at the center, a round perimeter wall more or less equidistant at all points from the citadel enclosing the lower town. In all cases, the citadels are raised, and access is limited via controlled routes and gates, in a way similar to later Islamic practice in the Near East. The royal palaces of the ancient Near East are also themselves frequently set on raised platforms, so that a continuous sequence of physical elevations may be read as progressive elevations in status.

In the case of building techniques and materials, a combination of environmental factors plus wealth, labor force, and extension of trade network conspires to dictate materials and methods, which present significant regional variation.
Throughout Mesopotamian history, the primary building material was mud brick—making use of the most abundant natural resource in a region of virtually no stone or construction-size wood. At Zincirli, set in the foothills of the amply wooded Amanus mountains, stone foundations are overlaid with walls that combine wooden beams and brick. On the Anatolian plateau to the northwest, stone construction was common. In Assyria, brick was used for bearing structural loads; however, proximity to sources of stone and wood allowed rulers under the influence of the west and northwest to introduce stone revetments and orthostat slabs as decorative skins on the walls of their public buildings, and to employ a variety of precious woods as well. From the Middle Assyrian Period (second half of the second millennium B.C.) through the Neo-Assyrian Period (first half of the first millennium B.C.), kings describe in display texts the lavish construction materials assembled for their palaces and, in the later phase, actually depict on palace reliefs the cutting of wood and quarrying of stone blocks for sculpture.\(^7\)

Limited by the preservation of buildings, we are reduced to reconstructing façades, lighting, and roofing methods from the occasional ancient representations of architecture, in monumental scale on palace reliefs or in miniature on cylinder seals.\(^8\) From these images it would seem that massive exterior walls with niched façades and crenellated tops were prevalent at least from the mid second millennium. And, although post-and-lintel construction was likely to have been the principal way of spanning space and bearing weight, there is again evidence for vaulting in palaces from the same period.\(^9\) At Khorsabad, both complete barrel vaults and intact arches over major entries were well preserved, as was arched wall construction in the so-called Governor’s Palace at Nimrud.\(^10\) All of this suggests that while the antecedents of Islamic construction may be found most immediately in the great arches of the Sasanian period at sites like Ctesiphon, the beginnings of that tradition may have reached considerably farther back into antiquity than is generally acknowledged. Indeed, I should not be at all surprised if one day we find evidence of simple dome construction in the ancient Near East as well!

Great attention was paid in the Assyrian palaces to the scale and decoration of major gateways and entrances, including threshold inscriptions and the colossal human-headed bulls and lions that flanked principal doors (fig. 6).\(^41\) It is not clear whether these great stone colossi actually carried the weight of doorway arches, or, like the orthostats, simply lined the walls; but their iconography is one of menace and protection. The placement of monumental stone sculpture at doorways seems to have been borrowed by the Assyrians from the West—where gateway lions and sphinxes are known from second-millennium Hittite sites on the Anatolian plateau, and then later, from first-millennium Neo-Hittite citadels, like Zincirli, with which the Assyrians came into contact during the ninth-century military campaigns in the area.\(^42\)

The larger lesson to be learned from interactions of this sort, which must surely be relevant for subsequent periods as well, is that in some aspects of architectural practice, like the shapes of perimeter walls and placement of elite citadels, neighboring states may, despite contact, remain distinct; however, in other aspects, like building techniques, materials, or decorative schemes, they may change once contact is established. In the case of Assyria and the West, Assyrian palace construction owes a good deal to foreign contact. In the case of Assyria and the East, by contrast—as seen at the site of Hasanlu in northwest Iran, exposed to Assyrian contact around the same time—we see the converse: Assyrian elements were adopted, as illustrated by the addition of glazed plaques and new porticoes to embellish local building façades.\(^43\) In this latter case, it would seem that there was a desire to emulate practices associated with the major political force in the region. In the case of the Assyrian adaptation of Western elements, there may also have been some positive charge associated with the incorporation (appropriation?) of a highly developed tradition just as the Assyrian polity was expanding.

In later historical periods, it is possible to document the spread of new techniques and modes of construction as part of the general dissemination of architectural knowledge and practice. While this is not possible for the ancient Near East, I do wish to underscore the importance of seeking to distinguish between transmission of knowledge as part of practice and culturally charged borrowings that carry with them coordinates of reference and meaning. Furthermore, I would stress the fact that regionally distinct traditions in morphology and decoration are not fixed, but rather, within the constraints of resources and cultural practice, can respond to historical/political exigencies.
The earliest of the relatively well-preserved Neo-Assyrian palaces, the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.) at Nimrud, sits on the western edge of the citadel, overlooking the Tigris. Although many rooms of the western sector have been eroded away, the basic configuration of the ground plan can be read (see fig. 7). Typical of most Neo-Assyrian palaces, it conforms to the basic type established by the palace at Mari, in which space is divided into two main sectors organized around an outer and an inner courtyard.44

Dividing the two courts on an east-west axis is the throne-room suite of two long rooms, one with a throne base preserved in situ (cf. room B on plan). Primary access to the throne room is via the large outer courtyard, where monumental pylons with flanking door guardians mark the entrance. This entrance is on the long, north wall, necessitating a 90-degree turn to face the throne on the short, east wall. The pattern of access and layout is one seen already in the palace at Mari, and is repeated in the reception/throne-room suites of all of the major Assyrian palaces.45 Oppenheim suggested that this represents a conscious modeling of the royal audience chamber upon the bent-axis plan of the early Sumerian sanctuary, in effect sanctifying the ruler without formally deifying him.46 In any case, the ruler is not on axis with, or visible from, the outer court, as he would have been in the anteroom at Mari, and as was traditionally the case in the straight-axis throne rooms of the later Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, where the king was seated opposite the main door (for example, in the Southern Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II in Babylon, fig. 8).47 These traditions of visibility and sight-lines, both of and by the ruler, can become significant indicators of cultural and national attitudes toward authority and the person of the ruler, and analysis of patterns thereby goes beyond description toward the reconstruction of experience within the built environment, as Islamicist Eric Schroeder called for nearly forty years ago,48 and as Gülru Necipoğlu pursues in her paper here.

Subsequent Assyrian rulers also built palaces on the citadel at Nimrud, but the remains are too fragmentary to read the complete plans. When Sargon II (721–705 B.C.) decided to shift the capital to Khorsabad, he constructed the citadel in such a way that his palace and attached temples were the only buildings at the highest level, with subsidiary palaces and administrative buildings in a separate, lower enclosure (see reconstruction of the citadel, fig. 9, and plan of the palace, fig. 10). Sargon preserved the organizational principle of two main courtyards; however, his throne room (room VII on plan) is no longer between the two courts, but rather is set longitudinally along the southwestern wall of the inner court. Nevertheless, the configuration of the throne-room reception suite remains constant, as it did throughout the Neo-Assyrian period.49

As noted at the beginning, a very different sort of royal palace is found in contemporary Neo-Hittite and Aramaean sites to the west of Assyria. Here, small self-contained structures are marked by columned-portico entrances into banks of lateral rooms, often with service rooms at one or both ends (for example, Hilani III at Zincirli, fig. 11). They either stand independently or are grouped around enclosed courts (as in the "Upper Hilani" complex at Zincirli).50 The columned portico and limited size are characteristic of royal buildings in Syria and Palestine from at least the mid second millennium onwards. While the politics they represent are considerably smaller than the large urban states of Babylonia and Assyria, the reduced size of the Syro-Palestinian palaces is not merely proportional to their population or territory. Even considering that they may well have stood several stories high, on the model of Mari and the Wenamun text cited above,51 the limited number and type of rooms and spaces suggest that they could not have served as many and diverse functions or constituents as an Assyrian palace.

It is presumably this smaller type of royal palace to which the Assyrian ruler, Tiglath Pileser III (744–727 B.C.) referred when he declared that he had constructed a palace in the western manner, which he called a bīt-hilāni. Sargon II also claims to have constructed such a building at Khorsabad. The literature on this building type in Assyria is long,52 and I shall refer to it only briefly here; but I believe it may have ramifications for the later development of the iwan in the Islamic architectural tradition, as well as serving as an important historical case of cultural borrowing. Scholars have debated just where Sargon’s bīt-hilāni might have been located and how its principal features might be recognized. The most salient feature of the plan of known western palaces, the columned portico, has been the marker sought by most scholars, largely because it is observable on the ground! It is this feature that connects the building type to the iwan: and
when, as at Zincirli, several buildings are grouped around one court, we may in fact see antecedents for the three- or four-iwan building. However, it is possible that the term hilānī could be related to modern Hebrew and ancient Ugaritic hlm, “window,” and may therefore actually be identified less by its columns than by a multistoried façade with windows, such as is described in I Kings 7 for the palace of Solomon and as has been reconstructed at Mari, with perhaps the second-story overhang supported by a columned portico. In such a case, the bit-hilānī may not always reflect a separate building, but rather a suite or complex incorporated in the main palace.

One possibility for the Assyrian bit-hilānī is that the building was not in the city or on the citadel at all, but rather was located in some landscaped area outside the walls, as is depicted in a hunting park on one of Sargon’s reliefs (fig. 12) and on a relief of Assurbanipal from room H of his North Palace at Nineveh, where small pavilions with columned porticoes stand amid trees and watercourses. A second candidate for the bit-hilānī at Khorsabad is a small, free-standing structure (often labeled a temple, but on no solid evidence) that is set on the western corner of the citadel (see plan, fig. 10). Yet another possibility is that the attached suite of rooms at the northwestern end of the royal palace, which extends out beyond the line of the city wall, constituted a specially designated wing (= rooms 1–8 on plan, fig. 10).

A clue to the character of the structure may be contained in Tiglath Pileser’s description of the building as built “for his pleasure,” that is, despite the formulaic nature of this phrase, which is used by several kings, one is led to think of the structure, free-standing or attached, as distinct from the official apartments and reception areas. This would apply to all of the three possibilities noted above. Along with the separate building on the citadel and the park pavilion, the attached suite of rooms at Khorsabad would lend itself well to repose. The northwest edge of the citadel looks out over the course of the river Khoṣr, thereby providing both view and fresh air. Sargon tells us that he laid out a landscaped park at Khorsabad, the siting of which would most appropriately be beyond the city to the northwest. In addition, the orientation of room 7 is such that its doorway is aligned with that of room 4, to look out to the northwest; and it is precisely in the reliefs of room 7 that we see banquet scenes and an elaborate frieze of the king’s hunters in a park. Moreover, the trees and river that are represented in the hunting park conform to Sargon’s description of the park he created, which he tells us explicitly was modeled on a western landscape. How better to enjoy the park than in a western-style structure?

However the bit-hilānī in its original or borrowed form may be identified in future, its association with leisure and park land introduces the connection of gardens and purposeful landscaping to Assyrian palaces. This is attested by the Middle Assyrian period, when Tiglath Pileser I records taking both hardwood and fruit trees “from the lands over which I had gained dominion,” and building the orchards of Assyria with them, while in a second text he records planting a royal garden for his “lordly pleasure, in the midst of which he built a palace.” The tradition is perpetuated throughout the Neo-Assyrian period, as seen from the Banquet Stele text of Assurnasirpal II, in which the king, describing the founding of the new capital at Nimrud, enumerates the various trees and plants gathered in his travels and incorporated with abundant water canals into luxuriant gardens at home. Scholars of the ancient Near East are just beginning to look for archaeological evidence of such landscaping, particularly associated with palaces, but the line from Assyrian to Babylonian to Achaemenid to Islamic palace gardens and orchards can at least be affirmed. Terms utilized in describing these early gardens all denote pleasure and joy. It should come as no surprise that in these early periods no less than in later times, wealth and power would be associated with management of the landscape for purposes of delectation, not just mere sustenance—especially in an environment where gardens were expensive and difficult to establish and maintain; but one can also go a step further in suggesting that such a display could be part of a public statement of wealth, power, and even territorial appropriation through reference to the lands of origin of the various trees and plants collected.

As noted above, Assurnasirpal II also refers to the varied types of wood he employed in his palace at Nimrud, and like the gardens, the building materials would have conveyed wealth and power independent of narrative content. Far more explicit statements of wealth and power, not to mention political ideology, are possible and attested in the decoration of the actual palace buildings, through the addition of applied verbal and visual messages.

It is in the incorporation of inscribed texts into
the scheme of palace "iconography" that Assyrian practice may come closest to later Islamic practice. Although calligraphic script was never developed in the ancient Near East to the extent that it was in later Islamic periods, one does see a distinctly "lapidary style" employed for the palace texts, which needs further study as part of the overall visual effect in the decorative program as a whole (visible, for example, on the block surrounding the doorway colossus, fig. 6). Russell has done the most complete study to date of the role played by various sorts of inscriptions in a single palace, where the ruler makes use of each type of text for different rhetorical purposes. For regions brought into the Assyrian polity that retained local rulers, we find bilingual inscriptions on palaces that juxtapose Assyrian Akkadian to the local language. This is not unlike the situation described by Catherine Asher (see article in this volume) for Mughal India, where a local Hindu ruler could include inscriptions in both Persian and Sanskrit. The ancient Near Eastern and South Asian cases show intriguing similarities in that both evince significant differences in nomenclature in the local versus the official court language. One ruler of Guzana to the west of Assyria, for example, is referred to as "king" in the local Aramaean, but only as "governor" in the Akkadian, appropriate to his subordinate status vis-à-vis Assyria.

The extent to which the Assyrians developed the application of orthostat stone relief carvings to exterior and interior palace walls was unprecedented and, as noted above, seems to be derived from contact with North Syria and Anatolia. The Assyrians employed limestone and alabaster in their carvings; the Syrian and Anatolian sites often used basalt as well as limestone, and it is interesting that the alternation of black and white stone for decorative purposes, as on the Long Wall and Herald's Wall at Carchemish, as well as the use of lions as door or gateway figures, can still be attested in the same general region well into the Islamic period (on which, see the Soucek, Redford, and Tabbaa articles in this volume).

The Assyrian orthostats stand some two meters high, and are carved in relatively high relief, often incorporating inscriptions over or as part of visual representations. Traces of color suggest that they were originally painted; and Layard's account of the throne room of Assurnasirpal II in the Northwest Palace includes references to fragments of plastered wall paintings along with the reliefs—presumably from the upper parts of the wall surfaces and the ceiling (see reconstruction, fig. 13; although note that the human figures are small in relation to reliefs). In addition, Assurnasirpal's Banquet Stele mentions the decoration of his palace with glazed brick and with bronze door bands, examples of which have been found elsewhere, and Postgate, following the speculations of Reade, argues for the probability of textiles, no longer extant, as having been another important medium of palace decoration. Numerous studies in recent years have investigated the sorts of political and cultural messages articulated in Assyrian decorative programs. These messages are conveyed by placement, as well as by content. Composite, protective creatures stand at doorways and at corners. Within rooms, the king's figure is often given prominence opposite doorways, or in the center of a wall, regardless of the subject of the scene. On one such example, a scene of the Assyrian king Sennacherib receiving prisoners in the field after the siege of Lachish, we see the enthroned ruler positioned exactly in the middle of the northwest wall (fig. 14). In the field above the king's face is a rectangle containing four lines of explanatory text. The introduction of textual labels into visual narratives, first attested on reliefs in the eighth century, served to emphasize the image or the narrative moment with which they are associated, thereby complementing or augmenting the visual program.

When we look at the sorts of motifs commonly represented in palace decoration, many commonalities occur across the entire range of preserved evidence. Foremost among these is the presence of the palm tree, either as an independent element or in association with the image of the king himself. At Mari, as in the Babylonian palace of Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 B.C.), the palm occurs in a repeating frieze on the outer façade of the throne room, flanking the central door through which the ruler could be visible at selected times. In the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal, the same tree is depicted throughout the palace, most frequently flanked by symmetrical genii. In the throne room, which constitutes a special case, the king himself is shown duplicated on either side of the tree, presumably participating in its ritual care (fig. 15). If Castriota is correct in suggesting that on some occasions the tree stands metonymically as a symbol of fertility, and it is the case that a Babylonian base of the Northwest
Palace is not merely for purposes of decoration, but also conveys the powerful message that rule is grounded in nature, i.e., in cosmology.

The motif of the king and tree is accorded pride of place in the throne room of Assurnasirpal; it appears both directly behind the king on his throne on the eastern wall and directly opposite the major doorway of the north wall. Throne rooms, as relatively public ceremonial and political loci, are especially likely to be highly invested with charged imagery—in the best preserved cases, incorporating a number of motifs that in total reflect the full panoply of royal activities and attributes. In the throne room of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud, scenes of hunt and battle are distributed along the long, south wall and parts of the north wall, with the king himself depicted at the far west end. I have argued elsewhere that the assemblage of images can be read as a unified program, recapitulating in both content and structure the king’s “Standard Inscription” that is written over every slab (see, for example, on throne-room slab B.28, fig. 15), and signifying all of the major attributes of the ruler appropriate to his stewardship of the state: ritual performance, virile strength, military victory, and statecraft. Russell has recently demonstrated that in the later reign of Sennacherib, this lexicon was expanded to include new themes related to civic construction, which convey more explicit messages pertaining to maintenance of the “center,” i.e., the capital, in contrast to earlier formulations that emphasized the maintenance of the state through territorial acquisition and the establishment of boundaries.

These Sennacherib reliefs are situated in the large court giving onto his principal throne room. As noted for Mari, the courtyard wall that doubles as throne-room façade is especially adapted to proclamations of rule, and in the Neo-Assyrian palaces of Assurnasirpal II and Sargon, at least (e.g., fig. 16), we find particular attention given on that wall to processions of foreign delegations bearing tribute to the ruler—a topos conveying the ruler’s ability to command both wealth and stately attention.

Through verisimilitude in landscape elements and dress, military narratives are made to be more than generic victories; they refer to actual campaigns of the king’s reign. The representation of at least a half-dozen separate campaigns in the reliefs of Assurnasirpal II’s throne room confirms the king’s account in his Banquet Stele of how he depicted on his palace walls the “glory of my heroism across highlands, plains and seas.” In later Assyrian reigns (as, for example, the Lachish siege of Sennacherib, fig. 14), these military scenes proliferated throughout the entire palace. By concentrating them in the throne room during the reign of Assurnasirpal and by placing the throne room itself at the center of the palace, the ninth-century king conveyed the fundamental message that, as the throne room is the heart of the palace, so the palace is the heart of the state.

The use of extended decorative programs as vehicles for the articulation of ideology is not unusual in the history of royal palaces, and many art historical studies have attempted to reconstruct those programs, along with their ideological underpinnings. In the palaces of the ancient Near East, the “official” public statements about the ruler and the state as they appear in the decorative program serve to underscore the institutional nature of the palace as part of the larger state apparatus. To the extent that “the palace” can serve as metonym for the ruler (as “the White House” does for the American president), and thereby for the state, the palace is the source of ideology; and to the extent that the palace is the physical manifestation of a program of royal rhetoric, it is also the vehicle for that ideology. Thus, we return to issues of function, and the role of the palace-qua-institution, with which we began.

Clearly, the ruler and a large extended household resided in the palace and had to be accommodated. On the practical level, this required private apartments, cooking facilities, and stores. Evidence exists that the king’s mess included large parties of his sons and officials and that allocations were made for the rest of the palace on a regular basis. In addition, periodic festivities must have been organized, which would have necessitated the banqueting of very large numbers of individuals, as on the occasion of the inauguration of Assurnasirpal II’s new capital at Nimrud, when the king records he fed some 70,000 people for ten days.

The size of the Assyrian throne room (ca. 10 x 45 meters for both Assurnasirpal II and Sargon II) and its decoration argue for its nature as a public reception suite in which the ruler would give audiences, although whether on a regular basis or occasionally is uncertain. Visual evidence that the ruler at least received selected members of the court and highly placed officials is preserved in scenes carved on cylinder seals, which show individuals presented before the
seated ruler—a tradition that must have been not unlike the Mughal darbār illustrated in several miniatures of the seventeenth-century court of Jahangir and Shah Jahan (see Necipoğlu, figs. 26–28). Scenes on reliefs showing Assurnasirpal II with cup or bowl in hand may attest to the king’s judicial function, in keeping with a long-standing iconography of the ruler rendering just decisions in Mesopotamia. Whether the ruler exercised legal office inside the palace (perhaps in the throne room) or outside is not certain for this period, however. On the basis of the Solomonic reference (see above, with regard to 1 Kings 7:7) and a Sumerian literary text regarding the legendary king Lugalbanda, who “takes [or exercises] office in the outer courtyard, in ‘the Gate that Brings in Myriads’,” one is encouraged to seek possible evidence for similar use of the palace courtyard and gate in the Assyrian period. It must also be considered that the throne room could have functioned as a venue for legal hearings.

Tribute scenes on courtyard façades leading into the throne rooms at Nimrud and Khorsabad (e.g., fig. 16) both illustrate and assert state reception of foreign delegations. That the palaces served as the repositories of such gifts, along with the booty seized in foreign campaigns, we know from Assurnasirpal’s repeated assertion that he brought precious metals and other rich booty to the palace, and also from Sargon’s statement that he restored the Northwest Palace in order to place in it booty from his victory over Carchemish in 717. Not unlike later palaces, from Fatehpur Sikri to Versailles, the display of valuable goods and elaborate appointments served as signifiers of the success of the ruler, and hence of the state.

Tribute scenes, overall decorative program, and display all attest not only to specific events, but also to the very fact that the palace was the site where statecraft was conducted. Texts from Nimrud further document that the extended household supported in the palaces included ministers, administrative officials, and scribes, whose job it was to run not only the palace but the state. Assurbanipal’s famous “library” at Nineveh may reflect the special case of an unusually literate ruler; however, the archives of other palaces, such as Mari, strongly argue for the palace as repository of central state records as well.

The iconography of room 132 at Mari and the suite around room G at Nimrud, as was mentioned earlier, may suggest that some rooms in the palace were devoted to ritual activities, and I suspect that if any new palaces were to be investigated with modern excavation methods, we would find considerably more evidence to support such a contention. The importance of ritual performance and court ceremonial in other times and places argues strongly for the presence of such spaces within the palace. If we were to include procession as part of ceremonial display, then the fact that the processional route from the Ishtar Gate to the temple of Marduk at Babylon passes along the east wall of Nebuchadnezzar’s palace (see fig. 8) could imply an active role for the palace and/or the king in the procession.

Finally, I would argue that a significant component of function is “affect”: the impact of the building upon subjects of the state and upon foreigners. Lackenbacher has studied Assyrian narratives of royal building activities, with particular focus on palace construction. In a number of instances, rulers take credit for innovations in technique (such as Sennacherib’s reference to bronze casting for column bases) or include statements about how skilfully the palaces have been constructed. In addition, rulers express personal gratification concerning their palaces (e.g., “palace of my joy” and “my royal residence that I love”).

Perhaps most important of all, we find references to intended impact. Assurnasirpal refers to his new palace as “fitting and splendid,” “palace of all the wisdom of Kalhu” (Nimrud). The king is clearly celebratory; but at the same time he proclaims the palace as concentrating within itself all that is of value in the capital. Nearly two hundred years later, Sennacherib calls his new residence “Palace without a Rival.” He says of the limestone reliefs, “I made them objects of astonishment”; of his colossi, “I made them a wonder to behold”; and of the palace as a whole, “To the astonishment of all peoples I raised aloft its head.”

The importance of this phrase, “to [or for] the astonishment of all peoples” (ana tabrāt kēšat nisē) cannot be too strongly emphasized. It is an exact translation of a Sumerian formula of reference to impressive building, largely applied to temples in the earlier periods (u₅-di un šar). In Neo-Assyrian usage, both temples and palaces are so described, but it is especially characteristic of texts referring to new palace constructions. It would be interesting to survey extant attestations to see whether it is possible to determine a time when “astonishment” was accorded to palaces as
have be

Nevertheless, in first buildings known

demonstrated exemplified command further well qualities that the ruler's power and ability to build; and at the same time, by having built so impressively, the ruler has further demonstrated his power and ability to command resources, induce astonishment, and create a fitting seat of government—in short, to rule. The rhetorical function of the palace, as exemplified through its affect, is, I would argue, as essential as its residential, administrative, productive, and ceremonial functions.

Throughout the preceding survey, I have tried to demonstrate that morphology, decorative program, and function are not independent variables. Rather, room type, organization of space, individual decorative motives, and overall decorative scheme are fundamentally linked to function. Given the nature of the archaeological and textual record, in any scholarly study of the palace we are limited to the expression of the royal voice, which privileges rhetoric and intention over actual practice. Obviously, as is all too well known in modern times, buildings can be poorly designed for anticipated functions. Equally, when buildings are secondarily occupied, or when historical events precipitate change, then their original form and decoration can either constrain function or have little relationship to new usage. Nevertheless, recovery of the ideal schema and the associated originating rhetoric is a necessary first step toward any critique of the fit between intention and actual practice.

In the Mesopotamian schema, and apparently in the Hittite one as well, the palace was conceived as incorporating a bundle of activities and functions: residential, political, administrative, industrial, ritual, ceremonial, and affective. Storage and display of surplus and luxury goods served as extensions of elaborate decorative programs that articulated state ideology, and spaces were designed to meet the functional needs of the palace as an institution. Limited comparisons with other palace types have suggested the importance of regional diversity; but at the same time, it can be demonstrated that regionally specific building forms and decorative practices could be transmitted across regional boundaries under certain political or cultural conditions. There are many ancient Near Eastern palaces not mentioned in this brief survey, and many palaces that have been mentioned have received less than adequate description or analysis. Because I have been sketching with a broad brush, there has been a tendency to emphasize similarities in the Mesopotamian sequence across some two thousand years. In many ways this is unjustified. From early royal hymns in Sumerian to later royal inscriptions in Assyrian Akkadian, indications are that the palace was construed as the seat of kingship, not merely as the residence of the king. Nevertheless, micro and macro shifts in form and decoration need to be studied more closely with respect to the many political changes in state development over this long period. What I have tried to stress throughout is the role of the palace within the context of the state and the rhetorical function of the palace as embodiment of the state.

If there turn out to be significant continuities in building materials and techniques, decorative programs (especially for non-figural motifs of symbolic value), and ceremonial/administrative functions from the pre-Islamic to Islamic periods in the Near East, beyond the few I have noted here, it will not surprise me at all; nor will I be surprised if distinct regional traditions within Islam actually reflect recognizable subdivisions in earlier periods as well. At the same time, one will want to take care to distinguish features apparently similar over time that are merely the consequence of relatively limited ways of representing/organizing authority (what evolutionary biologists call spurious homologies) from features that truly represent continuity in underlying concepts and traditions. When continuity cannot be demonstrated, it then becomes necessary to account for the differences as artifacts of differing historical practice. I confess that a significant part of my mission in the foregoing survey has been to convince historians of Islamic architecture (and culture) that the pre-Sasanian
pre-Islamic world should be included in their scholarly purview. Yet it has also become apparent that, however much we acknowledge the significant divide between before and after the introduction of Islam, students of the ancient Near East have much to learn from considering the more complete historical record of Islamic practice—by which I mean not only building practice, but also cultural and political practice.

In the end, what is so clear as to be obvious, but still needs to be stated, is that any study of the palace, whatever the historical period, is fundamentally linked to the study of concepts of authority and rule. To understand the palace, one must see it as the locus of a particular practice of governance. Furthermore, when continuities of morphology and/or decoration occur across spatio-temporal boundaries, one cannot immediately assume continuity in meaning; whenever possible, it is necessary to establish associative significance independently. Conversely, it is possible that differences in morphology and/or decoration nevertheless represent quite similar social and political systems.

For the ancient Near East, the play in the subtitle of this survey was a conscious one: the palace is both a physical and a mental construct, both built and construed. It is at once the concentrated center of rule, "the seat of kingship," and also the concrete expression of rule, "worthy of being" the seat of kingship, "for the astonishment of all peoples," "a wonder to behold."
Notes

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1. For the non-specialist, it may be useful to note that Sumerian-speaking peoples predate Akkadian speakers in the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley. The two languages and peoples mixed in the third millennium B.C., after which time we find Sumerian loan words in Akkadian, and evidence for Akkadian influences and words in Sumerian as well. Akkadian briefly (ca. 2300 B.C.) and then ultimately (ca. 1900 B.C.) replaced Sumerian and serves as the language of Babylonia and Assyria. Akkadian scribes and scholars continued to be taught Sumerian, copying old inscriptions as part of the school curriculum, and preserving literary and ritual texts through translation and bilingual word lists. Bilinguals continued into the early first millennium B.C., by which time Sumerian was no longer a living language. The convention in a modern scholarly text is to indicate Sumerian words in boldface type and Akkadian words in italics.

2. Note that the Sumerian word for temple, by contrast, consists merely of the logogram for “house” followed in construct by the name of the deity, as in E₄Inanna, “the house of the god(dess) Inanna.” My translation of “Great House” for the Mesopotamian palace should not be confused with a structure so indicated and distinct from the palace/challu in Hittite tradition (see H. G. Güterbock, “The Hittite Palace,” in Le palais et la royauté: XIXe rencontre assyriologique internationale 1971, ed. P. Garelli [Paris, 1974], 305–6).


4. And when multiple functions are characteristic of Hittite palaces of the late second millennium B.C. on the Anatolian plateau (cf. Güterbock, “Hittite Palace”), this is not to say that they are the same functions. Each historical and cultural case needs to be examined first in terms of internal evidence for associated activities.


8. O. Tunça, L'architecture religieuse protodynastique en Mésopotamie, Akkadico, Supplementum II (Louvain, 1984); Ernst Heinrich, Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im alten Mesopotamien (Berlin, 1982).


10. See discussion in Postgate, Early Mesopotamia, 137 ff., and also reference to the issue of the connections between the origins of royalty and the palace in early Mesopotamia in O. Tunça, review of Margueron, Recherches sur les palais, in Zeitschrift für Assyriologie 74 (1984): 318.

11. See on this period, Heinrich, Die Paläste, 9–13, where some possible candidates for palaces are noted, based on morphological comparisons with later palaces, but without definitive evidence.


13. For a discussion of the spatial properties of that central court in Palace A at Kish, see J. Margueron, “Remarques sur l’organisations de l’espace architectural en Mésopotamie,” in L’archéologie de l’Iraq du début de l’époque néolithique à 333 avant notre ère,

14. See Heinrich, Die Paläste, 43.


16. Heinrich, Die Paläste, fig. 22.

17. This would certainly seem to be true at the Assyrian site of Khorsabad, where the royal palace situated on the upper citadel was replicated in smaller scale in several buildings on the lower terrace. One of the lower buildings has been identified as the residence of the king’s brother and chief vizier; the other possibly belonged to his son as crown prince (Gordon Loud, "An Architectural Formula for Assyrian Planning, Based on the Results of Excavations at Khorsabad," Revue d'Assyriologie 33 [1936]: 153).

18. See on Ebla the many publications of P. Matthiae, for example, I Tresor di Ebla (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 1985), 25–54 and figs. 14–36, 41–47.

19. It is indeed unfortunate, given the number of administrative texts and literary texts preserved from the Ur III period (ca. 2112–2004 B.C.) in southern Mesopotamia, that we have not recovered any of the major palaces of Ur III rulers (cf. Postgate, Early Mesopotamia, 141). It is therefore difficult to estimate how characteristic of the period was the provincial palace built by an Ur III governor of Eshmunna in the Diyala River region to the northeast (Henri Frankfort, Seton Lloyd, and Thorild Jacobsen, The Gimil-Sin Temple and the Palace of the Rulers at Tell-Asmar, Oriental Institute Publications 43 (Chicago, 1940).


22. See chart in Gates, Biblical Archaeologist (June 1984) for divergent opinions.


24. Kinnier-Wilson, Nimrud Wine Lists, 32 ff.


27. See especially, Frankfort et al., The Gimil-Sin Temple and the Palace of the Rulers, where the palace of the provincial governor of Eshmunna when the city was under the hegemony of Ur included two shrines, one presumably to the local deity, the other to the deified ruler of Ur.


29. Marc Brandes, "La Salle dite ‘G’ du palais d’Assurnasirpal II à Kalakh, lieu de ceremonie rituelle," Actes de la 17ème Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Gembloux, 1970), 147–54. Note, however, that Julian Reade is not persuaded by Brandes’s argument that the suite around room G was used for ritual lustrations and suggests banquet as an alternative ("Assyrian Architectural Decoration: Techniques and Subject Matter," Baghdader Mitteilungen 10 [1979]: 85). The argument for both is based upon the imagery of the seated king holding a phial-like bowl on the reliefs, and whether he is lustrating or drinking is not certain. However, on scenes where individuals are clearly banqueting, as in the reliefs of Sargon II at Khorsabad, their drinking vessels are obviously being
brought to the lips, which is not the case here, so I tend to be more persuaded by the symbolic than the literal in the present scene.


33. Khorsabad is a particularly good example since, like Samarra and Fatehpur Sikri, it was built and occupied by a single ruler, Sargon II of Assyria. The phenomenon of new palace construction by successive rulers was noted by Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia, and has been discussed in part by Sylvie Lackenbacher, Le roi bâtisseur: Les récits de construction assyriens des origines à Tiglath-Pileser 3 (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1982): 76, as a way of demonstrating that the ruler surpassed all of his predecessors.

34. Fort Shalmaneser, excavated at Nimrud between 1949 and 1963, is a good example of the type—on which, see M. E. L. Mallowan, Nimrud and Its Remains (Aberdeen, 1966), vol. 3, plan VII. For the city walls, with citadel and ekał-māšartī set into the perimeter, see plan in Moortgat, Art of Ancient Mesopotamia, fig. 102.

35. Naumann, Architektur Kleinasiens, fig. 259.

36. Note also the point made by Posigate, Early Mesopotamia, 137–40, that in the earlier periods in Mesopotamia, the location of the palace varied significantly from one city-state to another and from one period to another: sometimes located close to the traditional temple/sacred precinct, sometimes in newer sectors of town, away from the older traditional areas, and this was closely tied to the relationship of a particular ruler to the state.

37. Cf., for example, A. Kirk Grayson, Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia 2 (Toronto, 1991): 38–45, for the palace of Tiglath Pileser I at Assur and 227–28 for the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal at Nimrud; John M. Russell, “Bulls for the Palace and Order in the Empire: The Sculptural Program of Sennacherib’s Court VI at Nineveh,” Art Bulletin 69 (1987): 520–39, and Sennacherib’s Palace without a Rival at Nineveh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Although the Neo-Assyrian palaces are far better preserved, it would seem from the Middle Assyrian texts that kings employed many of the same building techniques as are archaeologically attested later—for example, the lining of the walls with basalt and alabaster slabs, and the installation of large gateway figures, noted in the Tiglath Pileser I inscription cited above.


40. Heinrich, Die Paläste, fig. 76.

41. On attention to doors and gates in general, their construction and plan, see Damrji, Doors and Gates.

42. On this, see Winter, in Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn, esp. 356. Note, however, that Reade rightly points out Assyrian colossi have Mesopotamian prototypes as well in smaller-scale free-standing figures of glazed terra cotta or stone (“Assyrian Architectural Decoration,” 18).

43. It should be noted, however, that interior spatial configurations did not change. See on this I. J. Winter, “Perspective on the ‘Local Style’ of Hasanlu IVB: A Study in Receptivity,” in Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia, ed. L. D. Levine and T. C. Young, Jr. (Malibu: Undena Press, 1977), 371–86.

44. The literature on this palace is vast, as it is one of the best preserved in the ancient sequence. For a recent study of the architectural basis for reconstruction, see Richard Sobolewski, “Beitrag zur theologischen Rekonstruktion der Architektur des Nordwest-Palästes in Nimrud (Kalhu),” in Palast und Hütte: Beiträge zum Bauen und Wohnen im Altertum (Mainz: von Zabern, 1982), 237–50. For this particular two-court plan, see Moortgat, Art of Ancient Mesopotamia, 127, following Loud, “An Architectural Formula,” 156, in which the outer court is referred to as the “gate-court” or bābānu in Akkadian, the inner court as the “house” or...
"residential court," Akk. bitannah. My objections to this terminology would take too long to argue here, but in summary can be related to the likelihood that the rooms flanking the inner court were also devoted to ceremonial or public functions, while the thickness of the walls (some 5 meters) argues again for a second story, with the residential quarters more likely to have been located on the upper floor(s).


46. Ancient Mesopotamia, 328, as cited in Winter, "Reading Concepts of Space," 63.


50. See the lengthy discussion in Naumann, Architektur Kleinasiens, 354-78, for the sites of Zinciri, Carchemish, and Tell Halaf, among others. More recently on Tell Halaf, see Jenny V. Canby, "Guzana (Tell Halaf)," in Ehba to Damascus: Art and Archaeology of Ancient Syria, ed. Harvey Weiss (Washington, D.C., 1985), 322-38. Indeed, in the earlier, Hittite palace of the second millennium as well, although it was apparently a large complex, Güterbock has suggested that residence and administrative quarters may have been in separate structures (cf. Güterbock, "Hittite Palace," esp. 308).

51. Cf. reconstruction in Naumann, Architektur Kleinasiens, fig. 455.

52. See Winter, "Art as Evidence for Interaction."

Note also that J. Börker-Klähn ("Der bit-hilānī im bit-šahārī des Assur-Tempels," Zeitschrift für Assyriologie 70 [1980]: 258-72) has recently documented an instance in which a bit-hilānī was associated with a temple of the Neo-Assyrian period in Assur. She reconstructs the building (Börker-Klähn, "Der bit-hilānī," fig. 4) with portal sculpture flanking a large entry, and an upper colonnaded balcony above the entrance.

53. I have even wondered whether there might not be some etymological relationship between the Aramaic/Akkadian hilānī and Arabic (l)īwan, but such speculation goes well beyond my own competence.


55. See Grayson, Royal Inscriptions, 27, 55, and, for a similar account by Assur-bel-kala, 105.


structure of the text finds parallels in representational practice. In addition, shifts in grammatical structure when referring to the ruler (from third person singular, as part of narrative accounts, to first person singular as self-presentation) are indicative, and not without parallels to the account by Sheila Blair (see article in this volume of Ilkhanid texts concerning the ruler (that shift from third-person narratives to second-person exhortatives).


61. Glazed bricks as part of palace decoration are attested in the Middle Assyrian period by Tiglath Pileser I, who continues a palace begun by his father, adding a façade of glazed brick (the color of obsidian (black), lapis lazuli (blue), pappardilios (stone) and paruru-alabaster (which must be yellow and white, respectively, for that is the color palette found on later exterior glazed façades and walls). For the Assurnasirpal text, see Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, 2: para. 677; indeed, the Banquet Stele on which the reference occurs could itself be considered part of the palace program, as it stood in niche EA of the great courtyard D of the palace, just adjacent to the throne room (see Shafer, "Monument to the Center of Empire"). The only problem with this is uncertainty, given the later occupations of the palace, that this was the stele's original location.


64. Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs."

65. Feldman, "Presentation of Kingship."


68. Unfortunately, however, not all throne rooms in Assyrian palaces have been completely recovered. The reliefs of the throne room of Sargon at Khorsabad (room VII on plan) were lost in an accident after their removal, those of Assurbanipal at Nineveh are poorly preserved, those of Tiglath Pileser were dismantled in antiquity to be reused in a later palace. It is also likely that no matter how complete the archaeological remains of a given building may be, we will never fully recover all of the elements that contributed to the decorative program. The loss of textiles as a contributing factor has been noted. In addition, the actual thrones on which the ruler sat could well have been decorated with motifs appropriate to the ideology of rule. This is certainly the case with the two decorated stone throne bases that have been preserved: one of Shalmaneser III from Fort Shalmaneser (see P. Hulin, "The Inscriptions on the Carved Throne-Base of Shalmaneser III," *Iraq* 25 [1963]: 48-69, and the recent analysis by Michelle L. Marcus, "Geography as an Organizing Principle in the Imperial Art of Shalmaneser III," *Iraq* 49 [1987]: 77-90), the other of Sargon II from Khorsabad (discussed in Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 19 and fig. 17). Neither of the throne bases adds a rhetorical element not also preserved in wall decoration, although the emphasis on state diplomacy on the Shalmaneser III base offers a different nuance by virtue of its primacy.


71. In the palace of Assurnasirpal at Nimrud, there is clear indication by dress that the tribute bearers are foreigners from the West. While just one national contingent is represented, at least in what is preserved of the court D façade, Assurnasirpal mentions that envoys from twelve countries were invited to his inauguration festivities in the text of his banquet stele, which was set up in that same courtyard. It is to be expected that all would have brought gifts, and I see the throne-room façade as a kind of presaging of the delegations anticipated at the inauguration. Sargon II, who restored the Northwest Palace at Nimrud, similarly represents a tribute-bearing foreign delegation on the façade of his throne room (cf. Heinrich, *Die Paläste*, fig. 93 = the west wall of court VIII, leading into the throne room, room VII, our fig. 16). An indication of the sort of high-level gifts between rulers
appropriate to the opening of a new palace is preserved in an exchange of letters between the king of Babylon and the king of Egypt in the second millennium, in which the Babylonian king declares that he has just built a new "house," is planning a "house-opening," and invites the Egyptian king to attend. The Egyptian king responds by sending luxurious furnishings for the new palace, including ebony furniture overlaid with ivory and gold (cf. William L. Moran, _The Amarna Letters_ [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992], EA 3 and EA5), very much on a par with the chandelier sent by Queen Victoria to the Ottoman court on the completion of the Dolmabahçe Palace in the nineteenth century (for which reference I am indebted to Jülide Aker). That these tribute scenes have a broader valence than merely diplomatic gift exchange has been suggested in a most interesting paper by Jak Cheng, in which he argues that the representation of tribute is a means of proclaiming the stability of the economic base of the state through the effective accumulation of wealth, and as such constitutes an important trope in the iconography of the successful ruler (cf. "Tribute Scenes in the Program of Legitimation by Sargon II of Assyria at Khorsabad," unpublished paper, 1992).

72. For example, Jonathan Brown and W. H. Elliott, on the palace of Philip IV of Spain, _A Palace for a King: The Buen Retiro and the Court of Philip IV_ (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986).


76. Winter, "The King and the Cup," 253–68; Postgate, _Early Mesopotamia_, 150.


78. Grayson, _Assyrian Royal Inscriptions_, 2:para. 653 (=Assurnasirpal II, Standard Inscription); D. D. Luckenbill, _Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia_ 2 (Chicago, 1927): para. 138 (=Sargon II).


80. Cf. Gülru Necipoğlu, _Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries_ (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 120–22, 140–41. See also in this volume, Necipoğlu, figs. 2 [17], 10a [11], 21 [16], plans which show small mosques in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal palaces.


82. _Le roi bâtisseur_, esp. 73–81; see also Lackenbacher, _Le Palais sans Rival: Les récits de construction en Assyrie_ (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1990), passim.

83. See, for example, the _Chicago Assyrian Dictionary_, vol. 'N', p. 187, entry under _nakliš_: Sennacherib refers to an earlier palace, whose construction had not been artistic/skillful enough, _ia _ekalli . . . _epištaš _la _naklatma;_ his son Esarhaddon declares that he "had [a palace] built skillfully as his royal seat and for the pleasure of his lordship," _ana _mūšab _arrātiya _u _multa’āti bēlītiya _nakliš _usēpišma._ This is clearly a continuation of Middle Assyrian rhetorical practice, as when Tiglath Pileser I states that he built his palace at Assur with understanding and skill, decorating it in a splendid fashion, and making it fitting as a royal residence (cf. Grayson, _Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia_, 2:TP 14.65–66, 77–89). In some of the royal correspondence from the later reigns of the Neo-Assyrian period, there is also evidence that rulers were not only kept informed but engaged through correspondence in decisions regarding construction and decoration. See, for example, Simo Parpola, _State Archives of Assyria_ 1 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1987): nos. 60, 61, 110, 133, and _State Archives of Assyria_ 5 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990): nos. 15, 56, 282, 293, concerning Sargon II and the work on Khorsabad.

84. Cited in Lackenbacher, _Le roi bâtisseur_, 74.

85. Grayson, _Assyrian Royal Inscriptions_, 2: paras. 680 and 653, translates it as "in splendid fashion," and para. 682, the "palace full of wisdom." I find more persuasive the translations of Ann Shafer in "Monuments to the Center of Empire": in the first instance because it is more grammatically accurate and in the second because it implies an "epithet"
applied to the palace, as opposed to mere description.

86. Literally, "Palace for which there is no second [or, no equal]."

87. Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia, 2: paras. 367, 389, 394.

88. See, for example, Grayson, Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, 2:296, where Assurnasirpal uses a comparable phrase for his Sharrat-Niphi temple at Nimrud.


90. Güterbock, "Hittite Palace."

91. Clearly, more work needs to be done in systematic study of the shifting role of the palace as institution over time in the ancient Near East, as seen through changes in decorative program, room, and spatial distribution, sight lines, and avenues of approach. What is interesting is that the evidence provided by Mari and the Neo-Assyrian palaces suggests the palace decorative scheme consisted not merely of a single, generalized message appropriate to the "seat of kingship," but of a series of accumulated messages, communicated in individual rooms and areas, that were specifically tailored to the function of associated spaces. One must therefore "read" the sum of those messages to get closer to the overall rhetorical program of the palace.
APPENDIX

Bibliography for the Study of Ancient Near Eastern Palaces

GENERAL TEXTS
Cassin, Elena, Jean Bottero, and Jean Ventoungo, eds. Die altorientalischen Reiche, vols. 2 and 3. Frankfurt am Main, 1966.

PALACES (+ Temples and Texts)


Fig. 1. Uruk/Warka. Plan of Eanna Complex, level IV, ca. 3200 B.C., including “Palace” E (Building 11). From Postgate, Early Mesopotamia, fig. 6:4.

Fig. 2. Tell Braq. Plan of Naram-Sin Palace, ca. 2300 B.C. From Heinrich, Die Paläste, fig. 22.

Fig. 3. Mari. Plan of Palace, early 2nd millennium B.C. After Margueron et al., M.A.R.I. 6, fig. 1.

Fig. 4. Mari. “Investiture” painting, Palace, court 106, detail. From Parrot, Mission archéologique de Mari II, pl. XI.
Fig. 5. Khorsabad. Plan of city walls with citadel, built by Sargon II, 8th century B.C. 
From Frankfort, Art and Architecture, fig. 165.

Fig. 6. Nimrud. Colossal gateway figure from entry a into throne room B of Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II. Photo: courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 7. Nimrud. Plan of Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II, 9th century B.C. Composite from several sources, including Mallowan, Nimrud and Its Remains, 165, and Heinrich, Die Paläste, fig. 55.
Fig. 8. Babylon. Plan of Southern Palace of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, 6th century B.C. From Heinrich, *Die Paläste*, fig. 122.

Fig. 9. Khorsabad. Isometric reconstruction of citadel and Palace of Sargon II, 8th century B.C. From Levine, *Bulletin of the Society for Mesopotamian Studies*, fig. 2, drawing by Rob Mason.
Fig. 10. Khorsabad. Plan of Palace of Sargon II, 8th century B.C. From Loud, *Khorsabad II*, after Place.
Fig. 11. Zincirli. Plan of Hilani III, 8th century B.C.
After Naumann, Architektur Kleinasiens, fig. 448.

Fig. 12. Khorsabad. Relief showing pavilion in wooded area, from room 7, Palace of Sargon II.
Photo: courtesy Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.

Fig. 13. Nimrud. Watercolor reconstruction of the throne room of Assurasirpal II, room B, Northwest Palace. From Layard, Monuments of Nineveh, 1849, pl. 2.
Fig. 14. Nineveh. Relief showing ruler and epigraphic text, in aftermath of the siege of Lachish, from room 36 of the Southeast Palace of Sennacherib, early 7th century B.C. Photo: courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 15. Nimrud. Relief of king flanking palmette tree, from throne room B, Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II. Photo: courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 16. Khorsabad. Reconstruction of the throne room façade, court VIII, Palace of Sargon II. From Heinrich, *Die Paläste*, fig. 93.
THE SASANIAN PALACES
AND THEIR INFLUENCE IN EARLY ISLAM

By LIONEL BIER

The ruins of palatial buildings in Iran and Iraq have been linked with the Sasanian dynasty since the nineteenth century, but the concept of a Sasanian palace architecture goes back only six decades to Oscar Reuther's study in the Survey of Persian Art. Despite excavations and surveys undertaken since then, Reuther's work remains extraordinarily influential. Indeed, most of our impressions about the "Sasanian palace" still derive from this study and particularly from the attractive drawings with which he illustrated it.

Reuther's seminal work has many shortcomings, which were due for the most part to the nature of the materials available to him. His firsthand experience of the monuments he presented was limited to Ctesiphon where he excavated in the late 1920s. For everything else he had to defer to the accounts of others; Flandin and Coste, for example, and the Dieulafoys, de Morgan, and Gertrude Bell. These, in turn, had based their Sasanian attributions on traditions embodied in the works of Arab and Persian authors writing centuries after the fall of the empire. Few buildings at that time had been adequately recorded and even fewer excavated. Add to this the fact that these monuments have yielded virtually no epigraphic material and it is easy to understand the problems which Reuther faced in compiling his study.

It seems to me that now, some sixty years later, a realistic conception of Sasanian palace architecture continues to elude us, and that this is due largely to an oddly uncritical acceptance of the published drawings which in the end are our most important source of information. The older plans, for example, are so familiar through frequent reproduction on an ever smaller scale that they have become almost iconic. They most often begin, as in the case of Damghan, as line drawings which clearly indicate the limits of excavation and preservation, but in time they are reduced to their essentials. In the Survey the walls of the palace are partially blackened for clarity. Further along in the recension the broken edges become less distinct. F. Kimball's reconstruction, which appears in the following chapter, shows a clean edge at the left, adding to the impression that we have before us a complete unit. The graphics have prepared the ground for statements about the building's symmetrical plan and theories about its function.

This transfiguration of an original survey is particularly striking at Kish where Watelin uncovered in a relatively small area what he described as eight "Sasanian palaces." Palaces I and II are well known for their rich stucco decoration and their elaborate ground plans which suggest a ceremonial function. Even when the plans are hatched rather than blackened, we have become accustomed to seeing in each a more or less complete building. Moorey, who has recently made a fresh study of the Kish excavations, suggested that Palaces I and II may actually have been part of a single complex if not a single building, and the published plans are here arranged in a pastiche as if they were (fig. 1). A variance of some ten degrees indicated by their north arrows does not pose a significant problem; plans which show ancient buildings oriented dead north are always suspect, especially in roughshod surveys, which this one seems to have been. The published site plan, which is apparently definitive—although it has no scale—seems to indicate a uniform orientation but in a different direction. They fit well, in any case, in their general scale and in the thickness of their outer walls which vary from room to room. What lay in between and to the north may have fallen victim to the plow, a common fate for mud-brick buildings, but we are not given the topographic information to judge.

The case of Bishapur is especially interesting in this respect. The original publication, which remains the basic work, contains a well-known plan (fig. 2) showing the great cruciform hall flanked by a rectangular court in the south and a group of three rooms in the north. The plan first appeared already blackened and, like all drawings in this style, has tended to divert attention from archaeological problems like the separation of building phases. There is no indication, first of all, that the partly sunken structure, which was made of dressed stone blocks rather than the usual mortared rubble, and which is actually
oriented differently from the rest of the building, almost certainly existed before the palace was built. Nor is there any indication that the massive walls defining what Ghirshman called the "triple iwan" were, as Keall recently pointed out, later additions, even though they partially covered the famous floor mosaics.

Ghirshman also published an aerial photograph of the city (fig. 3) showing its grid plan, the river, and the citadel at the mouth of the gorge. One can see that the entire northeast corner of the city was occupied by an enormous enclosure of some 27,000 square meters, whose southern limit and southwest corner are plainly visible. To the east is a depression which represents a great rectangular court measuring approximately 30 x 50 meters. In the centers of three sides are the remains of structures that were probably iwans. From the fourth side a broad corridor (which has since been cleared by Ali Akbar Sarfaraz) led to the excavated western portion of the palace which seems to have comprised less than seven percent of the whole.

Such scrutiny of a well-known photograph puts the palace of Shapur into a somewhat clearer perspective and has interesting implications for the thorny problem of functional interpretation not only of Bishapur but of the Sasanian palaces in general.

This interpretation has tended to follow two often interconnected lines. The first has been to take the sum total of all the nefarious activities that would have taken place in such palaces and make them fit the fragmentary remains. Here we are like the three blind men who describe the elephant variously as a snake, a tree, or a whale, depending on which part of the beast we happen to touch. The second is to see these buildings not as palaces at all but as fire temples. Almost all of the monuments now thought to have been Sasanian palaces have at one time or another been seen as temples, and some still are.

Once it is recognized that what we have come to think of as a more or less complete building is but a small portion of one, some difficulties disappear. We know from the Pahlavi inscription on the Kaba Zardash at Naqsh-i Rustam, for example, that the king and queen and members of the royal court made religious sacrifices on a daily basis, so we can assume that the palaces and perhaps smaller princely residences like those uncovered at Ctesiphon contained chapels of some sort. Most recently M. Azarnoush has argued that the palace of Shapur—by which he means the parts exposed by Ghirshman—was not a palace at all but a temple for the worship of Anahita. My arguments with him stem from the architectural analogies he made with his fragmentary building at Hajjiabad to the south, which I do not find convincing. But his conclusion is entirely reasonable, especially since the cruciform hall at Bishapur with its associated rooms and courts lies immediately adjacent to the sunken building at the edge of the great complex, which was, as A. A. Safaraz proposed, most likely an Anahita temple.

H. von Gall's theory that the Bishapur mosaics with their strong Dionysiac flavor alluded to the Bacchic pomp borrowed by Shapur from western rulers to celebrate his own military victories over the Romans would not contradict a cultic interpretation because Sasanian state religion had from the very beginning a strongly militaristic character. If the excavated portion of the building was indeed of a sacred nature, the secular activities and specifically the audience could have been located elsewhere in this vast complex, most likely in one of the iwans that opened on the great court. In the same vein, it seems entirely possible that if Sasanian Palaces I and II at Kish did originally belong to the same building, one locale could have served as an audience hall, the other as a chapel.

Perhaps the best example of how architectural drawings can cloud rather than clarify almost any issue is the so-called Imaret-i Khusrav, the palace of Khusrav II at Qasr-i Shirin. That this building can have played such an important role in the architectural history of the region is astonishing because Reuther's wonderful drawing (fig. 4) on which virtually all discussion has been based is a total fabrication. The building, which rose from a great platform, was in a ruined state long before de Morgan came through on his mission scientifique in the 1890s. But he managed to extract a plan which showed basically a series of bays around an open court, and an elaborate gate complex preceded by colonnades that were doubled at the front.

A few years later Gertrude Bell visited the site and produced another plan which looked vaguely like that of her predecessors except that, instead of rows of paired columns, she has a simple iwan hall of narrow proportions. Now Reuther, who gives no indication of having seen the place, recognized the inconsistencies of the two surveys and tried his hand, explaining that he has taken the liberty to make his own variation on a theme based on the columned buildings at Damghan.
and Kish which were just then coming to light, and the palace acquired a dome.

There is no doubt that a very large building once stood on this platform, and it may well have been the palace of Khusraw mentioned by the medieval geographers. But before using this drawing to discuss the nature of Sasanian gate complexes, the typical Sasanian arrangement of domed hall fronted by an iwan, or the basilical hall in Sasanian architecture, we should dwell for a moment on its pedigree. Bell informs us that in producing her survey she was sometimes obliged to make analogies with the better-preserved palace at Ukhaïdir in Iraq to fill in the missing parts,\(^{18}\) of which there were many. I suspect this is why Khusraw’s building has such a strong Abbasid flavor. Put less delicately, it seems to me a fine example of how Sasanian architecture can be influenced by early Islam.

The assumption that architectural design in any period is somehow influenced by that of the preceding one is not only reasonable but an underlying principle of architectural history. Due largely to the dearth of reliable archaeological data at the Sasanian end it has not been possible to define systematically the nature and extent of this relationship between the palaces of the Khushrahs and those of their Muslim successors. Studies have tended to focus on isolated features such as the four-iwan plan and the familiar combination of iwan and domed hall.

Two classes of evidence have fostered the widespread notion that there was a continuity in palace design in a more comprehensive sense, but they are largely circumstantial and of limited significance. The first is an extensive body of symbols and imagery originally associated with Sasanian kingship which survived in all media into the Umayyad period and later. Grabar, in his doctoral thesis of 1955 and in a number of later publications,\(^ {19}\) has dealt in great detail with Umayyad ceremonial as it is described in the Arab sources, relating it to the material remains as these have become available. He has shown how the Umayyad rulers were able to create for themselves an ambiance of princely splendor that was drawn in large measure from the defunct Persian court. He did not, however, press the issue of continuity of its architectural setting, noting that the desert castles of Syria, Jordan, and Palestine—virtually all that remains of Umayyad princely architecture—derived from local Roman and Byzantine traditions.

Second, a considerable number of Pahlavi works describing Sasanian court ceremonial survived into the later Middle Ages and were used by Muslim chroniclers. The Kitāb al-taj of Jahiz (d. 869), for example, seems to have incorporated much material from the Gahnamā, a notitia dignitatum of the Sasanians which listed according to rank all the dignitaries of the Persian monarchy.\(^ {20}\) As vital as such sources are for an understanding of internal politics in the royal court, they provide virtually no direct information about an architectural background.

The archaeological evidence for continuity of form and function is no less equivocal. The problem is best illustrated by considering briefly the setting for the audience. Very few Umayyad palaces, first of all, preserve locales that can be identified with reasonable certainty as throne rooms. Two of these are Mshatta and Khirbat al-Mafjar. At Mshatta\(^ {21}\) the throne complex lay at the back of the walled enclosure directly opposite the entrance gate, and consisted of a triconch preceded by a long hall open at the front that was divided into a broad central nave flanked by side aisles. At Khirbat al-Mafjar\(^ {22}\) the audience most likely took place, as Ettinghausen once demonstrated,\(^ {23}\) in a complex that included a pillared hall with a broad central aisle that led from a gate structure to an apsidal room at the back. The ensemble was richly decorated with mosaic and stucco that incorporated an elaborate program of images taken from Sasanian royal sources. Most striking are the stucco figure of a prince in Persian dress added to the gatehouse façade at a later time, and the stone chain and headdress which hung from the semidome, presumably above the throne.

Two points can be made here, the first being that neither the triconch nor the pillared hall is known in Sasanian palace architecture and indeed would seem to be quite uncharacteristic. The second is that while the Umayyad audience could apparently take place in any number of architectural settings, the Sasanian audience was connected primarily, if not exclusively, with the iwan hall, with or without a domed chamber in back. This is certainly the impression one gets from the Muslim sources which deal specifically with the Arch of Chosroes. But the Sasanian monuments themselves insofar as we know them give the same impression.

The so-called Taqi Girra, which probably dates to the Middle Sasanian period, seems to reproduce the form of an iwan hall, and cuttings in the floor and at the back suggest that it held a statue,
most likely a royal one.\textsuperscript{24} The rock-cut iwans at Taq-i Bustan, richly decorated in relief with royal imagery, may actually have been provided with a throne.\textsuperscript{25} In Qal‘a Dukhtar, the royal audience certainly took place in the great iwan hall at the center of the building. Huff, noting the window opening high at the back, and a fragmentary stone basin discovered in the middle terrace, compared the arrangement with seventeenth-century pavilions in Isfahan which accommodated the Safavid audience and had windows in the upper story from which courtiers could view the official activity taking place below.\textsuperscript{26}

In a detailed analysis of Mshatta, Hillenbrand plays down the importance of the forms of the individual halls as indicators of Sasanian influence, stressing instead their arrangement with an open court along a single axis: “Functionally, there is very little to choose between the Partho-Sasanian formula of an iwan preceding a domed chamber and the classically inspired formula of a basilical hall preceding a triconch audience chamber.”\textsuperscript{27} He continues his general argument for Sasanian influence in late Umayyad palace architecture by pointing to the vaulting in this official area at Mshatta, suggesting first that its pitched brick construction was inspired by Sasanian architecture—most likely the palace at Ctesiphon, where the brick rings also incline towards the rear wall—and second, that the very use of brick vaulting in the audience complex of a stone building may have been intended as a reference to the Taq-i Kisra where brick was also used “for the area most closely associated with the sovereign.”\textsuperscript{28} The fact remains, however, that while the great vault of Ctesiphon is indeed built of brick, the rest of the building is also, and tunnel vaults of pitched brick laid vertically or in inclined rings are common enough in Byzantine architecture.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, while it is true that Mshatta has a strong Iranian flavor, the nature and extent of Sasanian influence is difficult to define. It seems to have consisted of little more than an axial disposition of the halls and court at the official center of the palace and the deployment of Sasanian royal symbols in the carved ornament.

An intriguing example of Umayyad palace architecture of some relevance here is the complex at the northern edge of the Amman citadel, which seems to have been built and decorated in the Sasanian mode.\textsuperscript{30} Constructed in the local cut-stone technique, its nucleus consisted of a domed chamber fronted by an iwan hall that opened on an inner court. Its unmistakably Persian aspect derives from a vocabulary of decorative motifs clearly originating in Sasanian stucco. The articulation of the court wall of the qasr, a kind of entrance building, with tiers of niches framing the iwan arches, makes, on a miniature scale, an emphatic allusion to the Taq-i Kisra at Ctesiphon, the great palace of the Sasanian kings.\textsuperscript{31}

There have been attempts to establish a second type of Sasanian audience complex based on what are in fact strong similarities between the building at Damghan at the core of the Umayyad dār al-imāra at Kufa.\textsuperscript{32} But the two major buildings normally pressed into service to form a class—Sarvistan and Qasr-i Shirin—are of dubious value. Since Sarvistan can no longer be attributed to the Sasanians,\textsuperscript{33} and since the Imaret-i Khusraw is a fantasy based partly on Damghan itself, the arrangement at Damghan must remain an anomaly, one whose precise function is unclear.

There is ample evidence that the Abbasid caliphs followed the Umayyads in incorporating Sasanian practices into their ceremonial,\textsuperscript{34} but their palaces, insofar as we know them from Samarra and isolated monuments like Ukhaidir, had fewer affinities with Sasanian architecture than might be expected. They are characterized by their sprawling plans that contained a great number of units, and consisted most typically of courts in series connected by gate structures around which were grouped numerous bays of fairly uniform format.\textsuperscript{35}

The Abbasid gate complexes were architecturally significant and had ceremonial importance.\textsuperscript{36} But whether these or the Umayyad palace gateways before them owed anything to the Sasanians is a moot question, as little Sasanian gate architecture survives. The unit is known only in the very early Qal‘a Dukhtar where the layout and built-in features suggest a reception area rather than a place of appearances.\textsuperscript{37}

Sasanian influence becomes a real factor only with the cruciform grouping of rooms which were clearly the focus of these complexes. There are two variants. The first, found in all the major palaces of Samarra, consisted of four axial iwans fronting a domed room.\textsuperscript{38} In the second, represented at Samarra only by the “resthouse” behind the mihrab of the Abu Dulaf Mosque, four iwans open on a central court.\textsuperscript{39} The first type is known also from the dār al-imāra of Abu Muslim at Merv and probably formed the nucleus of the great palace of al-Mansur at Baghdad.\textsuperscript{40}

To re-create the ceremonial of an earlier dynasty one needs a reason for doing so and some
genuine text to serve as a guide. Something of the physical ambiance can be reproduced by copying a courtly style of stucco decoration or metalwork from examples that in the early Islamic period must have survived in ample quantities. Continuity in ceremonial practice also implies a parallel re-creation of architectural features to provide a proper framework.

It is very likely that the audience ensembles of both Abbasid and late Umayyad palaces derived from Sasanian models. Whatever symbolic value such appropriations might have had for the early Muslims, these ensembles were eminently suited to an audience ceremony that began with a revelation in which the ruler was stationary.

It might be useful at this point to consider the question of what early Muslim builders and their princely patrons could have known about the palace architecture of the Sasanian kings. In Western tradition, concepts of architectural planning and details of construction are often transmitted by a process involving the close observation of existing monuments and their description in architectural treatises. This process is exemplified by Vitruvius, that Roman architect of the first century B.C. who traveled about examining earlier monuments of architecture in order to establish principles for practicing architects and builders of his own day.

This antiquarian, indeed forensic, approach to architecture is nowhere in evidence in the early Islamic period. We do have references in geographical and historical works to dozens of palaces, princely residences, hunting lodges, and garden pavilions. Their authors refer to wonders of construction and decoration such as columns in the shape of women and blocks of stone so finely worked that the joins were invisible. Their main purpose, aside from marking a conspicuous feature of a locale, was to impress the reader with certain qualities of the original occupant. But they contain no information that would enable a builder to understand these remarkable monuments in architectural terms.

Even imagining a prince with archaeological inclinations, it is difficult to say, given the paucity of available data about the post-Sasanian histories of the Sasanian palaces, what information remained to be gathered. Some were already in ruins when Yazdigerd fled the capital for the Iranian plateau. Dastagird and Qasr-i Shirin, for example, had been totally demolished by Heraclius in the sixth century.

Excavations at Firuzabad and Bishapur have shown that the palaces there were occupied into the early Islamic period, but we do not know how the buildings were used or how far their physical integrity was appreciated and respected. At Takht-i-Sulayman we have in the Ilkhanid period a rare case of builders incorporating Sasanian walls which then determined the plan of the new palace.

As a result of recent survey work at Samarra, the remains of a large Sasanian palace have been identified immediately adjacent to the Qasr al-Jafari of al-Mutawakkil. The Sasanian building was renovated when the Abbasid palace was constructed in 859–62, at which time a substantial water tank with supply channels and drains was built into it. Certain features, notably a series of courtyards and public rooms, have been tentatively located in the unexcavated debris, and there was apparently a hunting enclosure nearby which was used into the Abbasid period. Further work there may provide some insight into the caliph’s attitude towards the buildings of a Sasanian predecessor.

The rulers of certain Iranian dynasties of the early Islamic period must have had a special interest in Sasanian palace architecture. The Muslim Buyids, for example, traced their lineage back to the Sasanian kings, and a few of them are known to have displayed an active interest in the ancient monarchy. A Mundar al-Dawla, who rebuilt the Sasanian capital of Gur, renaming it Firuzabad, appears as a Sasanian ruler on coins minted in Fars that bear the Persian title shahanshah. He proudly recorded at Persepolis a visit he made to the site in the company of a mobad from Kazarun who read to him an inscription in Pahlavi. The founder of the line from which the Buyids emerged is said to have dreamed of conquering Iraq, rebuilding the palace at Ctesiphon, and reestablishing an Iranian state based on the ancient Zoroastrian religion. Unfortunately, we have little Buyid architecture of any kind, and none of the palaces that were described by contemporary authors have survived.

Finally, I would like to return to the great palace in Ctesiphon which was probably erected by Khusraw II in the sixth century. When the Arab commander entered the Sasanian capital in 637, he led the Friday prayers in the throne hall and, from that moment, the building assumed great symbolic significance to the Muslims. This is perhaps most dramatically expressed in the often cited passage in al-Khutib al-Baghdadi’s introduction to his history of Baghdad which
describes al-Mansur’s demolition of the Iwan-i Kisra and the reuse of its bricks for his own palace. He relates how al-Mansur proceeded despite a council of non-Arab advisers who argued that the palace was a monument to the Arab victory over the Persian kings, but how the caliph desisted only when the undertaking proved too vast. Al-Tabari offers a variant in which an adviser now recommended pushing on at all costs lest the caliph’s inability to destroy the palace damage his prestige in the eyes of his Persian subjects.

Whether or not such anecdotes reflect historical reality, they are interesting because they illustrate what seems to be the real significance the monuments of the Persian kings had for their Muslim successors. When we consider these accounts alongside the quasi-historical traditions and romances which later grew up around this and other Sasanian monuments like Taq-i Bustan and Takht-i Sulayman in Iran, it becomes clear that the influence of the Sasanian palaces on early Islam was largely in the realm of poetry and metaphor.

There is no doubt that early Muslim rulers looked to their Sasanian predecessors for means by which to express a concept of kingship in architectural as well as ceremonial terms. But the resulting adaptations were usually so subtle and complete that they defy attempts to isolate the various components. There is no evidence that early Muslim princes sought to imitate the Sasanian palace in a comprehensive sense and it is doubtful that there was readily available sufficient archaeological information to do so. When Sasanian influence is evident at all, it is invariably seen in the official portions, more specifically in the throne-room ensemble which must have embodied for writers and builders alike the essence of Sasanian imperium.
Notes


2. Erich Schmidt, Excavations at Tepe Hissar, Damghan (Philadelphia, 1937), 327 ff. and fig. 170.

3. Pope, Survey, 1:fig. 166 (drawn by Oscar Reuther).


8. My own compass reading taken in 1976 showed a variance of about two degrees.


10. Salles and Ghirshman, Bichâpour, 2:pl. I.


15. Pope, Survey, 1:plan, fig. 153 with reconstruction, fig. 154.


18. Bell, Palace and Mosque, 44–51.


20. See Arthur Christensen, L'Iran sous les Sassanides (Copenhagen, 1944), 62 f.


32. For example, Oleg Grabar, “Al-Mushatta, Baghdad,

33. For a date of construction in the ninth century, see Lionel Bier, *Sarvistan: A Study in Early Iranian Architecture* (University Park, Penn., 1986), passim.


38. See Yasser Tabbaa’s discussion of the four-iwan plan in this volume.


45. Muqaddasi, for example, reported that 'Adud al-Dawla built a palace with 360 rooms, each decorated in a different style, in the vicinity of Shiraz. See Donald Whitcomb, *Before the Roses and Nightingales: Excavations at Qasi-abi Nasr, Old Shiraz* (New York, 1985), 140 ff., for the topographic problems.


Fig. 1. Reuther’s plans of Palaces I and II at Kish combined as a single building. From A. U. Pope, ed., *A Survey of Persian Art*.

Fig. 2. Plan of the palace at Bishapur. After George Salles and Roman Ghirshman, *Bishapour*, vol. 2, plan II.
Fig. 3. Aerial photograph of Bishapur showing (a) iwans or gateways and (b) Anahita temple.

Fig. 4. Reconstruction of Imaret-i Khusraw, by Reuther. From A. U. Pope, ed., A Survey of Persian Art, vol. 1, fig. 154.
LATE-ANTIQUE PALACES: THE MEANING OF URBAN CONTEXT

By SLOBODAN ĆURČIĆ

Late-antique palaces have attracted considerable scholarly attention, despite the fact that not a single complex or building from that time has survived intact. To make matters worse, not a single room from any of these palaces has been preserved with its original decoration or furniture in place. To comprehend the magnitude of the problem, one would have to imagine, for example, the study of palatine architecture in the age of Louis XIV relying on the foundation walls of Versailles or, for that matter, of the Ottoman palatine tradition without the Topkapi Palace. Yet, notwithstanding such discouraging odds, the subject of late-antique palaces is highly deserving of further attention.

At the moment, we stand at an important scholarly watershed in late-antique palatine studies. The subject has been persistently, if somewhat unevenly, explored by specialists in various disciplines, while the body of physical evidence, owing to new archaeological discoveries, has continued to grow during the past few decades. This, I believe, presents us with an opportunity and a responsibility to attempt to break the present major historiographical stalemate that has resulted from polarized views formulated by proponents of very different methods of investigation. The views of the older and the more numerous of these two groups were articulated by such scholars as Karl Swoboda and Ejnar Dyggve, among others. Their method of investigation, largely typological and iconographic, led to the establishment of certain convenient clichés which, all too easily, have become fossilized in general scholarly literature. The most prolific exponent of the opposing group has been Noël Duval. His method, which he would define as “archaeological,” for all the validity of some of his critical remarks, has evolved into a veritable crusade against the “methodological establishment.” His often too obsessive criticalism has tended to obscure some very relevant issues through his insistence on, among other things, an over-restrictive application of terms such as “palace” and “palatine.”

These terms are, to be sure, problematic and require prudent consideration. In insisting on “correct” terminology, however, we must bear in mind that the existing ambiguities had their origins in late-antique times. The late-antique authors themselves not uncommonly used such seemingly distinct terms as palatium and villa loosely and even interchangeably. That attitude is certainly deserving of our attention, as it may reveal more than mere sloppiness in the use of classical literary standards. This, however, is a separate subject, too large to be dealt with here.

In this paper, I propose to reexamine a fundamental aspect of late-antique palatine architecture—its urban setting and its interaction with, and borrowing from, that urban setting. In the process, I also hope to clarify some of the semantic dilemmas which confront us.

The first and essential step of my investigation is to come to terms with the phenomenon of proliferation of imperial palaces. Inasmuch as its most obvious phase should be associated with the period of the first Tetrarchy, established by Diocletian in 293, this was actually a process with a much longer history. It was already remarked on by Cassius Dio, earlier in the third century, who noted that the term palatium was to be understood as implying any dwelling occupied by an emperor. This important conceptual notion was given new physical reality during the Tetrarchy, when several imperial palace complexes came into being in major cities in the Roman Empire. As Rome herself ceased to be the center of imperial power, so the imperial residence on the Palatine Hill ceased to be the imperial palatium. The new Tetrarchic palaces at Trier, Milan, Thessaloniki, Antioch, and other centers, all built during the last decade of the third and the first decade of the fourth centuries, were conceptually indebted to the palatine prototype in Rome, notwithstanding the innovative idiosyncrasies of their own planning and architecture. The particular aspects of the Roman palatium which were emulated had to do with the topographical and functional relationship between the palace and the city. Some of these, especially the huge hippodromes situated alongside palatine complexes, have already received considerable attention in scholarship. I will therefore concentrate on examining other aspects of late-antique palaces and their urban settings and on the impact of urban forms on late-Roman palatine architecture in general.
Turning to two specific examples, I will begin with the imperial palace at Antioch, built most probably by Emperor Diocletian in the last years of the third century.\textsuperscript{11} Nothing of this palace complex has survived, and the archaeological excavations conducted in the general area of its presumed location were not successful in uncovering its remains.\textsuperscript{12} Yet, a literary account, written in 360 by the writer Libanius, provides us with some invaluable insights into the very question of the relationship between the palace and its urban setting.\textsuperscript{13} The following quotation is taken from Glanville Downey’s translation of Libanius’s \textit{Oration XI}:

\begin{quote}
[203]. . . The new city stands on the island which the division of the river formed. . . . [204] The form of this new city is round. It lies on the level part of the plain, the whole of it an exact plan, and an unbroken wall surrounds it like a crown. From four arches which are joined to each other in the form of a rectangle, four pairs of stoas proceed as from an omphalos, stretched out toward each quarter of the heaven. . . . [205] Three of these pairs, running as far as the wall, are joined to its circuit, while the fourth is shorter, but is the more beautiful just in proportion as it is shorter, since it runs toward the palace . . . and serves as the approach to it. [206] This palace occupies so much of the island that it constitutes a fourth part of the whole. It reaches to the middle of the island, which we have called an omphalos, and extends to the outer branch of the river, so that where the wall has columns instead of battlements, there is a view worthy of the emperor, with the river flowing below and the suburbs feasting the eye on all sides.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

Further on Libanius states: “[232] . . . the district in front of the palace shares the grandeur within, even though it is itself inferior to what is within.”\textsuperscript{15} Here Libanius evidently refers to a relatively open area surrounding the short approach avenue to the palace. It is within this space, it would seem, that Emperor Constantine built his famous Great Church in 327.\textsuperscript{16} Libanius, a pagan, makes no mention of this monument, but the Christian court historian Eusebius describes it in some detail.\textsuperscript{17} The large church was octagonal in form, and was surrounded by open porticoes.

Libanius’s description of the imperial palace in Antioch has been used by modern historians, most notably by Downey, in attempts to reconstruct its layout in the most general outlines (fig. 1). My purpose for bringing it up again is to draw attention to a number of specific points, the significance of some of which has been noted inadequately or not at all.

1. Libanius makes an important point that the palace was built within a \textit{new city}.
2. This new city was located on an island in the Orontes river, and was completely enclosed within a \textit{circuit of fortification walls}.
3. The palace itself was very large and occupied a \textit{full fourth} of the area within the new city.
4. In front of the palace lay an intersection of two major colonnaded avenues (“stoas”), their crossing marked by a quadrifrons (“omphalos”; also referred to as the “Tetrapylon of the Elephants” by Malalas).
5. Three stretches of these colonnaded avenues emanating from the quadrifrons led to three fortified \textit{city gates} within the enclosing wall.
6. The fourth, much shorter avenue (referred to as the “Regia” by Malalas) was more beautiful than the other three, and led to the entrance into the palace proper.
7. One flank of the palace abutted the circuit wall, in place of whose battlements in that area was a \textit{colonnaded gallery} providing a splendid view.

Precisely the same features can be recognized in the remains of the palace of Diocletian at Split (figs. 2 and 3).\textsuperscript{18} It was located on a bay, its main exterior exposure taking advantage of the view through an open-arcaded gallery replacing the battlements of the fortification walls much as in Libanius’s description of the palace at Antioch (figs. 4 and 5).\textsuperscript{19} As at Antioch, too, the palace is preceded by a system of intersecting arcaded avenues, their crossing marked by a monumental quadrifrons arch, whose foundations were brought to light in recent archaeological excavations.\textsuperscript{20} Three of the four arms of these intersecting avenues terminate in elaborate fortified gates in the circuit wall. The fourth arm, shorter than the rest, has a pavement at a level lower than the other avenues, and is approached by three steps. Opposite the quadrifrons, the short avenue—generally, if mistakenly, referred to as the “peri-style”—leads up to the monumental protoyron which marks the entrance into the palace proper (fig. 6).\textsuperscript{21}

The palace proper, as can be judged from the general plan, occupies approximately one-fourth of the fortified enclosure, as was the case with the Antioch palace. Fronting it is a large, basically open area consisting of two distinctive parts. The first, closer to the palace, was actually lower and related to its basement level (figs. 3, 4, and 6). The second part was made of two walled-in court-
yards flanking the so-called peristyle. The western of these courtyards contained three small temples; the eastern one the octagonal mausoleum of Diocletian (figs. 2, 3, and 4). This entire area fronting the palace proper was apparently accessible to the public, and would have corresponded to the open spaces which flanked the Reggia at Antioch, described by Libanius as "the district in front of the palace [which] shares the grandeur within."22

The key remaining unknown in this comparison of the palace at Split with that at Antioch is what function the fortified enclosure beyond the palace proper served at Split. At Antioch, as Libanius informs us, the corresponding area was built up; it was the "new city," as he calls it.23 At Split this remains a gray area in our understanding of the complex as a whole. Only fragmentary remains, insufficient to yield any kind of comprehensive knowledge about the general character of the northern half of the fortified enclosure, have been archaeologically explored. A general ex silentio conclusion among scholars is that the area was most likely occupied by the emperor's guard, horse stables, workshops, and other related facilities.24

I would like to introduce a different line of thought and, basing my thinking in a preliminary manner on the analogy of Antioch, propose that the fortified enclosure at Split was, in fact, a small city and that the area in question was a residential district. At first, such an idea may strike one as improbable.25 Why should, one might ask, such a small fortified city have been built not far from the already existing large city of Salona? The answer is found in the example of Antioch where a relatively small fortified new city was built on an island, adjacent to a major existing city.

If this admittedly vague analogy does not fully satisfy us, we may turn to other forms of information which support the proposed notion that the so-called palace of Diocletian at Split was, in fact, a small city with a palace in it. The first of these is an internal piece of evidence—found in the upper frieze decorating the interior of the mausoleum of Diocletian.26 Amidst the high-relief scenes depicting erotes hunting and carrying garlands with masks, we find three imagines dipeatae within laurel wreaths. One of these depicts Hermes Psychopompos, and the other two depict Emperor Diocletian and a woman, identified in scholarship as his wife Prisca (figs. 7a and 7b).27 Skirting the question why a wife's portrait would have been appropriate in a major public building built for an emperor who had abandoned the traditional system of dynastic succession to the imperial throne, it behooves us to examine the head of the lady more closely. We discover that she is wearing a type of headgear resembling a crown, which would not commonly have been worn by women, not even an empress, at this time. The headgear is, in fact, a mural crown worn by a tyche, or personification of a city. An important confirmation of such an idea—the juxtaposing of an imperial imago clipeata with that of a tyche—is found on a small, highly decorated marble arch of an unknown function, excavated in the imperial palace in Thessaloniki (fig. 8).28 The front of this arch displays two imagines clipeatae: the one on the right contains the portrait of Diocletian's co-emperor Galerius; the one on the left is a tyche, in all likelihood the personification of Thessaloniki. As at Antioch, the construction of the new imperial palace in Thessaloniki appears to have involved the addition of a whole new sector to the existing city, warranting the perception that Galerius was a city founder, as suggested by this pairing of his portrait with the image of the city tyche.

At Thessaloniki, Galerius is thought to have planned his burial in a large mausoleum, situated on the main axis leading toward the entrance to the palace proper. Now known as the Rotunda of St. George, this building evidently never did serve as an imperial mausoleum.29 A passage from Epitome de Caesaribus indicates that Galerius died and was buried in a new town which he had built and named in the memory of his mother Romula.30 A recent archaeological discovery of an inscription at the site of Gamzigrad, in eastern Serbia, supports an earlier suspicion that Gamzigrad was, indeed, Romuliana.31 At Romuliana, it would seem, we have the final confirmation that during the period of the Tetrarchy small-scale fortified new towns outfitted with imperial palaces were being built simultaneously with major additions to the newly established imperial capitals (fig. 10). Particularly relevant in this context is the following comment by Libanius, in reference to the size of the imperial palace at Antioch: "I believe that, if this palace stood by itself in some insignificant city, such as are numerous in Thrace, where a few huts form the cities, it would give the one that possessed it good reason to claim a proud position in the catalogue of cities."32 Is it not possible, then, that the complex at Split was originally a small city, built by Diocletian in the general area of his birth, and dedicated to the memory of his own mother?33 While the name of
this town remains a mystery, the preserved personification of this city, juxtaposed with the bust of Diocletian in his mausoleum, is an important indication that such a concept was, indeed, implemented.

The second phase of the fortification walls at Romuliana, also built during the Tetrarchy, is characterized by immense polygonal towers, measuring fifty to sixty feet in diameter. The west and the east side of the complex featured imposing twin-tower gates, whose elaborately decorated façades can be hypothetically reconstructed (fig. 11). Such symbolic imagery no doubt was intended to reflect the imperial presence within these walls. It would appear, also, on the basis of the examples at Split (the Golden Gate) and Trier (Porta Nigra), that during this period city gates—at least on a symbolic level—began to be associated with imperial palaces. This postulated process is confirmed by such later examples as the late-fifth-century seaside palace at Polače on the island of Mljet (ancient Meleda) on the coast of Dalmatia (figs. 12 and 13), and by the early-sixth-century palace of Theodoric in Verona, known only from a literary description (Anonymous Valesianus) and from a tenth-century drawing (Iconographia Rateriana).

A different, but related, manner of borrowing urban architectural forms for use in palatine architecture is seen in the relatively common employment of triumphal arches, mostly of the quadrifrons variety, close to the points of entry into palatine complexes. We have noted such a feature at Antioch and Split, but the finest partially preserved example is the so-called Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki. This huge quadrifrons with lateral extensions was built to commemorate the emperor’s victory over the Persians in 297, and was appropriately decorated with reliefs illustrating the various episodes from this war. The arch was constructed so as to span the Via Egnatia, the main east-west road passing through Thessaloniki; its lesser axis related to the vestibule of the imperial palace to the south and the rotunda planned as the mausoleum for Galerius at the north end (fig. 14).

Interesting adaptations of such triumphal arches are found in two extra-urban palatine complexes. The earlier of the two, dating from the Tetrarchic period, is the well-known villa at Piazza Armerina in Sicily, whose postulated imperial ownership has recently been challenged (fig. 15). Here the approach to the entrance into the villa proper led through a triple archway, with a large colonnaded courtyard behind it. This courtyard appears to have served a function similar to that of the short avenue—the Regia—in front of the palace at Antioch, or the so-called peristyle in front of the palace proper at Split.

The second example, probably dating from around 421, is the so-called Palace of the Giants in Athens, in the area of the ancient Agora, but at the time of its construction situated outside of the city wall dating from a.d. 267 (fig. 16). The patronage of this large palatine complex has been linked to Empress Eudocia, the wife of Emperor Theodosius II. Here the triple archway was supported by reused statues of giants and tritons, originally belonging to the Antonine remodeling of the porch in front of the Odeion of Agrippa. Beyond this triple archway one would have entered a large colonnaded forecourt, and only from there the actual palace proper. The ostentatious nature of the arcuated approaches, both at Piazza Armerina and at the Palace of the Giants, leaves no doubt as to their deliberate borrowing of known urban architectural forms—i.e., triumphal arches—and employing them in palatine contexts in extra-urban settings. We may postulate that the specific borrowed urban architectural motif had by this time lost its direct urban connotations. Seen in another way, we may suggest that it was actually lending an urban aura to palaces outside the city.

Closely related to the colonnaded forecourts at both Piazza Armerina and the Palace of the Giants, we find baths (figs. 15 and 16). The one at Piazza Armerina was directly accessible from the villa, as well as from the forecourt, suggesting that it may have had more than merely a private function. The location of other bathing establishments in comparable locations in related complexes leads us to the same conclusion. Libanius, in his Oration XI, mentions baths in reference to the “new city” on several occasions, but unfortunately, he does not specify where they were. A luxurious residence, built and modified from the second through the fifth century, has come to light at Paphos, on Cyprus, and has been labeled the “House of Theseus” because its wealthy occupants remain unknown (fig. 17). As large in floor area as the villa at Piazza Armerina, the House of Theseus was also equipped with a large bathing establishment in its southeast corner, accessible both from the exterior and from within.

Archaeological excavations conducted in Split in recent years have revealed the remains of two baths, situated in the open area, just in front of
the palace proper (figs. 2 and 3). The placement of these baths at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, at Piazza Armerina, and in the House of Theseus at Paphos suggests that these were deliberately and routinely planned arrangements, presumably reflecting some functional requirements which, for the moment, elude us. While research into this question must continue, it is possible to hypothesize that these baths were open to the outside so that invited visitors and their retinues could refresh themselves before being formally admitted into the residence itself. Nor should we ignore the possibility that they may also have had a security-related role, in addition to the postulated, more hospitable, social function.

The preceding observations on the links between the late-antique imperial palaces and the urban environment, as well as the phenomenon of later palatine borrowings from urban forms, can be fruitfully summarized by turning to the late-antique imperial palace par excellence, the Great Palace in Constantinople. Though archaeological evidence in this case is meager, the written sources facilitate a hypothetical reconstruction of the critical aspects of this complex which are of particular relevance to this discussion (fig. 18).

The Great Palace was begun by Constantine I, with the aim of replacing the imperial palatium in the abandoned capital city of Rome. In a general sense, it followed in the tradition of Tetrarchic imperial palaces. Conceptually, it also emulated the Roman prototype in general outlines, most notably by virtue of a large hippodrome along its western flank. The subsequent augmentations of the palace of Constantine paralleled the rapid growth of the city itself (fig. 19). By the sixth century, the major components of the palace complex within its urban setting were sufficiently established to permit the following summary:

1. The capital city was enclosed by a circuit of fortification walls built initially by Constantine I. In 412–13, this circuit of walls was replaced by a larger, more sophisticated one built by Emperor Theodosius II to protect a much larger urbanized area. The imperial palace occupied a site overlooking the Sea of Marmara at the southeastern edge of the peninsula on which the city was located.

2. The main city gate, known as the “Golden Gate,” was also built under Emperor Theodosius II (fig. 20). Its triple-arch design and its marble facing both allude to triumphal arch imagery, deliberately utilized here as an appropriate way of declaring the imperial presence within the city walls.

3. The major colonnaded avenue—the so-called Mese—led from the Golden Gate to the imperial palace.

4. Near the palace, the Mese terminated at a large quadrifrons arch, called the Milion. This arch, appropriately decorated with statues of various members of the imperial family, also contained a milestone from which the distances from the capital city were measured. Thus, the Milion was the “omphalos” of Constantinople, in the same sense as the Tetrakylon of the Elephants was in Antioch.

5. Beyond the Milion, and leading up to the palace gate known as the Chalke, was a short but impressive colonnaded avenue, referred to as the Reggia. Similar arrangements, as we have already seen, existed at Antioch and at Split. In all three cases, the short avenue was part of the public domain, though ceremonially linked to the palace. To the north of the Reggia in Constantinople was a large public square, the so-called Augusteum, with its display of imperial monuments and statuary.

6. On the opposite, south side of the Reggia were the baths of Zeuësios. This large bathing establishment was strategically situated in such a way that it was probably accessible to the public as well as to the occupants of the Great Palace.

7. The large hippodrome, along with the baths of Zeuësios, the Reggia, and the Augustaon, must be perceived as a kind of semi-open buffer zone, which separated the Great Palace proper from the city. In addition to providing a greater degree of security for the palace, this buffer zone must have also prevented the spread of fires from the congested city, where such disasters must have been commonplace.

8. The Great Palace in Constantinople by all accounts was not laid out on a regular rectangular plan, as was the case with the palace at Split and possibly at Antioch. Yet, as at Split and Antioch, a section of the palace abutting the sea walls in all likelihood did feature an open gallery (galleries?) overlooking the Sea of Marmara.

In conclusion, then, the urban character of late-antique imperial palaces is not in doubt. My paper has aimed at reexamining the meaning of “urban context” as a function of time. The
process of change, as we saw, appears to have begun with the increased mobility of Roman emperors in the course of the third century. By the end of that century and as part of the Tetrarchic reforms, a multiplicity of imperial residences was given new meaning through the establishment of new capitals, each equipped with its own imperial palatium. The creation of new capitals entailed large additions to the existing cities and often, as in the case of Antioch and Thessaloniki, these additions were regarded as “new cities.” In other cases, and for different reasons, miniature fortified cities, such as those of Romuliana and Split, were built. These contained minuscule urban quarters, of little more than symbolic significance, alongside imperial residences and mausolea of their founders. At this stage, it is quite apparent that the traditional meaning of both terms—city and palace—had already undergone a dramatic change. Furthermore, the Tetrarchic examples reveal major differences in scale and in physical layout. Here, the results of new research reveal both the manner and the degree to which earlier scholars, who sought to define typological or iconographic formulas, had gone astray. At the same time, late-antique imperial palaces are not without a common denominator, as Duval would have it. The major binding factor in their design, it would seem, was in their topographical layout. Various symbolic elements appear to have been used in standardized sequences, relating palaces to—and at the same time setting them apart from—their urban settings. Such relationships could and did exist, regardless of the scale or any particular abstract qualities, such as axiality or symmetry, of the layout.

An attempt at thwarting the process of change was made by Constantine the Great, who sought to reestablish a single imperial capital—Constantinople—with a single imperial palace in it. His efforts were relatively short-lived, and the multiplication and diffusion of palatine structures continued. During the second half of the fourth and throughout the fifth century, various “palaces,” imperial and non-imperial, were built, often in the suburbs or the country. In such cases, the sense of urban topography was commonly recreated by symbolic means. It would appear that, as the late-antique city underwent the process of irreversible decline, the traditional sense of the Roman urban palatium became more and more diffused. The palace at Polače, on the island of Mjet (Meleda), is the ultimate product of this long process. In it we see the various elements taken from the urban setting, along with the essential components of palatine architecture, all molded into a compact architectural statement. By the end of the fifth century, then, the process of the dissolution of the Roman urban palatium was essentially finished, as the new concept of a fortified, self-sufficient, urban or extraurban palace block—so familiar in the medieval and the Islamic world—began to emerge.
Notes

1. There is no good general survey on the subject of Roman and late-antique palaces. Alexander G. McKay, Houses, Villas and Palaces in the Roman World (Ithaca, 1975), is superficial. Karl M. Swoboda, Römische and Romanische Paläste, 3rd ed. (Vienna, Cologne, Graz, 1969), was the first serious attempt at addressing this vast subject. First published in 1918, it has been republished and updated twice, but though it continues to be used as the most authoritative book on the subject, it is seriously outdated on several accounts.

2. The subject of late-antique palaces has been addressed, among others, by Fergus Millar, The Emperor in the Roman World (Ithaca, 1977), esp. 40–57; and Sabine G. McCormack, Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1981), passim. Among the most important archaeological discoveries of late-antique imperial residences in recent decades are those of the villa of Maxentius on the Via Appia outside Rome, at Sirmium, and at Gamzigrad. For the complex on the Via Appia, see Giuseppe Pisani Santorio and Raisa Calza, La villa di Massenzio sulla Via Appia, I monumenti Romani, 6 (Rome, 1976); also Lucos Cozza et al., La residenza imperiale di Massenzio: Villa, circo e mausoleo (Rome, 1980). For Sirmium, see Vladimir Popović and Edward Ochsenschlager, “Der spätkaiserzeitlichen Hippodrom in Sirmium,” Germania 54 (1976): 156–81. For Gamzigrad, see Dragoslav Srejović, “Felix Romaniana, Palais impérial ou . . . ?,” Stariiniar, n.s. 37 (1986): 94–102, and also n. 31 below.

3. Swoboda, Römische Paläste; E. Dyggey, Ravennatum Palatium Sacrum. La basilica iperale per cerimonie. Studii sull'architettura dei palazzi della tarda antichità (Copenhagen, 1941), is the best known of Dyggey’s several studies dealing with the subject of late-antique palace architecture.


6. Particularly instructive is the case of Emperor Diocletian’s residence at Spalathos (Spalato; modern Split). The confusion among the ancient authors writing about this complex was analyzed by Fran Budić and Ljubo Karaman, Palača cara Diokletijana u Splitu (Zagreb, 1927), 12–13. They pointed out that certain ancient authors (Eutropius, Tiro Prosper) refer to Diocletian’s residence as a villa, while others (notably St. Jerome, cod. Ldeg.) use a curious formula in vilar suae palatii. The term palation was used in the late tenth century by Constantine Porphyrogenetos. Thomas F. Magnier, “Aspalathos, Spalaton, Split,” in Classics and the Classical Tradition, ed. E. N. Borza and R. W. Carrubba (University Park, 1973), 95–116, offers an extensive etymological analysis of the problem. More recently the issue has been analyzed again by Tadeusz Zawadzki, “La résidence de Dioclétien à Spalatum. Sa dénomination dans l’Antiquité,” Museum Helveticum 44, fasc. 3 (1987): 223–30 (I am grateful to Mark Johnson for bringing this reference to my attention). Zawadzki concludes that there was: (1) considerable flexibility in using terms such as villa and palatium in late antiquity, and (2) that changes in meaning were a function of time. He, along with Budić and others before him, rejects any etymological links between the term palatium and the name of the location—Spalatum (Aspalatum). N. Duval, “Le ‘Palais’ de Diocletian at Spalato,” 90, troubled by the modern uses (and misuses) of the terms villa and palace, proposes that the residence of Diocletian at Split would best be referred to as a “château” (a fortified residence). I find that the introduction of the term château (first employed by Ernest Hébrard and Jacques Zeller, Spalato: Le palais de Diocletien [Paris, 1912]), confuses rather than clarifies the issue. The term, however, has met with some approval; cf. J. J. Wilkes, Diocletian’s Palace, Split: Residence of a Retired Emperor (Sheffield, 1986), esp. 56–66. Paradoxically, Wilkes, as is the case with John B. Ward Perkins, Roman Imperial Architecture, Pelican History of Art, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, 1981), 454–59, continues to use the term “palace” in titles and illustration captions, while describing the complex as a “fortified villa” or a “château” in their texts. Thus, in 1992, we seem to be no closer to having solved the terminological dilemma than were the scholars.
who first started addressing the problem two generations ago.

7. A brief but helpful historical introduction to the subject is given by Millar, Emperor, 40-53.

8. “Thus even when the Emperor is residing somewhere else, the place where he is staying is still called the Palatium” (Cassius Dio: The Augustan Settlement (Roman History 53–55.9), ed. J. W. Rich [Warminster, 1990], 43 [Book 53.16, 6]).


12. Glanville Downey, A History of Antioch in Syria, from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest (Princeton, 1961), esp. 318–23 (on the palace, with a brief overview of the archeological findings and the relevant reports of the excavations).


16. According to the sixth-century chronicler John Malalas, the Great Church was built on the site of the demolished public baths, originally constructed by Emperor Philip the Arab (?), but neglected and fallen into ruin; cf. Ioannis Malalae Chronographia, ed. L. Dindorf, Bonn Corpus (Bonn, 1831), bk. III, 3. It was André Grabar, Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique, 1 (Paris, 1946), 219, who postulated that the Great Church was probably built in the proximity of the imperial palace, in a physical setting reminiscent of Diocletian’s mausoleum in front of his palace at Split. This idea, subsequently quoted by several authors, has been categorically rejected by F. W. Deichmann, “Das Oktogan von Antiocheia: Heroon-Martyrium, Palastkirche oder Katedrale?,” Byzantinische Zeitschrift 65, 1 (1972): 40–56, esp. 47–48. Deichmann points out that Malalas makes no mention of the location of the baths of Philip the Arab. Because the baths in question were public, Deichmann concludes that they could not have been in or near the palace. This notion, however, does not hold true, in view of the fact that public baths characteristically appear to have fronted late-antique palaces; cf. the discussion of this matter below and nn. 43–47.


19. The sea façade of the palace of Diocletian at Split has received a great deal of attention as iconographically one of the most significant aspects of the complex. Made famous by the splendid engraving published by Robert Adam, The Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatino in Dalmatia (London, 1764), pl. VII, this façade has been discussed in a number of specialized studies; see especially Karl M. Swoboda, “The Problem of Iconography of Late Antique and Early Medieval Palaces,” Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 20, 2 (1961): 78–89, esp. 78–84. See also the helpful review of the related issues in McNally, “Introduction,” esp. 11–15. McNally also raises the question of the precise relationship between the palace façade and the sea, which has not been fully determined archaeologically. Earlier reconstructions (notably those by George Niemann and Ernst Hébrard) favored the idea of a direct link between the outer wall of the palace and the water, but McNally remains resolutely cautious. Some of her explanations (e.g., “The bay of Split is not the Grand Canal; it is poorly sheltered and strong winds drive high spray that would easily drench the arcaded wall of a second story rising directly from the water” [McNally, “Introduction,” 12]) are not convincing. The second-story arcaded gallery is approximately thirty feet above sea level. It would be difficult to imagine waves high enough to cause the problem postulated by McNally in a sheltered bay suited for a harbor.

21. The function and the meaning of the peristyle of Diocletian's palace have probably been the most debated aspects of the entire complex. Yet the term "peristyle," which is clearly a misnomer, has never been questioned. For the state of scholarship on this particular subject, see McNally, "Introduction," 17-21. The two most important articles, revealing diametrically opposite points of view, are Enej Dygge, "O izvornom izgledu antičkog Peristilla," URBS 4 (1965): 53-60; and Noël Duval, "La place de Split dans l'architecture aïque du Bas Empire," URBS 4 (1965): 67-95, esp. 78-85.

22. Downey, "Libanius' Oration," 677. For the temenoi containing the temples and the mausoleum of Diocletian at Split, see Marasović, Diocletian's Palace, 104-6; also McNally, "Introduction," 21-25.


25. The question of relative sizes of different complexes, including those at Split and Antioch, was raised by Duval, "La place de Split," 70-78; "Split n'est pas à l'échelle d'une ville," 70 and fig. 1. The notion of a "city," with reference to Diocletian's palace at Split, was first obliquely suggested by André Grabar, Martyrium, 1:232-33, and subsequently by Frazier, "Iconography," 386, who phrased it in the form of a question with a negative answer. Neither Grabar nor Frazier pursued this issue further. Sizes of late-Roman cities varied greatly. In my opinion, the relatively small size of the "palace" of Diocletian at Split should not be used as a criterion for excluding it from consideration as a city. After all, the town of Split which grew up within its walls in the early Middle Ages barely expanded at all until modern times (see n. 33 below).


27. McNally, "Frieze of the Mausoleum," esp. 108-9. See also the comments by Wilkes, Diocletian's Palace, 43-44, who points out that Prisca "never received the dignity of Augusta or empress," but does not question the identity of the lady in the medallion.


29. The Rotunda of St. George in Thessaloniki—the largest surviving late-antique domed building—has been the subject of many studies and scholarly controversies pertaining to its design, functions, names, etc.; Theocharis Pazaras, The Rotunda of Saint George in Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki, 1985), provides a good summary of the problems and a bibliography. The view held earlier that the Rotunda was built as a mausoleum for Emperor Galerius has been questioned by Georgos Velenis, "Architektonische Probleme des Galeriusbogens in Thessaloniki," Archäologischer Anzeiger 94 (1979): 249-63, esp. 262-63. Doubts about its function as the imperial mausoleum have further intensified on account of the recent discoveries at Ganizgrad-Romuliana (see n. 31). Ultimately, the issue cannot be settled solely by proving where Galerius may actually have been buried. The original intentions with regard to the planning of the mausoleum are equally important and must be considered independently of the question of the actual burial place.


33. A text which becomes particularly relevant in this context is the Historia Salonitana, written by one Thomas, Archdeacon of Salona (1200–68), who says that “because he [Diocletian] was of Dalmatian origin, he directed that a better building resembling a strongly fortified city be constructed near Salona with the purpose of serving as an imperial palace, within which were erected temples of pagan idols Jupiter, Aesclepius, and Mars, as can still be attested to. Diocletian did all of this to provide a residence for his mother, whom he entrusted with the rule over Salona with the entire province” (see Tomá Arhidjakan, Kronika, trans. and ed. V. Rizondo [Split, 1977], 26; the free English translation is my own). This passage has been commented on by Frane Bulić, Palača cara Diocletijana, 16, who also refers to Diocletian’s mother by name—Diokleja (Dioclea)—with the implication that she is referred to as such by Archdeacon Thomas. The Rizondo edition cited above, however, makes no mention of her name. Bulić also goes on to dismiss Thomas’s account as “being of limited credibility.” As it now appears, this text may be of greater relevance than previously thought. Regarding the origins of Diocletian as the main factor influencing his choice of the site for his retirement residence, see Wilkes, Diocletian’s Palace, 11–13. Dedication of new towns by Roman emperors in memory of their mothers may indeed have been in vogue around 300. In addition to Romuliana, we should also note the example of Drepanum, in Bythnia, renamed Helenopolis in 327 by Constantine I in honor of his mother, Helena, who was born there; see Chronicon Paschale, 284–628 A.D., trans. Michael and Mary Whitby (Liverpool, 1989), 15. I am grateful to Alan Cameron for bringing the case of Helenopolis to my attention.

34. For the detailed discussion of the reconstruction of the “Porta Decumana,” see Čanak-Medić, Gamzigrad, 33–83. For the newly discovered eastern gate of Romuliana, see Stojanov, “Feiix Romuliana” (cf. n. 2 above).

35. For the Porta Nigra at Trier, see E. Gose, Die Porta Nigra zu Trier (Berlin, 1969). For the Golden Gate (northern gate) at Split, see Marasović, Diocletian’s Palace, 54–56; Wilkes, Diocletian’s Palace, 27–31. The question of palatine symbolism in reference to the gate at Romuliana and the related examples is surveyed by Čanak-Medić, Gamzigrad, 83–86.

36. The ruins of a palace at Polače (toponym polače, palače = palaces) on the island of Mijet (ancient Meleda) in Dalmatia have attracted the attention of a number of scholars, among them Ejnar Dyggve, “Intorno al palazzo nell’ isola di Meleda,” Palladio 9 (1959): 19–28; and Michelangelo Cagnano de Azevado, “Il Palatium di Porto Palazzo a Meleda,” Tardo Antico e alto medioevo. Atti del convegno internazionale (Rome, 1968), 273–88. Cagnano de Azevedo associates the palace with the patronage of Odoacer (476–93), and dates it to 489–90, as opposed to Dyggve’s more general dating in the fifth or sixth century. Dyggve’s dating is echoed by Ivanka Nikolajević, “Veliki posed u Dalmaciji u V i VI veku u svetlosti arheoloških nalaza,” Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta 13 (1971): 277–92, who proposes a late-fifth- or early-sixth-century date on the basis of two written documents which shed light on the activity of large landowners on the island of Meleda at that time. A very different conclusion was reached by Ana Deanović, “Les types des fortifications isolées dans la campagne de la côte Adriatique (Yougoslavie),” in Pyrgoi kai kastra, ed. N. K. Moutsopoulos (Thessaloniki, 1980), 207–17, esp. 209 ff., who argues that the palace at Polače should be associated with the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus (193–211), but such an early dating cannot be supported. For the palace of Theodorich in Verona, see Bryan Ward-Perkins, From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy, a.d. 300–850 (Oxford, 1984), 160 and fig. 4. The Anonymous Valesianus, as quoted by Ward-Perkins, describes the palace as having had “a portico all the way from the city gate to it.” The Iconographia Ratrieriana drawing, on the other hand, shows the palatium as a twin-towered building. Thus, it is possible that the twin-towered façade was linked to the twin-towered city gate by a colonnaded avenue.


for a comprehensive up-to-date bibliography on the imperial palace and the related buildings. Recent discovery of the foundation walls of the Roman stadium places this large public building just to the west of and perpendicular to the palace proper. According to the excavator, G. Velenis, this may imply that the palace complex was considerably narrower than previously thought. I am grateful to Professor Velenis for sharing this information with me. The question of the exact palace width, in my opinion, should still be considered open, pending further archaeological information. Topographical questions related to the stadium (cf., e.g., M. Vickers, "The Stadium at Thessaloniki," *Byzantion* 41 [1971]: 339–48) will require complete rethinking.

39. R. J. A. Wilson, *Piazza Armerina* (Austin, 1983), esp. ch. 3, "Context and Ownership," where the author argues that the owner of the villa was "very probably a private individual of senatorial class, probably a Sicilian, but more likely a member of one of the great aristocratic families of Rome" (p. 98). Also A. Carandini, A. Ricci, and M. de Vos, *Filosofiana. La Villa di Piazza Armerina: Immagine di un aristocratico romano al tempo di Costantino*, 2 vols. (Palermo, 1982); and, more recently, Giovanni Rizza, ed., *La Villa Romana del Casale di Piazza Armerina* (Palermo, 1988), a series of essays by several authors sharing the same point of view.

40. William L. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*, vol. 2, *An Urban Appraisal* (New Haven and London, 1986), "Appendix: The Piazza Armerina Villa" (pp. 274–83), argues that at Piazza Armerina we see "a summary of Roman urban principles in villa form" (p. 274), a "reductive urbanism" whose results resemble "a domesticated town without streets, wherein the traditional architecture of dwellings is secondary to that of rather grand structures clearly of public nature" (p. 279). In other words, MacDonald sees the villa as an "imploded" city, possibly as a result of the private usurpation of what might be seen as the "public architectural domain." This viewpoint differs fundamentally from my own understanding of the same process. I see the process not as a "reductive urbanism," but as a selective borrowing of those specific urban forms needed to give a villa or a palace an urban aura, where it did not otherwise exist. Therefore, the process, in my opinion, should be viewed as a result, not of formal reduction on the urban scale, but of functional and symbolic expansion on the residential scale. It should be noted that all of the examples cited by MacDonald (Piazza Armerina, Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, villa at Montmaurin, and villa of Sette Bassi) were all complexes either in the country or in the suburbs, where the various "borrowed" urban forms would have provided the "missing" urban dimension, presumably in the fulfillment of some functional or symbolic need.


43. Wilson, *Piazza Armerina*, 17–23, who, consistently with his general interpretation of the owner and the function of the villa, favors the notion of the "local crowd" (clientela from the surrounding farms and villages; servants and their families) as the probable outside users of the bath.

44. The most notable earlier example is Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, where the visitor came through the vestibule along a path, to the left and the right of which were the so-called small baths and large baths, respectively. The small baths were accessible directly from the main (upper) level of the vestibule, whereas the large baths were accessible by a route which took one through a cryptoporticus below the vestibule. It seems quite clear that both of these bathing establishments were functionally linked to the entrance area of the complex; Eugenia Salza Prina Ricotti, "Criptopor- tiche e galerie sotterane di Villa Adraiana nella loro tipologia e nelle loro funzioni," *Les cryptopor- tiques dans l'architecture romaine*, Colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 545 (Paris, 1973), 219–59; esp. pl. X. A notable late-antique example of baths associated with a palace are those added to the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill in Rome by Emperor Maxentius (306–12); J. J. Herman, Jr., "Observations on the Baths of Maxentius in the Palace," *Römische Mitteilungen* 87 (1976): 403–24. The baths appear to have been related to the entrance route, and may have had a dual, private/public role.


49. The most comprehensive archaeological assessment of the Great Palace is that by Ernest Mamboury and Theodore Wiegand, Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel (Berlin, 1994). For the interpretation of the written source, see Jean Ebersolt, Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre de cérémonies (Paris, 1910); and R. Guillard, Études de topographie de Constantinople byzantine, Berliner Byzantinische Arbeiten, 37 (Berlin and Amsterdam, 1969).


51. B. Meyer-Plath and A. M. Schneider, Die Landmaurer von Konstantinopel (Berlin, 1943); also Müller-Wiener, Bildlexikon, 286-95 (land walls), and 312-19 (sea walls).


53. For the Mese, see Müller-Wiener, Bildlexikon, 269-70. For the Milion, see Müller-Wiener, Bildlexikon, 216-18.

54. For the Chalke, see Cyril Mango, The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace in Constantinople (Copenhagen, 1959). For the Reggia, if indeed the name is used correctly in this context, see Mango, Brazen House, 79-80, who discusses the problem of the name, but who also makes the comparison with Antioch. For the Augusteon, see Mango, Brazen House, 42-47.


56. Because of the virtually total lack of archaeological evidence, earlier attempts in scholarship to produce a hypothetical reconstruction of the Great Palace depended heavily on the known examples, such as the complex at Split, and the ideal reconstructions of it, in particular. Among the hypothetical reconstructions of the Great Palace, the one which relied most heavily on the complex at Split was that produced by Jean Ebersolt, whose ideas were later modified somewhat by Albert Vogt; on this, see Mango, Brazen House, 15. Ebersolt's and Vogt's studies on the Great Palace remain among the most important works on the subject. Hence, it is not completely surprising that, under their influence, even in as late a work as Dagron, Naissance, 93, the "fortified palace" of Diocletian at Split continues to be viewed as the paradigm of late antique palace design in general, associated even with the Great Palace in Constantinople: "Il aussi est une citadelle adossée à la mer, comme le palais du Dioclétien."

57. Mamboury and Wiegand, Die Kaiserpaläste, 1-25; also Müller-Wiener, Bildlexikon, 225-28, for more current opinions and bibliography. The oldest parts of the palace complex in this area are believed not to be earlier than the sixth century. The no longer extant open-arcaded gallery (known from two nineteenth-century drawings) is now ascribed to Emperor Theophilus (829-42). I am grateful to Professor Cyril Mango for his advice on this matter, and for permitting me to consult the text of his article, "Ancient Spolia in the Great Palace of Constantinople," which is slated to appear in Byzantine East, Latin West. Art Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann.

58. On this, see Dagron, Naissance, esp. 77-115.

Fig. 1. Antioch. Hypothetical schematic plan of the New City according to Libanius. After Downey; delineated by Joel Kelly.

Fig. 2. Split. Palace of Diocletian. Schematic plan. Delineated by Joel Kelly.
Fig. 3. Split. Town and palace of Diocletian. Plan, present state. Delincated by Christoph Panfil.
Fig. 4. Split. Palace of Diocletian. Partial axonometric reconstruction. Delineated by Christoph Panfil.

Fig. 5. Split. Palace of Diocletian. Sea façade, ca. 1750. Engraving from Robert Adam.
Fig. 6. Split. Palace of Diocletian. Partial axonometric reconstruction. Delineated by Christoph Panfil.
Fig. 7a. Split Palace of Diocletian. Mausoleum frieze. Detail of Tyche. From T. Marasovic.

Fig. 7b. Split Palace of Diocletian. Mausoleum frieze. Detail of Diocletian. From T. Marasovic.

Fig. 8. Palace of Galerius. The Small Arch of Galerius.
Fig. 9. Gamzigrad. Romuliana. Inscription. From D. Srejović.

Fig. 10. Gamzigrad. Romuliana. Plan. From D. Srejović.
Fig. 11. Gamzigrad. Romuliana. West gate. Hypothetical axonometric reconstruction. After M. Čanak; delineated by Joel Kelly.
Fig. 12. Polače, Mljet (Meleda). Palace. Hypothetical axonometric reconstruction. After E. Dyggve; delineated by Joel Kelly.

Fig. 13. Polače, Mljet (Meleda). Palace. Axonometric plan. After E. Dyggve; delineated by Joel Kelly.
Fig. 14. Thessaloniki. Palace of Galerius. Hypothetical schematic plan. Delineated by Joel Kelly.

Fig. 15. Piazza Armerina. Villa. Plan. Baths indicated by cross-hatching. From R. J. A. Wilson.
Fig. 16. Athens, Palace of the Giants. Plan. Baths indicated by cross-hatching. From A. Frantz.

Fig. 17. Paphos, House of Theseus. Plan. Baths indicated by cross-hatching. From W. A. Daczewski.
Fig. 18. Constantinople. Imperial palace. Schematic plan. Delineated by Joel Kelly.

Fig. 19. Constantinople. City plan. Hypothetical layout of main topographical features as in the 6th century. After C. Mango and G. Dagron; delineated by Kathryn McPherson.
Fig. 20. Constantinople. Golden Gate. Hypothetical axonometric reconstruction. Delineated by Joel Kelly.
PART 2

PALACES OF THE EARLY

ISLAMIC CALIPHATES

(SEVENTH–TENTH CENTURIES)
UMAYYAD PALACES RECONSIDERED

By OLEG GRABAR

The latest, most complete, and most authoritative survey of early Islamic architecture—Allan’s reworking of Creswell’s standard history—contains seventeen partly documented buildings datable between 690 and 750, the main decades of Umayyad rule, and fitting into the general category of palaces. It is a loose category including nearly all foundations with living accommodations for which a reasonable assumption can be made of sponsorship or use by the state (a dār al-imāra for instance), by the ruling dynasty, or by members of the Arabian aristocracy associated with the Umayyads.

Out of these seventeen buildings, five—al-Muwaqqar, Rusafa, Qasr al-Tuba, and Tulul al-Sha’iba—are too poorly known or too poorly preserved to allow for significant conclusions, two—Anjar and Amman—pose a very complicated set of problems in the interpretation of archaeological evidence, which, in my opinion, does not necessarily lead to the Umayyad dates proposed by the investigators of these sites, and four—Jerusalem, Qasr Kharana, Jabal Says, and Qasr al-Hayr East—are not palaces or even royal or dynastic residences, at least not in my judgment, although this judgment is not necessarily shared by all scholars.

This process of elimination leaves six relatively well-known buildings—Kufa, Khirbat Minya, Qusayr Amra, Qasr al-Hayr West, Khirbat al-Mafjar, and Mshatta—which can be reasonably assumed to be dynastic foundations of the Umayyad dynasty. For Kufa the evidence is essentially historical in the sense that written accounts of events from the last decades of the seventh century and the first ones of the eighth justify the interpretation of an excavated building as the dār al-imāra of the Umayyad governors. At Khirbat Minya, Khirbat al-Mafjar, and Qasr al-Hayr West (all of which were first thought by archaeologists to be pre-Islamic Christian foundations), inscriptions were discovered which suggest that some aspect of the construction of these buildings was sponsored or ordered by a ruling Umayyad caliph or else that a caliph was alive while the building was being built. But not one of these inscriptions can be considered as a foundation statement or as decorative writing in the manner of later Islamic foundations or ornamental inscriptions. For Qusayr Amra, as we shall see shortly, there is a valid presumption for an Umayyad dynastic patronage on the basis of the paintings decorating the monument. As to Mshatta, it is primarily its inordinate size and its peculiar decoration that make it reasonable to assume that only princes, and in all likelihood ruling princes, had access to the funds and personnel necessary for its planning and construction, and for a completion which never took place.

In short, we have no direct knowledge of these buildings as palaces built for ruling Umayyad princes, and I shall return in my conclusion to the hypotheses which can be derived from this apparent absence of clearly cut, written or archaeological, external labels. Nor can we really argue that their shape, the functions they imply, or their decoration make it necessary for all of them to be Umayyad creations. In fact, as I reread some of the papers, articles, and books I wrote on them over the years, I realize that there may have been a major methodological flaw in parts of my reasoning. Following very respectable masters like Sauvaget, Herzfeld, Stern, and in his own way Creswell, I consistently tried to fit all these buildings into a single pattern by assuming that they all reflected the same architectural and functional type: a villa with living and formal or official quarters arranged around a porticoed court in standard square buildings with a single, usually massive, entrance; a bath, most of the time an independent building; a mosque; a variety of service areas; and possibly formal gardens or orchards. The type would have developed within the rich tradition of secular architecture in the late-antique Mediterranean area. And, following primarily Sauvaget but frequently using documentation gathered much earlier by Lammens and Herzfeld, I further assumed that this particular type could be fitted into a reconstruction or a model of Umayyad aristocratic behavior. But that reconstruction of behavior was based on very different sources: written texts in which an originally orally transmitted poetry predominates; archaeological sources involving the interpretation of excavated spaces and other remains; and finally a more complicated source which may be
called “ecological logic” and which consists in apparent changes within the lands ruled by the Umayyads which require significant investments of money and labor.  

The resulting hypothesis was a simple one. Umayyad patrons, a nouveau riche class of aristocrats from central Arabia, invested in the land they inherited or conquered and in a life of varying but usually considerable luxury. The palaces illustrate the setting for that life. Variations and peculiarities in the model were then seen as aberrations reflecting individual needs or preferences in taste or behavior for which no explanation was likely to be found. A case in point is that of the twin quarters of Qasr al-Tuba for which some romantic or family explanation could always be invented and proposed but no proof can be found.

To the historian of architecture, that is to say, of techniques which require considerable investments of funds and differentiated competencies from specifically trained practitioners, the assumption of types adapting rapidly or slowly to new patrons was then and remains now a reasonable one, for the hitherto unknown sponsorship of architecture by rich aristocrats from northwestern Arabian cities did not necessarily demand new functions or seek to satisfy new needs. This patronage could easily accommodate itself to the prevailing habits of building and of designing within the Mediterranean world, and one or two technical innovations from elsewhere—as, for instance, the covering of stone walls with stucco—easily found a place in an essentially traditional system. A typical problem of design arose from the new requirement for an oriented place of prayer. The mosque became a compositional problem with several early and more or less successful solutions until buildings apparently began to be oriented in order to meet the necessity of fitting a mosque into them. Oratories appear, most commonly to the right of the entrance (Mshatta, Ukhaydir).

The more original aspect of these Umayyad secular buildings is how they transformed, or at least modified, the architectural profile of an area by introducing the amenities of a wealthier and restricted private life of “masters” into a simple landscape of farms and villages with their churches and occasional civic buildings such as baths or into old Roman military cities. The Umayyads, this hypothesis implied, did not really invent much that is new; they simply put whatever they found in spaces which had not previously been used for these purposes.

There are several other, more specific issues of architectural history, like the technology of building for instance, which come up whenever there is a combination of a set of buildings from a restricted period of time, in a relatively limited space, and with more or less the same patronage. Beyond elementary measurements and the establishment of the most basic modular principle of designing and with the exception of the question of brick in Syria and Palestine about which a few things have been written, these technical issues have hardly been touched, however important they are for establishing the technological potential of a time.

A more specific approach to the establishments attributed to the Umayyad dynasty can be derived from a number of puzzles in the architecture and decoration of remaining buildings. These puzzles led historians of art, of visual forms, to seek an explanation in the history provided by texts. Such features as the elaborate reception rooms of Mshatta and the rich decoration of Khirbat al-Mafjar did not quite coincide with the simple-minded image created by earlier historians such as Lammens and Creswell of an easy-going, fun-loving, but not very serious life attributed to freely moving and semi-nomadic Umayyad princes and assorted aristocrats. Nor is fancy decoration necessary for landlords in their manorial and private estates. As a result, several studies, whether or not they acknowledge the original inspiration of Sauvaget for the method involved, sought to describe an Umayyad ceremonial life and to fit that life within the ruins or reconstructions of whatever remained from alleged palaces. The best among these studies, notably Hamilton’s meditation on al-Walid and Khirbat al-Mafjar, have provided a very tempting and coherent picture, based to a large degree on poetry, of an unstable equilibrium between formality and fun, between rigidity and freedom, all of it bathed in virile sensuality. It is a coherent picture in the sense that the poetry of the time and especially the ways in which this poetry was recited in male gatherings seem to fit with the spaces provided by the ruins.

But there are problems. For instance, too many of the examples of almost anything in these studies deal with al-Walid II, who was in many ways an eccentric hardly typical of his rank and of the office he occupied. And there are always dangers
in excerpting examples from literary contexts whose own rules have not been ascertained. In
general, there are many theoretical and concrete
pitfalls in explaining architecture through poetry,
unless, as for instance with much later Persian
lyrical poetry, the poetry itself deals with architec-
ture or, as in the Alhambra, ad hoc poetry adorns
architecture.\textsuperscript{14} The danger exists because the
sphere of life and of behavior in which poetry
appears is the immediate and the evanescent;
much of it was not written down at the moment of
recitation, but at the moment when the event in
which it participated was recorded.
Architecture, on the other hand, is more per-
manent, unless, of course, we consider decora-
tion separately from building on the grounds that
some of its techniques—especially painting and
carved or molded stucco—were themselves
changeable or could be covered with other mate-
rials such as textiles.\textsuperscript{15} The skin of architecture
like that of snakes can be changed, at least in part.
A remarkable feature of Umayyad architecture
is the quantity as well as the quality of the decora-
tion it exhibits, still in situ, as in the Dome of
the Rock and the mosque of Damascus, or through
masses of fragments, some in place, others reconsti-
cted into their original compositions, many
still hiding in unopened crates in the basements
of museums or exhibited as bulk remains in their
drawers and galleries.\textsuperscript{16} The curious point is that
the decoration of the main Umayyad palatial
establishments has been less well studied than
architecture or planning in that period, probably
because Creswell spent relatively little time on
the decoration, much of which was discovered
after the first edition of his work. The only partial
exception is that of classical art historical issues
dealing with genetic sources which have occupi-
ced a few scholars, especially in the early decades
of the century.\textsuperscript{17}
This absence of studies is all the more peculiar
since the originality and the variety of decoration
in Umayyad palaces are quite astounding. Yet,
precisely because of its variety and originality, the
study of this decoration leads to a number of
methodological problems. Among approaches
which have been tried is one I used for the first
time some forty years ago, and which was proba-
bly even more dubious than the procedure I used
for architectural planning and design. Following
the model of Christian and Buddhist art, I sought
to find in the decoration of walls, floors, and
ceilings a set of types, that is to say, of common
standards with local variations. The assumption,
valid for religious arts with an ecclesiastical pa-
tronage, was that models (actual ones on monu-
ments and objects or written ones in manuals)
must exist for any visual program to be executed
and to be understood. In reality, of course, the
secular arts operate quite differently from rela-
gious art. It is therefore more fruitful and, in fact,
necessary to attempt to understand the individu-
al combinations of themes and forms located in
one monument.\textsuperscript{18} The establishment of vocabu-
laries and grammars of forms and the definition
of typologies are proper endeavors, but because
in secular art almost every statement through a
given object or monument is a different combina-
tion of terms and means something different,
typologies must follow rather than precede indi-
vidual analyses. In a nutshell, system follows syn-
tagm.\textsuperscript{19} In the absence of formal manuals and of
a doctrine about the arts, the only way one can
eventually reach a sense of the language used in
the art of Umayyad palaces is first to provide
reasonable hypotheses about every monument
by itself. Such hypotheses are all the more im-
portant since every one of the monuments involved
provides a range of information which is pecu-
larily its own. I shall illustrate the point with two
examples.
The first one is that of Qasr al-Hayr West, for
which the last written and drawn statements by
the excavators, all of whom are now deceased,
have recently been published.\textsuperscript{20} The second one
is Quasyr ‘Amra, the first of the Umayyad dynastic
establishments to have come to light, and the
only one which is not in ruins. It underwent a
major overhaul some twenty years ago, but its
complete actual appearance today is, rather
shamefully, not yet available in print.\textsuperscript{21}
I shall be brief about Qasr al-Hayr. In addition
to the sculptures and paintings which are well
known, have been visible for over a generation in
the Damascus Museum, have been mentioned in
general books and manuals, and have even been
subjected to elementary scholarly analyses, we
are presented with painted fragments which were
exhibited occasionally but never published and
with stone and stucco sculptures of personages
known only to visitors to the storerooms of the
Damascus Museum.\textsuperscript{22} It is nearly impossible to
reconstruct how these paintings and sculptures
fitted anywhere, except for a few fragments on
the façade of the palace rebuilt in the Damascus
Museum and for two large paintings found on the
The floor of the staircases. It is, therefore, nearly impossible to propose a program for these images, or even sequences of visual impressions with some iconographic or expressive meaning. This is so even when the sources of a motif are clear. For instance, two sculptures found at Qasr al-Hayr resemble representations of rulers in Byzantine and Sasanian art. But if we argue, as I and others have done, that, because these had been forms for the representation of pre-Islamic rulers, they must now be representations of Umayyad princes, then we also have to argue that a sculpture with obvious Palmyrene funerary associations (fig. 1) should be connected to some funeral theme in Umayyad times. What then is it doing on the façade of the building?

A similar position of iconographic skepticism can be argued for almost every fragment found at Qasr al-Hayr West. But the same skepticism need not apply if one tries to identify, even tentatively, not so much the subject matter as the sources of inspiration for the images. Within the limits and restrictions of existing information and investigations, the genetic pool from which these images came may be the only kind of meaning or semantic range available for the decorative motifs from Qasr al-Hayr West which can be traced with some certainty. The most interesting and most unexpected point about this genetic pool seems to be the close relationship between the paintings and sculptures from Qasr al-Hayr and the art of Soghd in Central Asia, and even the Buddhist and Manichean arts found farther east in the Tarim basin. The question is how did themes and styles from the northeastern frontier of the Muslim empire (and even beyond) reach Syria, when none of the patrons of Syrian and Palestinian buildings had ever set foot there and the movement of artisans, while not impossible, seems technically unlikely at this time. The answer lies almost certainly in transmission through objects—silver objects sent as tribute or as gifts, textiles, perhaps rugs. Books are not likely to have been important at this time, a few decades before the appearance of paper through the same route, but painted bark and bone could have been among the marvels brought from the east. It is also through textiles and works in metal that Mediterranean motifs can be imagined to have reached a remote site like Qasr al-Hayr and through silver objects that Iranian ones would have become available. Therefore the evidence from Qasr al-Hayr West does not lead one to interpret the decoration on the walls within a social, official, or personal setting, but it does explain how certain combinations of forms ended up in a striking location of the Syrian steppe. We become informed on the movement of works of art and of artistic motives across western Asia rather than on their meaning in the setting they eventually adorned. This is so because the heterogeneity of the vocabulary of the palace seems to me to be its only characteristic which lends itself to a positive conclusion.

Let me turn now to the bath house of Qasr `Amra which is only one of a larger group of constructions including now-ruined living quarters, a watch-tower, and a hydraulic complex. Its discovery a century ago affected nearly all historians of Islamic culture because of the paintings which adorn the bath and whose subjects seem to reflect the life of princely leisure. Now we have the advantage of possessing all the information we are ever going to get and of having it in situ.

It is possible to reconstruct the probable models for many of the paintings. Just as at Qasr al-Hayr, objects, mostly from the Mediterranean, but also from the Sasanian world, had a clear impact on the paintings. Moreover, as I have already pointed out elsewhere, there were also many images inspired by a direct perception of the actual setting of the building and of the events which took place in it. This was not done in order to present the illusion of a physical world, but in order to commemorate events which had either taken place or been recalled there. In fact, those images which are new, without a clear model, seem often to be more caricatured and more awkward than the conventional representations in the bath. It is as though someone, a patron no doubt, had requested topics that may have been a bit outside the competence of the painters, for the whole place has the appearance of a lively amateur exhibition. The more important point, however, is that even here, where about five-sixths of what had once been there is preserved, no clear sense of what is shown emerges. This may well be an example of the art historical principle that it takes two to tango, or that a unique building is almost impossible to understand, especially when additional contextual evidence is missing.

It is tempting to give up, just as it is tempting to excerpt something immediately understood like the Six Kings and to elaborate from there on some grand iconographic message. So far, to my
knowledge, none of these approaches has worked, although admittedly so little has been written about this fascinating little place that even methodological judgments are dubious. What can be proposed is something akin to chemical tests used to determine the composition of some product, that is, try possibilities until something works. Here are two examples.

The first one is difficult to illustrate because, when the photographs I used were made,97 I was concerned with recording two-dimensional painted panels on walls. I did not try to record photographically or even to determine on the spot the impressions made on users and visitors from various points of view logical and unique to this particular place: the entrance, doorways, the floors on which one sat, the apse or throne niche in the center of the building, and so on.

Pending verification at Qusayr 'Amra itself, I propose two visual impressions as correct assessments of the building’s impact. One concerns the wealth of pictures hanging on the wall: there are so many of them that one can hardly make sense of them as a whole, and one moves almost automatically to consider them individually. Just as in a museum, one is overwhelmed by the quantity of pictures, and one can only handle them one at a time. I am unclear about the psychological implications of this cascade of ever-present images. The second impression is that the first and richest hall of the bath, usually interpreted as a throne hall, is dominated by the image of an enthroned ruler in the apse and by a series of large panels in the right vault ending at the vault’s back wall (fig. 2). The comparable area in the left vault is cut up into smaller sections and visually less effective from a distance.

The question is whether this visual judgment, if accurate, justifies arguing that the woman by the pool (fig. 5), the Six Kings, and the “Lady Nikê” (fig. 4)98 are, with the prince in the back of the apse, more significant than other images. One could propose several other similar readings of the walls from a variety of points of view corresponding to the likely uses of the building. The result of this kind of investigation would be to establish hierarchies according to the way the paintings are perceived, but I am not sure that such hierarchies would not themselves become arbitrary constructs rather than useful explanations.

My second approach is even more subjective, at least in its premise. A striking feature of Qusayr 'Amra is the extraordinary number and variety of women represented on its walls in a truly minuscule space: half-dressed ladies around the prince (figs. 5 and 6), Lady Nikê (fig. 4), the tall lady by the pool (fig. 3), nude dancers (fig. 7), a heavily dressed dancer (fig. 8), another standing naked woman (fig. 9; now in the Berlin Museum), a woman apparently alighting in front of a man (fig. 10), meditating personifications identified by Greek inscriptions (fig. 11), busts of well-dressed women in the central nave of the main hall as though looking at the goings-on below (fig. 12), a cogitating nude woman in one of the side rooms for bathing (fig. 13), and partly damaged paintings of totally naked women and children also found in one of the small bathing rooms that seem to depict domestic activities that would have taken place in precisely such a room (figs. 14 and 15).

Almost none of these representations of women finds adequate parallels in comparable or reasonably comparable artistic traditions, except occasionally in details like the stubby and awkward legs so typical of Coptic textiles, poses and gestures clearly belonging to the ways of representation in late-antique art, and occasionally the memory of a classical personification or of a Sasanian symbol.

The point I would like to make, however, is a different one. While the presence of so many women predominates at Qusayr 'Amra, it is striking that they are so different from each other. Sensuous performances cohabit with highly proper ones, possible narratives coexist with apparent scenes of leisure and domestic life, and trite personifications are found alongside concrete references. Should one try to argue that what is shown or reflected in Qusayr 'Amra is the world of the women whose power, both political and cultural, was, in early Islamic times, considerable? Or should one interpret all of this as a men’s locker-room view of the world? A preliminary argument can be made for either possibility, and maybe others exist as well. The full appreciation of this strange and fascinating museum of rather mediocre paintings most probably requires the elaboration of a series of categories of understanding, one of which may even be the traditional art historical one of specific iconographic meanings and of an equilibrium of sources from many origins.

What conclusions can one draw from these remarks? The most important one is that Umayyad
palaces, or at least a small number among them, contain a considerable amount of data which should at this time be considered syntagmatically, that is, in terms of the unit in which they are found, rather than systematically, in terms of the separate histories of each example. Before returning to types and to broad vistas, it may be worthwhile to plunge into the depth of each palatial establishment, to study all of its details, to imagine how it was built and what went on in it. This sort of analysis should not stop at information provided by the monument or by written sources about its time, nor even by the sources which can be identified for any part of it. It is perfectly appropriate to bring to bear everything from gender studies to technological analyses which can develop a grip on the monument. Such a monographic approach, like a proper trench in an archaeological investigation, would at least begin to show that each one of some six buildings can bristle with specific references and interpretations, acquiring a full personality of its own.

The acquisition of such precise information together with a range of possible interpretations would allow for the first time three additional discourses. One is the art historical one of witnessing, in the first half of the eighth century, a series of transfers of forms and of meanings, as new sponsors and new resources contribute to the recomposition of older forms, on the one hand, and to the development of new meanings, on the other. The most obvious example of the latter is the ceremonial pastime, which acquires new dimensions with the luxurious baths of Khirbat al-Mafjar or the grandiose composition of Mshatta.

A second discourse concerns the Umayyad phenomenon. It can explain how a new aristocracy from the outside established itself in ancient lands, but the more tantalizing question is whether the specific phenomenon of Umayyad palaces played any significant role in the development of a new art of princes eventually associated with Muslim rulers. One would also be able to return with better information and fuller perception to standard problems of early Islamic art like the formation of a princely cycle and the myths that developed around the Umayyads. At this time, I am doubtful that the Umayyads were as important and innovative in secular art as they were in the art of the mosque, but the matter will be discussed over the years to come, I hope.

Finally, there is a thematic discourse. The Umayyad establishments belong somewhere in one or more schemes of royal and aristocratic living and behaving. Most of them are private palaces which constantly use public artistic triggers—like a decorated façade, for example—to audiences who are impossible to identify. But although their most brilliant features are inside, to be treasured and enjoyed and not to be shared, they lack clear spaces for private and family living. They seem different from anything else and yet can be related to French Renaissance palaces or to nineteenth-century villas in the West perhaps more easily than to their Roman ancestors. In short they have a significant contribution to make to the broader understanding of what rulers sought to do with their architecture and its decoration: to proclaim and display their glory or perhaps to create places in order to hide and enjoy their wealth.
Notes

This paper is neither a coherent reevaluation of Umayyad palaces nor quite a repetition of remarks begun some forty years ago for my doctoral dissertation at Princeton University. It is rather a moment in a continuing meditation on the first monuments of Islamic art, perhaps with a different set of questions and interpretations than I and others developed in the fifties of this century.

1. K. A. C. Creswell, A Short Account of Early Islamic Architecture, revised by James W. Allan (Aldershot, 1989). The buildings are in the order in which they appear in Creswell, and in what is also supposed to be their chronological order: Kufa, Khirbat al-Minya, Jerusalem, Qasr Kharana, Qusayr ‘Amra, Jabal Says, ‘Anjar, al-Muwaqqar, Qasr al-Hayr West, Rusafa, Qasr al-Hayr East, Amman, Qasr al-Mafjar, Mahatta, Qasr al-Tuba, Tulul al-Sha’ib. I have not included in this list places like Qasr Burqā‘ or Bayir, where there were Umayyad foundations but which are too damaged to allow for significant architectural rather than archaeological or geographical conclusions. Nor does this list include buildings like the Khadra in Damascus which are known to have existed but about which too little can be reconstructed, even though some of these constructions, like the Damascus palace of Mu‘awiya or Wasi’s palace of al-Hajaj, in their time or eventually acquired a mythical value. Both of these buildings are mentioned in Creswell-Al- lan, but there are many places like Fustat, Basra, Merv, and probably other cities for which written sources yield some information. In the absence of a reasonably complete survey of these sources, occasional accidental references would have been misleading. I have also not counted in the list of seventeen “palaces,” buildings like Qasr Hallabat in Jordan or Raqqā in Syria, where recent excavations have found significant Umayyad uses and modifications of older buildings or Umayyad secular buildings like the ones being excavated in Aqaba or Humayma in Jordan which may have been palaces, but whose investigation is still incomplete. Finally, I have left aside the full investigation of the long list of possible Umayyad princely establishments made, partly as a heuristic exercise, by Jean Sauvaget, “Observations sur les monuments omeyyades,” Journal Asiatique 231 (1939). This list contains many places which are merely settlements without palatial functions or whose exact dates are still under discussion.

2. Actually quite a bit is known about Rusafa and about Qasr al-Mafjar, but much of the available information is not easily accessible. For Qasr al-Mafjar, for instance, the activities of Patricia Carlier are summarized in her thesis for a Doctorat de troisième cycle from the University of Aix-en-Provence, Qasr al-Mafjar, château umayyade (Aix, 1984). For Rusafa, the pertinent results of the renewed German excavations have not yet, to my knowledge, been published. I am sure that departments of antiquities and private notes of travelers and archaeologists contain large quantities of useful information.

3. For Qasr Kharana, see the rather complete study and original interpretation by Stephen K. Urice, Qasr Kharana in the Transjordan (Durham, N.C.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987). For the other three sites, see the comments provided in Oleg Grabar et al., City in the Desert (Cambridge, 1978), 151–52. On Jerusalem the only easily accessible source consists in the very impressionistic and personal accounts of Meir Ben-Dov, In the Shadow of the Temple (New York, 1982), esp. 273–321. More detailed views on these buildings will appear in my forthcoming book on the early medieval city of Jerusalem. In my view, the date and functions of the Amman citadel have not yet been resolved, in spite of the assiduous and meticulous works by A. Almagro, El palacio omeyyade de Amman (Madrid, 1984), and by Alistair Northedge in his unpublished dissertation on the topic completed in 1982 at the University of London. ‘Anjar’s problem is quite different. Too little has been published of what was discovered there and its size as well as apparently commercial functions do not fit with what is known of Umayyad economic policies in this area as opposed, for instance, to northern Mesopotamia where new trade routes can be assumed. Furthermore, its alleged palace does not look like known Umayyad ones.

4. Most of the immediate evidence on Kufa is found in Creswell’s larger volumes, pt. 1, 46 ff. But, since Kufa remained as a major and very lively city for several centuries, it should be possible to analyze and interpret the continuing use of this building, a possibility which cannot be pursued with the evidence which has been published.

5. At Qasr al-Hayr West and at Khirbat al-Mafjar fragments of statements written casually on marble plaques mention the name of the caliph Hisham, once as the sender of a message, the other time as the recipient of one. Both statements contain the names of otherwise unknown and unidentified individuals, and it is extremely difficult to imagine the circumstances which would have led to the writing of these messages on marble plaques presumably destined to be used in the buildings. They are correctly interpreted as graffiti, not as inscriptions. See Daniel Schlum-
berger, “Kasr el-Heir,” Syria 20 (1939): 375, and R. W. Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar (Oxford, 1957), 43. The written fragment found at Khirbat al-Minya is possibly a genuine inscription since it begins with the traditional invocation of God’s name and with the words mimma amara bihi, “what has ordered,” the typical beginning of thousands of medieval inscriptions on objects or buildings. The problem is that the stone with the inscription is reused in the palace and there is no way of knowing to what it referred. See O. Puttrich-Reignard, “Die Palastanlage von Chirbet el-Minje,” Palästina-Hefte des Deutschen Vereins vom Heilige Lande 17–20 (1939). The three documents are quite different from clear-cut foundation inscriptions like the one from Qasr al-Hayr East.

6. Elsewhere I have argued for an early Abbasid date for Mshatta (Oleg Grabar, “The Date and Meaning of Mshatta,” Dumbarton Oaks Papers 41 [1987]), but it is only slightly later than the one usually given to the palace and does not affect the reasoning of this paper. See now the excellent summary by Volkmar Enderlein and Michael Meinecke, “Mshatta-Fassade,” Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen 21 (1992), with a discussion of epigraphic information I did not know.


10. A thorough study of early solutions to the problem of finding a place for mosques in a language of planning that did not have them lies beyond my purposes here, but I do want to note that many early Islamic buildings (Zia, Qasal, Umm al-Walid, Qasr Hallabat, all in Transjordan) have small mosques outside the main residential complex.

11. The landscape of Christian times can best be seen in books like G. Tchalenko, Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord (Paris, 1959). Much has been accomplished since that time, and numerous excavations and surveys, especially in Jordan, have modified some of the views developed a generation ago, especially around the extent and character of the cultural continuity of the area. Consult the reports found in various archaeological journals. For a recent publication which touches on many of the pertinent problems, see P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey-Coquais, La Syrie de Byzance à l’Islam (Damascus, 1992).

12. See, as an example, the work of J. Ward-Perkins on vaults in University of St. Andrews, The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors, 2nd report (Edinburgh, 1958). On a much smaller scale similar analyses have been carried out on Palestinian churches and synagogues.

13. J. Sauvaget, La mosquée omeyyade de Médine (Paris, 1947), is the first book to have used this approach of blending written and visual documentation. For later studies, see Oleg Grabar, “Notes sur les cérémonies omeyyades,” in Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet, ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem, 1977); Robert Hillenbrand, “La Dolce Vita in Early Islamic Syria,” Art History 5 (1982); and especially Robert Hamilton’s admirable Al-Walid and His Friends (Oxford, 1988). In reality the historiography of this particular approach is older than Sauvaget, as Lammens in particular and Herzfeld were inspired by buildings to search for texts, but they did not look for ceremonies and for behavior, something which has been compelled on a scholarship affected by the decoration which came out of excavations for the most part.

14. For the Alhambra, see Oleg Grabar, The Alhambra (London, 1978). To my knowledge no study has been devoted specifically to the references to architecture in Persian poetry or in Ottoman panegyrics, whether descriptions of buildings or metaphors and images used architecture. I owe to Professor Necipoğlu the reference to A. S. Levend, Türk Edebiyatında Şehrengizler ve Şehrengizlerle Istanbul (Istanbul, 1957).

15. A typical early Islamic example of changing textiles is that of the Kašba in Mecca which was covered anew every year with fancy embroideries; al-Azraqi, Akbar Mahka, in Geschichte der Stadt Mecca, ed. G. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1858), 1, 104 ff. Another kind of change using textiles were the
temporary modifications made for special occasions, as when the Baghdad palaces were festively transformed through textiles for the arrival of a Byzantine embassy; see, among many places, Grabar, *Formation*, 188 ff. For a more general theory of textile aesthetics, see Lisa Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. P. Soucek (University Park, Penna., 1988).

16. The principal structures with decoration are Khirbat Minya (practically only mosaics), Qasr al-Hayr West (paintings and sculpted stucco), Khirbat al-Mafjar (mosaics, stucco, and sculpture in stone and in stucco), Qusayr ‘Amra (paintings), Qastal (mosaics), and Mshatta (stone sculpture, a few stucco fragments). The basic bibliography on all of these except Qastal can be found in Ettinghausen and Grabar, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, 26–70. For Qastal, see above.

17. Genetic discussion of the origin of motifs was central to much of what has been written on the façade of Mshatta and on the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock. Most of it derived from the complex ways of analyzing the decorative arts developed out of grammars of ornament on the one hand and the theoretical studies of A. Riegl on the other.

18. I first approached the subject of a general system in Umayyad art in my dissertation, "Umayyad Art and Ceremonies," Princeton University, 1955. It is outdated in many ways and in error in some, but its impact can be found in most of the works quoted in n. 13.

19. The major exception to the rule lies in coinage, where both written sources and existing series of coins emphasize the necessity for a system of forms in order for any one item to be understood.


21. See M. Almagro and others, *Qusayr Amra* (Madrid, 1984), which unfortunately does not give a complete survey of the restored frescoes. It is also unfortunate that there is no account of the degree of restoration which has been provided in some instances, nor is anything really known about the technical details of the paintings.

22. Bibliographic references will be found in Creswell-Allan, *Early Muslim Architecture* and in Ettinghausen and Grabar, *Islamic Art*. Some pieces have been shown in various traveling exhibitions organized by the Syrian Department of Antiquities, especially the one held at the Musée du Monde Arabe in 1990–91 which focused on Umayyad palaces. Their catalogues provide a few additional pictures and minimal comments.


25. It is, of course, true that as an exercise in pure connoisseurship the Qasr al-Hayr sculpture differs in many details from actual Palmyrene works. Does it matter? How different must an imitation be in order not to be meaningful as an imitation? Conversely, are meanings carried together with forms?

26. There is no convenient access to the immensely rich treasures of early medieval art from Central and Inner Asia. A very general survey is Tamara Talbot Rice, *Ancient Arts of Central Asia* (New York, 1965). Rich and accurate, but geographically more restricted information is found in the published catalogue of an exhibition that never took place, *Culture and Art of Ancient Uzbekistan*, 2 vols. in Russian and English (Moscow, 1991). A little-known and unexpected source of major importance for Qasr al-Hayr as well as Khirbat al-Mafjar is Varkhsha in Uzbekistan, which has frescoes of animals strikingly similar to the Umayyad ones; see V. A. Shishkin, *Arhitekturnaja Dekoratsija Dvortsja v Varahshe,* *Hermitage Museum, Trudy Otdela Istori Kultury i Iskusstva Vostoka*, vol. 4 (Leningrad, 1947). For further examples see my comments on the paintings of Mafjar in Hamilton’s publication of the palace and A. von Le Coq, *Die Buddhistsche Spätantike* (Berlin, 1922–33), 1:pl. 20 and ff.; 5:pls. 12 and 33, comparable to fragments from Mafjar and Qasr al-Hayr.

27. It is well ascertained that considerable booty came from the conquest of Central Asia and that taxes were at times paid in objects rather than cash. A complete gathering of all appropriate texts would be a very worthy enterprise.

28. The arguments justifying this position are much beyond the range and purposes of this paper. From a methodological point of view I am trying to distinguish artistic transfers which took place through objects from the ones made by traveling artisans or artists.

29. The restoration work was accomplished by a team sent by the Spanish government. The results of its work are rather impressive, as can be seen in the
book by M. Almagro and others quoted earlier. There are, however, several places where the paintings visible now differ from the fragments seen by Musil a century ago and photographed by the Reverend Fathers Jaussen and Savignac, *Mission archéologique en Arabie*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1922). While important for the overall interpretation of the bath's paintings, these queries are not particularly pertinent to the point of this essay.


32. This is an appropriate occasion to recall the help of Fred Anderegg, for some time Head of Photographic Services at the University of Michigan, who came with me on so many Syrian and Jordanian trips and who took and often developed his pictures in most unusual places.

33. The representation on this wall is of a well-dressed woman in a tent with various figures around her.

To the right of the tent, in the upper part of the panel, there is a Greek inscription reading quite clearly *NIKE*, "Victory." In an article published a few years ago, I connected *NIKE* known for a hundred years with a number of Greek letters discovered by the Spanish restorers to have been painted on the left of the tent at the same level as *NIKE*. In "Une inscription grecque à Qusayr Amra," *Revue des études islamiques* (Mélanges Dominique Sourdel) 54 (1986), I argued that there was a single name and proposed that it be read ARIS[TO]NIKE. Unfortunately, I do not believe any longer that this reading is possible for a whole series of reasons. A suggestive alternative will be proposed by Dr. Garth Fowden in a forthcoming book which, if acceptable, will be of extraordinary importance for the understanding of Qusayr 'Amra. I am most grateful to Dr. Fowden for having shared his interpretation with me and for many wonderful discussions of Qusayr 'Amra. See Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth* (Princeton, 1993), 143–49.
Fig. 1. So-called Palmyrene sculpture from Qasr al-Hayr West.

Fig. 2. Qusayr ʿAmra. View toward right wall.
Fig. 3. Qusayr 'Amra. Standing nude woman on right wall in main hall.

Fig. 4. Qusayr 'Amra. "Lady Niké" on back wall of right vault.

Figs. 5–6. Qusayr 'Amra. Standing women on either side of ruling figure.
Dancing woman on arch in main hall.

Dancer accompanied by guitar player on spandrel of central vault.

Standing nude woman in central hall.

Dancing woman on arch in main hall.
Fig. 10. Qusayr ‘Amra. Personifications on the side of windows.

Fig. 11. Qusayr ‘Amra. Alighting (?) woman, on left wall of main hall.
Fig. 12. Qusayr ‘Amra. Female figures in upper part of central nave.

Fig. 13. Qusayr ‘Amra. Meditating woman in small side room.
SOLOMON'S THRONE/SOLOMON'S BATH: MODEL OR METAPHOR?

By PRISCILLA P. SOUCEK

Of the legendary figures mentioned in the Qur'an, Solomon is one of the most complex and multifaceted. He possessed both practical wisdom and a connection with supernatural forces. He could command the wind, communicate with birds and demons, some of whom constructed objects and buildings for him, and one of whom seized him the throne of a female ruler, Bilqis. Solomon could make armor, possessed the wisdom to adjudicate disputes, and was fond of horses. In religious terms Solomon’s role is somewhat ambiguous. He is said to have received a divine message, but also to have been arrogant, for which he sought a divine pardon. Death overtook him, as it does all mortals.

Across the Islamic period these various aspects of his personality varied in importance. The Qur'anic frame of reference for Solomon did ensure, however, that certain of them would retain a wide currency in the Islamic world, giving Solomonic imagery consistent features in different periods and regions. This consistency is an aid to the identification of Solomonic themes, even when an image or monument lacks any direct epigraphic or historical evidence which would connect it with that tradition.

Such is the case with the Umayyad palace complex known as Khirbat al-Majjar and in particular its bath hall. It lacks any direct historical documentation which could explain the rationale behind its decorative program, let alone any texts which establish a connection between its features and the attributes or accomplishments of Solomon. Nevertheless both the monument’s architectural features and its sculptural program do contain elements which may reflect Islamic legends about Solomon, particularly his connection with baths and the special properties of his throne. Since there is no direct historical documentation in contemporary sources which could corroborate this hypothesis, archaeological and textual evidence must be assembled before this question can be addressed.

The Khirbat al-Majjar excavation yielded no inscriptions aside from a few graffiti scattered on the surface or in foundation trenches. Archaeological evidence was, however, sufficient to establish that the complex was begun during the caliphate of Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik (724–43), but that some of the buildings were still unfinished when they collapsed in the devastating earthquake of the mid eighth century. Baramki and Hamilton dated this earthquake to 746, but other, more conclusive information suggests January 18, 749: excavations at Bet Shean (Roman and Byzantine Scythiopolis) turned up a gold coin dated 131 a.h. (August 31, 748–August 18, 749), excavated from a jeweler’s shop buried under earthquake debris.

The Khirbat al-Majjar complex had four main components: a palace, a mosque, a bath, and a courtyard with a domed fountain. Customarily a bath is assumed to be a subsidiary structure, a kind of service appendage to a residence, but in this case not only was the bath larger and more elaborately decorated than any of the palace rooms, it was also the first part of the complex to be built and the only one which shows signs of use. Thus, even though the upper story of the palace, which should have contained the private chambers of its owner, was unfinished when the building was destroyed, the pipes of the bath contained deposits of lime and ash that must have resulted from a significant period, perhaps years, of service.

The bath complex was also notable both for the divergent scale of its components and for its lavish decoration which included mosaic pavements, painted plaster, carved stucco, and stonework. The core of the structure was a square hall with projecting exedrae on each side. In his excavation report Hamilton identified this chamber as a frigidarium, but later designated it as a “music room,” partly as a descriptive term and partly to take issue with Ettinghausen’s interpretation that it was a throne room. Here the neutral terms “bath hall” or “hall” will be used. Although the functional rooms of the bath located along the hall’s northern side were small, the adjacent latrine was capacious. Three sections of the bath hall had particularly elaborate decoration: its entrance façade, its domed porch, and the small chamber attached to its northwest corner. The bath hall proper also contained some
figural sculpture, but it was too fragmentary to interpret. All three decorated areas—the bath-hall façade, its domed vestibule, and the northwest chamber—combine large areas of low-relief geometric or vegetal ornament with human and animal figures executed in high relief or even in the round. This contrast between two sculptural modes is particularly evident in the bath-hall façade and porch where figural elements were placed over or in front of vegetal and geometric ornament. Figural decoration was also concentrated in the upper zones of both structures. On the façade most of the sculpture was placed above the entrance portal. Three niches are assumed to have contained human figures, although only the central one, a bearded man standing on a pair of lions, labeled the “caliph,” was recovered. A row of bearded ibexes with pendants around their necks rested, somewhat precariously, on top of a cornice which surmounted the arch. Other animal sculptures, among them the head of a horse, were similarly perched along a lower molding (figs. 1–4).

The bath porch was, if anything, more startling in its juxtapositions, for it had low-relief vegetal and geometric ornament both below and above the figural zone. Figures in high relief or in the round were also arranged in clear levels. The upper level consisted of niches about 1.5 meters high once occupied by nearly life-sized, brightly painted male and female figures. Most of the women are nude to the waist with a cloth draped around their lower torso, but one poorly preserved figure wears a different garment. Some of the men wear loincloths, but one is dressed as a Roman footsoldier with a scale-armor tunic. The zone of figures in niches was surmounted by a row of birds and had kneeling sheep and gazelles at its base, balanced on the top ledge of an acanthus cornice (figs. 3–4).

This whole upper structure which filled the dome’s drum rested on pendentives covered with grapevines, but visually appeared to be supported by four male figures also wearing loincloths. These figures are described with derision by Hamilton who speaks of their conflicting roles of “Caryatid” and “juggler.” Certainly the execution of these figures lacks polish, but this does not exclude the possibility that their pose was intended to convey a message or that they had a meaningful connection with the upper zones of figures which they appear to support.

Hamilton is also critical of the placement of figures in the palace entryway, including life-sized figures in niches, horsemen standing on a cornice, and nude human figures on a vault covered by a dense tangle of grapevines inhabited by birds, monkeys, and pigs, which he describes as “awkward and incoherent.” Yet perhaps even this seemingly accidental placement of figural sculpture against the building, with birds and animals perched in rows along the cornices like so many pigeons on a roost, and life-sized human figures coming out of wall niches, was prompted not by incompetence but by the desire to create a specific impression in the mind of the viewer.

In his study, Walid and His Friends, Hamilton divides the figural sculptures into two groups on the basis of technique—one includes figures from the northwest chamber and domed porch, the other those from the palace entryway and bath façade. He also postulates two dates of execution and suggests that the bath façade sculptures were added only after Walid’s accession to the caliphate in 743.

Both Hamilton and Hillenbrand concur that the totality of the figural decoration on the bath façade and porch had no symbolic significance beyond an obvious reference to traditional themes connected with princely pomp and pleasure. As Hillenbrand states, “It was not conceived and executed as an entity” and “implicitly disclaims political themes.” Although Hamilton’s suggestion of two phases in the execution of the sculptures is plausible, it need not imply the absence of an overall rationale in the choice and placement of the figures.

The question of whether the structure and decoration of Umayyad palatial complexes were based on a unifying concept or whether they represent a kind of accidental assemblage of recycled forms and themes continues to be debated. With respect to Khirbat al-Mafjar, most of the debate to date has focused on a portion of the central bath hall and on its highly decorated northwest chamber. A theory that both of these areas displayed Iranian royal symbols proposed by Ettinghausen was strongly disputed by Hamilton. Subsequently, Shaked provided additional evidence to support some of Ettinghausen’s hypotheses. Rather than joining in a debate over these portions of the building, however, we will focus on the sculptural ensemble on the bath-hall façade and porch in which we see a reflection of legends about Solomon’s throne and bath.

First, however, it is useful to review what is
known about the Umayyad vision of Solomon and how the stories about him contained in the Qur’an were viewed in the first Islamic centuries. Studies on the evolution of Islamic religious thought and practice have suggested that the Umayyad period was a critical moment in which explanations for Qur’anic texts were sought from a wide variety of sources. Where passages have strong parallels with the biblical narrative, the interpretations of persons familiar with Jewish and Christian sources were particularly important.

Scholars have identified the names of several individuals whose interpretations were appreciated by the first generations of Muslims. Some of them were qußāṣ (sg. qass), popular preachers or storytellers whose explanations of the Qur’anic text helped the expanding community of believers understand the faith’s doctrines. They probably laid the foundation for the important aspects of Qur’anic analysis later codified as tafsir, and subsequently, some of their interpretations were incorporated into historical texts such as Tabari’s annals.

Major changes in the religious traditions which accompanied the formal codification of commentaries in the Abbasid period have made it difficult, however, to reconstruct the religious and cultural climate of earlier decades. Fortunately some texts preserved in an Abbasid recension still provide important clues as to the attitudes of the preceding period. Two texts useful for understanding the early Islamic vision of Solomon are the Kitab al-Tijan fi Muluk Himyar of Wahb ibn Munabbih (654–729 or 732) and the tafsir of Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d. 767). Muqatil was probably a qadi by profession and his tafsir is said to contain colorful elements drawn from the tradition of popular preachers who often included comments about Qur’anic legends in their sermons.

Ibn Munabbih’s biography, as reconstructed by R. G. Khoutry, underscores his role as interpreter of biblical traditions for the Umayyad dynasty and later generations of Muslims. Wahb was one of six brothers born into a family of mixed Iranian and Yemeni ancestry. His great-grandfather, al-Aswar, had come to the Yemen as a member of the cavalry force sent ca. 570 by Khusraw Anushirwan to help Sayf Dhu Yazan dislodge the Abyssinians who had occupied South Arabia. These Iranians and their descendants, known as the Abnā’, remained a distinct group in the Yemen until the advent of Islam, maintaining an attachment to Persian traditions and language. Wahb’s father, Munabbih b. Kamil, probably converted to Islam within the Prophet’s lifetime, and was also remembered as an early compiler of the Qur’an. His penchant for religious scholarship was evidently transmitted to his sons, two of whom, Humman and Wahb, achieved eminence in religious studies.

Wahb gained renown for his knowledge of biblical traditions and is said to have known both Hebrew and Aramaic; he was also known for his exemplary piety. Accounts that Ibn ‘Abbas, the traditionist, declared Wahb to be the most learned of men are probably legendary, but even in its present state the Kitab al-Tijan attests to his intimate familiarity with Jewish, Arabian, and Iranian lore. Some of this knowledge may have come from his mother, said to be descended from the rulers of Himyar, but his text also reflects the unusual amalgam of cultures and religious characteristic of sixth- and seventh-century Yemen.

Professionally Wahb ibn Munabbih served as a qadi in San‘a, a position to which he was appointed by the Umayyad caliph, ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz around 717. The Kitab al-Tijan confirms that he was also skilled as a qass, or reciter of religious tales, a combination of skills particularly characteristic of religious leaders in the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods.

Wahb is said to have been consulted by the caliphs Mu’awiya and Walid b. ‘Abd al-Malik on religious matters. A tradition preserved in Thalabi’s Qisas al-Anbiyā’ describes his conversation with Mu’awiya about the special features of Solomon’s throne. Walid allegedly sought Wahb’s aid in interpreting a Hebrew inscription discovered during the construction of the Great Mosque of Damascus which no one could read; Wahb was able to link it with the reign of Sulayman b. Da‘ud.

Despite its abbreviated state, one can sense in the Kitab al-Tijan the power of the qass to render the Qur’anic message intelligible to the community of believers through his dual skills as entertaining storyteller and moralizing preacher. In Ibn Munabbih’s text these two goals—instruction and entertainment—work in tandem. He creates a lively narrative of Solomon’s relationship with Bilqis by skillfully blending quotations and paraphrases of the Qur’anic text with extra-Qur’anic details to create a new whole which at once endows the principals with credible personalities and makes the Qur’anic text more meaningful. In addition, his stress on the story’s moral
and religious message recurs at intervals like a refrain. Thus he frames a description of Solomon’s supernatural attributes with a stress on their role in a divine plan beginning with the statement that God gave Solomon powers not granted to anyone before or since so that he might rescue Bilqis from her arrogant disregard for God’s omnipotence (qudrāh) and concluding that God’s real goal was making Solomon guide her and the Himyrites to the true faith.48

Ibn Munabbih’s text deserves a detailed analysis, but here three passages will be summarized—the discussion of Solomon’s powers, the role of his throne, and his connection with baths. In describing Solomon’s unique powers, Ibn Munabbih combines quotations and paraphrases of themes treated in suras 21, 27, 34, and 38. They describe Solomon’s command of the wind, his ability to communicate with both animate beings and inanimate things, and his power to force demonic creatures to do his bidding, particularly to erect buildings or collect pearls.

Here a section of this text will be translated. Qur’anic quotations will be both italicized and identified, and paraphrases will be followed by parenthetical references to their apparent source.

To Solomon [he submitted] the wind. The morning one blew a month’s journey and the evening one blew a month’s journey [34:11/12]. The birds shaded him. He [God] taught him the language of the birds and the language of all things [27:16]. No matter which thing uttered His praises he [Solomon] understood that praise [21:79]. The mountain traveled with him, indeed the wind carried it as it repeated its praises [of God] [34:10]. People, jinn, and shayātīn were made subservient to him [21:82, 34:12/13]. As God—may His praise be great—said: all builders and pearl-divers [38:36/37].49

This nucleus of attributes established Solomon’s role as builder, and his mobility permitted his connection with buildings and regions quite distant from one another. Ibn Munabbih notes that Solomon could travel anywhere he pleased, but specifically links him to Tadmur (Palmyra) in Syria, Istakhr (Persepolis) in Iran, and Kabul in Afghanistan.50

The Qur’anic text insists repeatedly on Solomon’s ability to command the wind and to make it carry him wherever he wished, but gives few hints about how he traveled. Comments in Ibn Munabbih and Tabari, however, show that he was believed to move from place to place with his entire entourage in what was, in effect, a portable palace complete with kitchens and stables. Ibn Munabbih describes how Solomon arranged his entourage during those journeys:

He commanded the wind to carry his throne (farash) and he ordered it to carry the chairs (karāsī) of his companions. Then he sat on his throne. He seated the men on his right and left, and he placed the jinn behind him in this way—some sitting, some standing. Then he said to the wind, “Carry us,” and to the birds, “Shade us.” Then the wind carried him and the birds shaded him and his companions among men and jinn from the sun. The horses were standing and the cooks sitting in their stalls at their work.51

This Kūṭāb al-Tijān description omits some details found in other early accounts cited by Tabari in his history. One given on the authority of Ibn Ishaq (d. 769) explains the preparations needed for such a journey. Whenever Solomon went to war, a wooden platform was constructed to transport his army, their mounts, weapons, and accoutrements. When everything was in order on the platform, Solomon commanded a gale (fasif) to lift this structure and when it was airborne a gentle breeze (rukḥār) propelled it.52 Another description cited by Tabari on the authority of Muhammad b. Ka‘b al-Quradi (d. 736) makes the same differentiation between a violent wind which lifts the platform and a breeze which carries it while also stressing that Solomon’s traveling entourage stretched over a distance of one hundred parsangs and was divided evenly between humans, jinn, birds, and animals, with each occupying twenty-five parsangs. His immediate household consisted of a thousand women—three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines—each of whom had a separate glass enclosure (bāyt min qawārīr) on that wooden support.53

Yet another description of how Solomon was transported from place to place with his retinue gives the demons (shayātīn) a role. It is in Tabari’s tafsīr to explain sura 34:12 which describes Solomon’s control over the wind. When it was stationary, the platform was supported by demons, but when he wished to move, it was lifted by demons and a whirlwind until a gentle breeze carried it along.54 A belief that demons could take on the form of winds links these two seemingly disparate features; it is reflected in a statement attributed to the Prophet that mentions God’s creation of three categories of jinn: one of chthonic creatures—snakes, scorpions, and reptiles; another with human form and character; and a third which resembles the winds.55

Taken together, these passages clarify the
Islamic conception of Solomon’s mode of locomotion: he moved about on a platform large enough to hold his entire army and retinue. When it was at rest it was supported by demons, and when he wished to travel it was propelled by those same demons metamorphosed into winds. This notion that Solomon’s throne was a mobile royal household is mentioned much more frequently in Islamic sources than is his personal ivory-and-gold throne so vividly described in the Bible (I Kings 10:18–20, and Chronicles 9:17–19), which had lions flanking its arms and guarding each end of its six steps.

Two Qur’anic passages refer to Solomon’s throne, but neither mentions specifically this lion-protected throne. Sura 27 describes how Bilqis’s throne (‘arsh) is seized for Solomon by the jinn (27:23, 38, 41–42) and sura 38 how God places an interloper on Solomon’s throne (kurṣī) as a test of his devotion (38:34/35). Commentaries stress the opulence of Bilqis’s golden and jewel-encrusted throne, but rarely discuss that of Solomon.57

Despite the silence of Tabari and other Qur’anic commentators on the subject of Solomon’s lion-protected throne (probably precisely because it is from the Bible), its distinctive features were known in Islam. The lion-protected throne was represented in paintings and even used as a model for actual thrones.58 Although the pious shaykhs of Abbasid Iraq may have excised discussion of Solomon’s throne from their chronicles and commentaries, legends about it persisted in other literary contexts probably because it served as an example of sculpture or tamālī (pl. tamāṭīḥ), as an example of the “marvels” (ṭajāʾīb) known from various periods and regions, and because it could be used in conjunction with Solomon’s role as ruler and judge. A link between the lion-protected throne and the administration of justice was of particular importance for early Islamic rulers because both the first caliphs and the Ummayads were involved in the resolution of disputes and the dispensation of justice.

Given his knowledge of biblical traditions, it would be logical to assume that Wahb ibn Munabbih mentioned Solomon’s lion-protected throne in his writings. His Hadīth Dārūd preserved in the Heidelberg Papyrus (dated 844) describes three disputes adjudicated by David and Solomon together but breaks off at the beginning of Solomon’s reign.59 However, a later text, the Qisas al-Anbā’ī of Tha’labi (d. 1035), cites a conversation between Wahb b. Munabbih and Caliph Muʿawiya, which connects Solomon’s throne with the practical administration of justice.

Tha’labi’s narrative opens by citing sura 38:34/35, which describes how God tested Solomon’s devotion by depriving him of his throne. Then Tha’labi abruptly shifts to a consideration of the throne itself, which he connects with Solomon’s role as judge because its awe-inspiring appearance would prevent witnesses from giving false testimony.60 The link between these two seemingly disparate elements lies in the traditional explanation of the offense for which God was punishing Solomon—namely, allowing favoritism to influence his ruling in a dispute. In this incident, recounted by Ibn ʿAbbas, he ruled in favor of the relatives of one of his favorite wives because of his affection for her rather than on the merits of their case. The incident of Solomon’s throne is also linked by commentators to sura 38:25/26 in which David, designated by God as caliph, is enjoined to rule justly or face divine retribution.61

Tha’labi’s description of Solomon’s throne is unusually elaborate and contains many details not given in the Bible, several of which recall the mechanical throne seen in Constantinople by Liutprand of Cremona during his mid-tenth-century visit.62 The steps of the ivory-and-gold throne were flanked by lions who stretched out their paws to aid Solomon’s ascent. The whole apparatus rotated. It was surrounded and protected by palm trees, grapevines, eagles, and peacocks. The vegetation was made of gold and encrusted with rubies and emeralds, and the birds shaded Solomon and also scattered musk over him. When he was finally installed on the throne a dove would present him with “the Torah” (al-tawrīḥ) which he would use in issuing verdicts. Solomon’s throne was flanked on the right by a thousand elders of the Israelites and on the left by a thousand jinn. Birds shaded the assembled company. When witnesses appeared before Solomon, the whole throne structure made two quick rotations.63

The alleged conversation between Muʿawiya and Wahb b. Munabbih contains a simpler description of Solomon’s rotating throne and centers on its lion protectors, bird canopy, and its value in forcing witnesses to give true testimony. This mechanical throne is said to have been made by one of Solomon’s jinn named Sakhr (lit. “solid rock”).64 This meeting may well be legendary but its import, the linking of one of Solomon’s magical attributes with the pursuit of justice, is in consonance with both Muʿawiya’s documented
interest in legends and with the moralizing tone of the early Islamic *qisas* tradition.65

Other Islamic authors connect Solomon’s lion-protected throne with the likenesses or sculptures mentioned in sura 34:12/13. Among the things made for Solomon by the jinn were “whatever he wanted of mihrabs (mabhárīḥ), likenesses (tamāthīḥ), basins (jifān) like pools, and fixed cauldrons.” Tabarī’s *tafsīr* demonstrates that religious scholars were perplexed by the Qur’anic linking of Solomon with “likenesses.”66 One of the few commentators to connect sura 34:12/13 with Solomon’s lion-protected throne is Shaykh Tabarī. *His Majesty al-Bayān*, composed ca. 1130, is noted both for following certain Shi’ī practices and for its voluminous and discursive commentaries in which he often presents differing points of view to allow his readers to reach their own conclusions.67 Tabarī’s remarks about Solomon’s throne combine the biblical tradition with some of the features mentioned by Tha’labī. This throne, intended to be awe-inspiring, had a pair of lions at its base and a pair of eagles perched on its flanking columns. Whenever Solomon “wanted to mount the throne, the two lions stretched out their paws and when he was sitting upon it, the two eagles spread out their wings and shielded him from the sun.”68

Both Tha’labī and Tabarī also describe how after Solomon’s death Bukhtnassar (Nebuchadnezzar) tried to ascend this throne but was struck by the paws of his lion supports, and Tha’labī adds that Bukhtnassar’s leg ached the rest of his life.69 This juxtaposition of Solomon and Bukhtnassar parallels a statement attributed to Wahh ibn Munabbih by Ibn Qutayba: “Among world rulers there were two believers and two idolators. The two believers were Sulayman ibn Da’ud and Dhul’ Qarnayn. The idolators were Nimrud and Bukhtnassar.”70

Statements about Solomon in various Islamic texts confirm his extraordinary prestige as a model ruler and judge in the early Islamic period. Particularly extravagant praises of him occur in remarks attributed by Tabarī to Wahh ibn Munabbih, in a description of Asi b. Abijah, a monotheistic ruler who is linked to the traditions of Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon. Here, Solomon emerges as the most powerful of this distinguished company. He has the greatest wealth and dominion over all creatures, but more particularly, he is termed ra’s al-ḥukamāʾ wa l-mulūk ([he who is] preeminent among sages and kings).71 The prominence accorded to Solomon in these statements raises the question of whether he played a particular role in the local South Arabian variety of monotheism, labeled by A. Beeston and others as “Rahmanism.”72 Solomon, with his combination of practical and esoteric knowledge, would appear to be the perfect candidate to mediate between the demon-inhabited landscape of pagan Arabia and the more intellectualized world of monotheism.

Further information about the early Islamic understanding of Solomon is evidently contained in an important, but as yet unpublished, source, the *Nihāyat al-ʿarab fī akhābār al-Furs wa-l-ʿArab* ascribed to the Pseudo Asma.73 This text, which has a complex literary pedigree, appears to be a mid-ninth-century work drawing on sources of the late Umayyad period. It traces the history of the world from the time of the creation, combining traditions of various regions, but it gives special emphasis to the traditions of ancient Iran and of the Yemen.74

Both versions of Solomon’s throne, his airborne retinue and the lion-protected seat of judgment, are connected primarily with Solomon’s official roles as warrior, ruler, and judge. However, the third aspect of his legacy to be considered here, Solomon’s bath, is linked to more private and intimate aspects of his life. Scattered references which link Solomon with baths are found in other Islamic sources, but only Wahh ibn Munabbih’s *Kitāb al-Tijān* provides a plausible rationale for this association; Tabarī’s history, however, also provides additional details. These two accounts contain a more expansive discussion of Solomon’s relationship with Bilqis than does the Qur’anic version in sura 27:20–44/45. Wahh’s narrative as a whole presents a skillful blend of Qur’anic citations and additional dialogue between the various characters which gives the story a kind of emotional immediacy.75 (In quotations given below the Qur’anic texts are again italicized.)

In the Qur’anic version an unnamed queen enters Solomon’s palace and, thinking its floor is wet, uncovers her legs. When he reassures her that what she sees is only a glass pavement, she pronounces her submission to Solomon and her adherence to Islam, whereupon the Qur’anic text shifts to another theme.

Wahh’s fuller version explains both why Solomon had a reception chamber with a glass floor and how Solomon reacted to the queen’s conversion to Islam. Wahh reiterates, at intervals, the religious purpose of Solomon’s relationship with
Bilqis, namely to rescue her and her subjects from the errors of idolatry. At the same time, his narrative has the atmosphere of a romance in which the lovers test each other before deciding to unite, and their union follows her acceptance of Islam.

In Wabh’s version Bilqis is the only surviving child of a marriage between Hadhad b. Sharhabil, the ruler of Himyar, and a female jinn. After Bilqis had succeeded her father and ruled seven years, Solomon, his retinue, and soldiers were transported to Arabia where the two corresponded and finally met. As he came to know Bilqis, Solomon, attracted to her beauty and impressed with her intelligence, decided to marry her. This decision alarmed his demonic servants because they feared Bilqis would help Solomon to keep them enslaved.

One of their number, Zawba’a, described as “an ‘ifrit among the jinn,” a phrase which echoes the Qur’anic description of the demon who procured the throne of Bilqis for Solomon (sura 27:39), promised the others to turn Bilqis against Bilqis. His leading role in this story may stem from the fact that as the embodiment of a whirlwind he was one of those forced to transport Solomon and his retinue. To cool Solomon’s ardor for Bilqis he claimed that she, like all those born to a jinn, had hoofs like a donkey and hairy legs. When Solomon demanded proof, Zawba’a constructed the palace with a glass floor in which fish seem to be swimming. When Bilqis was summoned to enter this chamber she saw the fish and she uncovered her legs in order to wade into the water. When Solomon saw her and looked at her two legs and the thick black hair on the white of those legs, he said to her, “don’t bare your legs; it is [only] a palace paved with glass.” Realizing his superiority, Bilqis offered herself to Solomon and acknowledged the primacy of his religion.

Wabh follows this passage with further details about their courtship, portraying Solomon as hesitant because of Bilqis’s hairy legs. In a passage typical of his colloquial style, Wabh recounts the conversations of Solomon, Bilqis, and the jinn. First Bilqis tries to entice Solomon, saying, “O Prophet of God, the pomegranate is not appreciated until it is tasted.” Solomon then rebuts her, saying, “Only what is sweet to the eye is sweet to the mouth.”

After a month’s delay Solomon had decided to marry Bilqis but remained concerned about her hairy legs. This time “a virtuous man among the jinn” says: “O Prophet of God, is her hair the only thing you detest?” He said, “Certainly.” [The jinn] said “I’ll leave her for you like unblemished silver.” [Solomon] said, “Do it.” This jinn’s solution was to construct a bath for Bilqis and to make depilatory paste from the lime encrusted in the bath pipes. This action is commented upon by Wabh or one of his editors who expatiates on the importance of this deed: “Some scholars say that the first depilatory was that made for her, and the first bath was the one made by that jinn. That one jinn made for her two paved palaces and [practiced] various crafts.”

The Kitâb al-Tîjân is unusual for the clarity with which it explains how Solomon became associated with baths, but several other authors repeat aspects of this story. Tabari links the jinn only with the invention of depilatory paste, omitting any reference to bath structures. However, both Mutahhar ibn Tahir al-Maqdisi and Tha’alibi mention Solomon’s connection with baths. Tha’alibi’s comments come in a chapter on awârīl, the first occurrences of various things. He describes Solomon as “the first person . . . to set up baths,” and credits him, not the jinn, with the invention of depilatories. This discovery is linked with Solomon’s desire to remove the hair from Bilqis’s legs, but no mention is made of their marriage. Tha’alibi indirectly confirms the early date of a link among Bilqis, Solomon, and baths by quoting a pre- or early-Islamic verse which refers to the use of depilatories in the time of Bilqis.

Mutahhar ibn Tahir al-Maqdisi (fl. 966) also lists both “the extraction from the earth of depilatory paste” and “the construction of baths” among Solomon’s accomplishments. His text adds a further dimension by noting that Persians claim the same powers for Jamshid as those attributed by “the Muslims and Peoples of the Book” (the Jews?) to Solomon (control over jinn, men, and demons, comprehension of the speech of animals and birds, and command of the wind).

The remark that Persians attribute bath-building to Jamshid in the fashion that Muslims (and Jews?) do to Solomon is also made by Tabari in his account of Jamshid’s six-hundred-year-long reign. This passage ascribed to “Persian scholars” also describes Jamshid’s ability to travel in a “chariot” (‘ajala) carried by demons.

From the year 150 to the year 250, he fought the demons (shayātīn) and jinn, causing great slaughter among them and humiliating them. They were subjected [to doing forced labor] for him and had to follow his
orders. From the year 250 to the year 316, he charged the demons with cutting stones and rocks from the mountains and making marble, gypsum, and chalk. They also were directed to erect buildings and baths with [these materials] and with clay. He also charged them with producing depilatories and with transporting, from the oceans, mountains, mines, and deserts, everything useful for mankind, such as gold, silver, and all other meltable precious metals, as well as different kinds of perfumes and medicines. They carried out all those orders of his. Jamshid then ordered the manufacture of a glass chariot. He harnessed the demons to it, mounted it, and went on it through the air from his home, in Dunbawand, to Babil in one day. That was the day Hurmuzruz of Fawardin Mah. Because of the miracle people saw him perform on that occasion, they established the day as New Year's Day (nawrūz). He ordered them to establish this day and the following five days as a festival.90

This passage and the one from al-Maqdisi’s text cited above demonstrate the complex manner in which Solomonic legends and those connected with the Persian ruler Jamshid had become interwoven.91 This occurred before the advent of Islam as the term used for Jamshid’s demon-transported vehicle ʿajala (wagon or chariot) shows. In Ibn Munabbih’s Ḥadīth Diṣūd the related word ʿajal is used to describe Solomon’s wind-borne vehicle.92 Both terms suggest a link between these legends and various apothecosis stories of late antiquity. There may even be traces of this apothecosis tradition in the sculptural program of Khirbat al-Mafjar.

Ibn Munabbih also connects Solomon with Istakhr, a town connected with the ruins of Persepolis in Islamic sources.93 This site has strong ties to the Jamshid legends, particularly those connected with the festival of Nawruz.94 In later Persian and Indian literary traditions and pictorial representations the figures of Jamshid and Solomon become so interdependent that the two sometimes appear to be different aspects of the same persona, a process through which Solomon can even be linked with Nawruz and Jamshid’s solar attributes.

Although by the tenth century, if not earlier, Persian sources ascribe the invention of baths to Jamshid, this innovation is more securely linked to Solomon, especially in the Arab tradition. Thus, the tenth-century Syrian author Muqaddasi identifies “Solomon’s bath” ( Hammam Sulayman) as being among the ruins of Istakhr/Persepolis.95 More commonly, however, Solomon is connected with hot springs or baths in the Yemen or Syria,96 most persistently with those in the vicinity of Tabariyya (Roman Tiberias), on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The proximity of this site to Khirbat al-Mafjar gives these associations a particular importance for the hypothesis proposed here that the structure and decoration of the Umayyad bath and palace complex at Khirbat al-Mafjar were intended to conjure up in the minds of its users legends surrounding Solomon’s bath, as well as those connected with Solomon’s throne.

Two different areas near the city of Tiberias had hot springs famous since antiquity for their curative powers: one is just south of the Roman and Byzantine settlement, the other some distance to the southeast, in the Yarmuk valley. Both areas contain structures identified by Islamic authors as Ḥāl al-Ḥarawi and Nasir-i Khusrav as baths erected by Solomon. The springs and baths connected with them were considered one of the world’s “marvels” because from the ground emerged water so hot that no additional heating was needed.97

The marvel of the Tiberias bath is illustrated in a late-fourteenth-century manuscript now in Oxford, the Kitāb al-Bulhān (fig. 5). The scene, which has lost its original title, is identified in a later hand as “ḥammām tabariyya.” In the illustration this bath has two stories, a lower one occupied by the bath’s furnace and two demons and an upper one for bathers. Because of its demonic fire-tenders the illustration evokes the literary tradition of Solomon’s bath, except that presumably at Tiberias the demons would have been underground whence the hot springs issued. Unfortunately there is no text associated with this painting.98

In addition to Islamic sources, the city of Tiberias and its baths are also described in an anonymous Syriac chronicle completed in 1234 and published by L.-B. Chabot in a Latin translation. It contains a description of damage inflicted on the city and its surroundings in the devastating mid-eighth-century earthquake which also destroyed Khirbat al-Mafjar:

The earthquake overturned the entire city of Tiberias, except for the house of a barber named ʿIsa. Thirty synagogues of the Jews were destroyed and [also] the wonders that were in that city. The baths built by King Solomon, of marvelous construction, were completely overthrown and collapsed. There was also in this city a spring of purgative waters bestowed by God for the people’s cure and beautiful shrines were built over
it and there were latrines built in the area around it for the use of those who came to be purged. . . . All these facilities were devastated and destroyed.\textsuperscript{99}

Recent excavations at Tiberias have confirmed the veracity of this description, which differentiates between a large bath and smaller structures near the spring. The "baths built by King Solomon" should probably be connected with a large bath erected in the Byzantine period, in the southern section of Tiberias, and said to have "a magnificent mosaic pavement," which was destroyed in the earthquake of 749.\textsuperscript{100}

More recent excavations near the springs in the southern suburb of Hammath-Tiberias have, however, uncovered a structure similar to that described in the Syriac text. Although also destroyed by the earthquake of 749, this building was subsequently rebuilt and continued to be used into the tenth century.\textsuperscript{101} This section of the city had buildings on either side of a main street. On the street's western side was a nine-room building (about 250 meters square) equipped with reservoirs, latrines, and systems for both running water and drainage.\textsuperscript{102} Information in the Syriac text combined with archaeological evidence tells us that during the first half of the eighth century there was a large bath on the southern side of Tiberias proper known locally as "Solomon's bath." After the earthquake this structure was not rebuilt as were smaller buildings adjacent to the hot springs. Later Islamic authors often associate Solomon with buildings adjacent to those springs, or even with the more distant baths in the Yarmuk valley.\textsuperscript{103}

What gives the baths and springs near Tiberias particular importance for the question of whether there is a link between the legends about Solomon's bath and the design and decoration of Khirbat al-Mafjar is the fact that the Umayyad dynasty owned property in its immediate vicinity and that several members of the family are known to have frequented the area. References to properties owned by various Umayyad family members are scattered through Islamic sources and have yet to be collected and analyzed in a systematic fashion. However, even without such a synthetic study, certain features of the manner in which property was acquired and transmitted are discernible. The various treaties of capitulation granted to conquered cities provided the Islamic leaders with substantial holdings in diverse sections of the conquered territories. From remarks made by Baladhuri it would appear that land or property thus acquired was transmitted within the ranks of the caliphs and their families not only from person to person but also from dynasty to dynasty. He was able to list the owners of land in the Arabian community of Fadak from the lifetime of the Prophet to the reign of the Abbasid al-Mutawakkil (847–61).\textsuperscript{104} Other sources indicate that members of the Umayyad family with holdings in different areas often traveled between them in the course of a year, whether to manage their properties better or to enjoy activities appropriate to a given region or climate.

With respect to Tiberias, both medieval textual references and modern archaeology confirm this city's importance in the Umayyad period. In addition to Umayyad-period buildings discovered both in the city itself and in its suburb Hammath, an excavation north of Tiberias at Khirbat al-Minya revealed the presence of an Umayyad palatial residence.\textsuperscript{105} The texts suggest, however, that the most important holdings of the Umayyad family were in or near al-Sinnabra (former Sinnabris), located south of the thermal springs.

Four generations of the Marwanid Umayyads can be connected with the Tiberias region or al-Sinnabra: Marwan, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik, and Yazid b. Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik. Both Marwan and 'Abd al-Malik appear to have used al-Sinnabra as a seasonal residence. Thus in Ansūba al-Ashraf, Baladhuri describes both Marwan's visit to al-Sinnabra while on route from Egypt to Damascus, and also the peregrinations of 'Abd al-Malik over the course of a year, from one winter to another. The cycle begins and ends with a sojourn in al-Sinnabra which he left at the end of winter, moving from there to Damascus via al-Jabiya, then to Ba'albak, and back to Damascus, before returning once more to al-Sinnabra. A bridge over the Jordan near al-Sinnabra linked it to the Damascus road.\textsuperscript{106}

Al-Sinnabra also figures prominently in the upheavals which followed the assassination of al-Walid II in 744. The citizens of Palestine, probably in Ramleh, sought to make Yazid b. Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik caliph because he had been living among them and they trusted him. The inhabitants of Jordan, however, backed the candidacy of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik. To quell these disturbances, forces loyal to Yazid b. al-Walid sent armed men to Tiberias where they began to plunder houses.\textsuperscript{107} In the ensuing confusion the citizens of Tiberias "went to the
residence of Yazid b. Sulayman and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik, plundered their belongings, seized their riding animals and weapons, and returned to their own villages and houses. After order had been restored, the commander of the caliphal army convened the people of Jordan in al-Sinnabra and forced them to swear allegiance to Yazid b. al-Walid. Textual evidence connecting the Umayyad family with the region around Jericho and hence with Khirbat al-Mafjar is less detailed than for al-Sinnabra, so a broader approach must be used. In climate the Jericho region resembled Tiberias and was also a traditional winter residence, especially for persons residing in the colder parts of Filistin, such as Jerusalem or Ramlah. Property adjacent to important springs in the Jericho region had a particularly high value and remained the property of Palestine's rulers from the Hellenistic through the Byzantine period. Both Herod and his son owned palm groves in the vicinity of Jericho. Herod also established a balsam plantation near the village of Naurath (Duyuk) five miles north of Jericho, and water from that same spring was used by his successor to irrigate a palm grove. Later both the palm trees and the balsam plantation were exploited for the profit of the Roman and Byzantine treasury. It is a measure of the high commercial value of balsam resin that Hadrian and his successors insisted that its cultivation continue despite opposition from the local population. For this reason a Jewish community is said to have remained at Naurath (Duyuk) until the sixth century.

Given the long history of governmental control over the oases of Jericho, it is probable that the capitulation treaty for Jerusalem transferred some such property to the new Islamic rulers. Thus, it is not surprising to learn that Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik, the governor of Filistin during the caliphate of his brother al-Walid (705–15) and the founder of Ramlah, also had property near Jericho. His foundation of Ramlah is described by Baladhuri, and other Islamic authors mention its connection with him or other members of the dynasty. A description of his Jericho property, however, appears to be found exclusively in the anonymous thirteenth-century Syriac chronicle, mentioned above in connection with the history of Tiberias.

Despite the thirteenth-century date of its compilation, this text, which appears to be based on much earlier records kept in the Christian community, often gives details of their tribulations at the hands of Islamic rulers and provides a vivid account of various miracles and disasters. It is in this vein that the chronicle of 1234 mentions damage inflicted on Sulayman's property by the earthquake of 749. Hamilton refers to this passage in a postscript to his monograph on al-Walid and provides a partial translation, without bibliographical references, based on the unpublished work of a certain Robert Schick. This text states:

The spring, however, which is situated near Jericho at which Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik had built citadels (arces), gardens (horti), and mills (mole), this spring itself stayed in its position, but the river which rose from it changed its course and receded six miles from the place in which it used to flow; thus it was that all the constructions made on this river by Sulayman perished.

The Syriac author gives no specific source for this evidence, but his extraordinarily specific description of earthquake damage inflicted on Tiberias mentioned above, the accuracy of which has been confirmed by modern archaeology, gives his account high credibility. Both descriptions appear to have been based on eyewitness testimony, perhaps from monks who resided in the vicinity. A monastic community was established near Jericho in 475, and archaeological remains document a continuous Christian presence into the Islamic period. Monks living in the Jordan valley are said to have supported themselves by making baskets and mats from palm fronds and to have scandalized their neighbors by raising pigs. Some of the graffiti discovered at Khirbat al-Mafjar itself are said to have been written by Christian clerics.

The spring near which Sulayman is said to have erected structures may be the twin sources of Ayn al-Nuwayima and Ayn al-Duyuk located four kilometers northwest of the ruins of Khirbat al-Mafjar and connected to it by an aqueduct. According to Hamilton, "About 700 m. north-west of the palace the waters were gathered in a reservoir or birkah, between which and the palace the fall of some 80 feet in the land was used to turn three or more water mills." This water channel then continued northward along the western side of Khirbat al-Mafjar until it reached an unexplored mound located to the north of the bath hall and tentatively identified as a guesthouse or khān. It is tempting to identify this unexplored northern mound, the mills and irrigation system with the structures erected for Sulayman b. 'Abd
al-Malik. If so, then this property may even have had a pre-Islamic imperial pedigree, and the hydraulic installations upon which it depended may have descended from those installed by Herod or his son to bring water to their palm groves and balsam plantation.\textsuperscript{121}

If the installations near Khirbat al-Mafjar and even its northern, unexcavated mound can be linked to the patronage of Sulayman b. ‘Abd al-Malik, this does not necessarily mean that he was also responsible for the construction of the bath hall, mosque, and palace complex excavated by Hamilton. Nor need it invalidate the hypothesis advanced by Hamilton which links those buildings with the patronage of Walid b. Yazid b. ‘Abd al-Malik. Taking as his point of departure the excavation of graffiti linking the buildings with the reign of Hisham b. ‘Abd al-Malik, Hamilton gradually evolved a theory that the complex had been erected toward the end of Hisham’s reign for his nephew and successor Walid ibn Yazid (r. 743–44).\textsuperscript{122} Hamilton provides several reasons for this identification; he finds a pun or rebus for Walid’s name in a mosaic decoration showing a knife beside a fruit with a green sprig attached.\textsuperscript{123} Literary accounts of Walid’s revels also contain terms which Hamilton equates with specific features of the hall at Khirbat al-Mafjar—\textit{majlis al-lauh} for the main bath hall,\textsuperscript{124} a \textit{birka}, or stone basin, contained in an antechamber to the hot rooms,\textsuperscript{125} and a \textit{bahw}, or intimate audience chamber, which he connects with the highly ornamented room attached to the northwest corner of the large hall.\textsuperscript{126}

The anthology of poetic texts and images which Hamilton has assembled gives a convincing picture of Walid’s life as it could have been enacted at Khirbat al-Mafjar, and Hillenbrand has collected further literary references about Walid’s habits which might have affected the organization and decoration of his palaces.\textsuperscript{127} Despite the plausibility of Hamilton’s arguments and the many detailed parallels between Walid’s habits and the decoration of extant Umayyad structures provided by Hillenbrand, neither scholar was able to establish a definite historical link between Walid and Khirbat al-Mafjar.\textsuperscript{128}

The evidence linking Sulayman b. ‘Abd al-Malik with the area of Khirbat al-Mafjar can provide a foundation for establishing such a connection and may also help to explain certain curious features of this complex. If this property had belonged to Sulayman b. ‘Abd al-Malik, then after his death in 717 it should have passed to another member of the dynasty, perhaps to ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-’Aziz or Yazid b. ‘Abd al-Malik, his designated successors. If Yazid had been the beneficiary, then the property might have been transferred by him to his successor, Hisham b. ‘Abd al-Malik or his own son, al-Walid.

Although this chain of inheritance must remain hypothetical, the possibility that the unexcavated northern mound houses the remains of an Umayyad residence earlier than the bath hall, mosque, and palace complex excavated by Hamilton would explain certain anomalies of those structures, such as why they were erected from north to south. In both the bath hall and the palace the northern wall was apparently the first to be erected.\textsuperscript{129} According to the excavators the bathing rooms were the first to be built; they were followed by the bath hall, the palace, the mosque, and the courtyard pavilion. This sequence explains how the bath complex could have had “some years” of use even before the palace was completed.\textsuperscript{130}

The connection of Khirbat al-Mafjar with the patronage of al-Walid b. Yazid could also strengthen the hypothesis that this complex represents an attempt to translate legends concerning Solomon’s throne and bath into architectural terms. Before considering this question, however, it is first necessary to examine two examples of Islamic palatial architecture which are linked to Solomon.\textsuperscript{131} According to the excavators the bathing rooms were the first to be built; they were followed by the bath hall, the palace, the mosque, and the courtyard pavilion. This sequence explains how the bath complex could have had “some years” of use even before the palace was completed.\textsuperscript{130}

The \textit{divānkhāna}, or reception hall, of the Gulistan Palace in Tehran,\textsuperscript{131} and a portion of the Mughal palace in Lahore known as the Kala Burj (Black Tower)\textsuperscript{132}

The \textit{divānkhāna} may originally have been built during the time of Karim Khan Zand (r. 1750–79), but was substantially altered by the Qajars.\textsuperscript{133} In the reign of Fath ‘Ali Shah (r. 1797–1833) it acquired a throne known as the Takhti-Marmar inscribed with verses linking that ruler with Solomon.\textsuperscript{134} Fath ‘Ali Shah was also portrayed with Solomonic paraphernalia by his court painter, Mihir ‘Ali.\textsuperscript{135}

Solomonic imagery also seems to have held a special fascination for the Mughal ruler Jahangir (r. 1605–27) who was compared to Solomon by his court poets and in architectural inscriptions.\textsuperscript{136} The most complete pictorial manifestation of his identification with Solomon comes in the decoration of the Kala Burj in the Mughal residence at Lahore now known as the Lahore Fort. This tower, located toward the middle of the fort’s northern façade, had a balcony (\textit{jharōka-i
The Qajar throne described and analyzed by Zuka, Tushingham, and most recently by Lerner is the most direct in its Solomonic themes (figs. 6-7). The throne consists of a horizontal platform on two levels supported by caryatid figures and by spiral-fluted columns. Three of the supports, two flanking the steps and a third beneath the royal seat at the rear, take the form of divs who carry the tools. The throne’s lateral sides rest on the shoulders of six figures: two men and four women. The women on the right side support the throne on their right shoulder with the help of their left hands and hold a piece of fruit in their right hand. The man on the right carries what appears to be a sprig of flowers. The figures on the left side use their right hands to steady the throne on their left shoulders. Their left hands appear to be empty. Lions carved in the round guard the throne’s rear and lions in relief flank its steps.

The dress and adornments of both the men and women can be paralleled in Zand and Qajar court painting. The women wear belted short-sleeved tunics, which bare their breasts, over long skirts, and the men wear belted tunics over knee breeches and leggings. The men’s costume is similar to that worn by princes or courtiers for riding or hunting. The women’s dress resembles that of courtesans and entertainers with a jeweled clasp just below the breasts and a jeweled belt.

The connection of this throne ensemble with Solomon and Fath ‘Ali Shah is made explicit by two qasidas inscribed in cartouches on the throne’s vertical surface. The first connects the throne with Fath ‘Ali Shah, and the second explores the meaning of its form and decoration and contains lines which identify it as a “Solomonic throne” (in takht-i sulaymān) and Fath ‘Ali Shah as “the Solomon of the Age” (Sulaymān-i zamān). The qasidas describe the throne as an ‘arsh, used in the Qur’an for both the throne of God and the one which the jinn seized for Solomon from the palace of Bīlqis, and they also use the more general words saṭr and takht. Other verses mention its supporting statues of paris as well as the guardian lions. These themes are combined with others drawn from the traditional Iranian repertory of royal glorification—comparisons of Fath ‘Ali Shah with Alexander, Jamshid, Faridun, and Dara and mention of the homage paid to him by foreign rulers.

The burden of this throne’s Solomonic message is contained not in its inscribed text, but rather in its structure and embellishment which echo long-standing textual traditions about Solomon and his throne. The placing of lions beside its steps and around its base connects it with the tradition of Solomon’s lion-protected throne.

The differentiation between divs and human figures among the throne’s supporters probably corresponds to beliefs about the various categories of supernatural beings. In Persian texts demonic creatures with animal attributes are described as divs, whereas those with a human appearance are called paris. For the theme of this essay the divs are of particular interest. The fact that they carry tools links them with Qur’ānic references to demons who were obliged to work for Solomon constructing buildings and diving for pearls.

Upon closer examination, the divs’ tools appear to be those of stoneworkers, a detail which strengthens their link with the monument’s creation. The single div at the rear holds a double-pointed tool, perhaps a tisha, or mason’s kernel hammer used to smooth the surface of stone in preparation for carving or final polishing. The pair of divs flanking the stairs hold the kinds of tools used in the finishing process, that on the left has a chakush, or mallet, used in conjunction with naqqari, or sculpting chisels, to carve decoration or flutes, the curved implement carried by the div on the right appears to be a large suhan, or file used to smooth the background of a relief-carved panel. These tools of the divs flanking the stairs also carry the signature of this monument’s human creator, the sculptor Muhammad Ibrahim Isfahani, a detail which emphasizes the symbolic role of the divs—sculptors as Solomon’s or Fath ‘Ali Shah’s servants.

Considerable uncertainty surrounds the history of the chamber in which the Takht-i Marmar stands. Its monolithic limestone columns appear to have been pillaged from the Shiraz palace of Karim Khan Zand. The avidity with which the Qajars collected objects owned by previous rulers is well documented in the sources, but here the reuse of architectural materials may also have a symbolic function. Monolithic columns are associated in Islamic sources with Solomonic
structures, such as the masjid at Bayt al-Maqdis or Jerusalem, which may mean that they had a similar connotation for Karim Khan Zand. If so, they may have a link to the various traditions which interpreted Persepolis as a religious structure erected by Solomon. There was also the commonly repeated notion that the ruler of Shiraz was the heir to Solomon’s legacy.

If so, then the Takht-e Marmar may be a Solomonic throne constructed to fit into a chamber which itself recalled aspects of Solomon’s legacy. At the same time, this throne-room ensemble probably also was linked to the legacy of Jamshid, who too was closely associated with Shiraz. Aspects of this throne such as the addition of parēs and dīvās as supporters could link it to Jamshid as well as Solomon because both had thrones propelled through the air by demons. Some verses of the qasīdas written about it use images of luminosity to describe Fath ‘Ali Shah, thereby connecting him with the solar aspects of Jamshid.

Finally, this throne was used by Persian rulers for important ceremonial occasions, particularly the audiences held on Nawruz, traditionally associated with Jamshid.

Fath ‘Ali Shah’s throne thus integrates aspects of Solomonic legends with those connected to Jamshid. Texts cited above show that this process was already underway in the first Islamic centuries so that by the Qajar period such a combination was to be expected. The Takht-e Marmar clearly represents an attempt to draw upon a Solomonic legacy which had assimilated elements from the Persian royal tradition to enhance the status and prestige of its owner, Fath ‘Ali Shah, and by extension to bestow legitimacy on Tehran as a dynastic capital.

A similar amalgam is said to have been created by the court ceremonial of a tenth-century military leader from the Caspian area, Mardawij ibn Ziyar the Jilite, who controlled Isfahan, Rayy, and occasionally other sections of western Iran between 926 and 937. Mardawij had grandiose visions of removing the Abbasid caliphs and installing himself in their stead, and he developed a court ceremonial which combined features from the Sasanian tradition with those drawn from Solomonic legends. Ibn Miskawy already gives two descriptions of that ceremonial which appear to be based on eyewitness accounts:

He had had fabricated a great crown studded with gems, and Abu Makhlad recorded how . . . he had seen him sitting on a golden throne on which he had placed a vast cushion, where he sat by himself; below him there was a throne of silver with a carpet spread over it and below that some large gilt chairs with other arrangements whose purpose was to assign the officials their proper order in the seating.

Abu Makhlad remarks that the audience stood at a distance “gazing and speaking only in whispers, such was their awe and admiration for his greatness.” In another passage ibn Miskawy relates this very theatrical court ceremonial to Solomonic precedents: “He seated himself on a throne of gold, below which was one of silver whereon the person whom he chose to favour took his seat. On the days in which he received official visits he arranged his army in lines at a distance from him. . . . He used to say that he was Solomon son of David and his men the demons.”

The fusion of Iranian court ceremonial and Solomonic traditions evidenced in both the actions of Mardawij ibn Ziyar and the throne of Fath ‘Ali Shah invites comparison with the use of Solomonic themes in the decoration of a Mughal palace complex at Lahore built under the patronage of Jahangir. Here the Solomonic imagery had an internal and external component. It had both a painted vault over the darshan chamber and panels of figural tiles on the building’s exterior. In Mughal palaces the darshan chamber was normally adjacent to the ruler’s private quarters, so that Jahangir would have been accompanied to this chamber by members of his immediate household. Only the emperor was normally visible from the exterior because of screens which covered all the windows except the one he used to appear before his subjects.

The room where Jahangir sat has a faceted vault embellished with figural paintings (fig. 8). Its apex contains a pair of simurghs in combat and is surrounded by concentric circles of small panels created by intersections of the vault’s ribs. Larger panels containing angels in flight alternate with small star-shaped units painted with birds. Lower zones of the decoration, no longer visible, appear to have contained demonic creatures whose appearance is vividly described by William Finch:

In the Gallery where the King useth to sit, are drawne overhead many Pictures of Angels, with Pictures of Banian Dews, or rather Divels, intermixt in most ugly shape, with long horns, staring eyes, shagge hair, great fangs, ugly paws, long tails and with such horrible diffornity and deformity that I wonder the poor womwnen are not frighten ed therewith.

The vault paintings, which appear to have been
executed between Jahangir’s accession in 1605 and Finch’s visit in 1620, show Solomon’s entourage in mid-flight and at the same time forming a protective canopy over the ruler’s head. The use of flying creatures who hover over the ruler’s head is one of the most characteristic themes in Solomonic imagery. Wahb b. Munabbih, as cited by Tabari, mentions this feature in his discussion of how Solomon first lost and then regained his ring and his throne. When Solomon had finally recovered his power, the birds reappeared hovering overhead, and “people knew that he was Solomon.”

In this Mughal ensemble the emphasis is on Solomon’s retinue which is permanently in attendance on the building both outside and inside. The exterior decoration consists of panels of mosaic tile inserted into niches along the fort’s northern and western walls of which only fragments survive. Some of them show demons dancing or being led by angels. Other panels contain animal combats. The theme of enslaved demons depicted on this palace, both inside and outside, is a second theme with clear Solomonic connections.

The Mughal decorative ensemble, however, has some features not met in other examples of Solomonic imagery. The integration of Solomon’s entourage into the structure of a vault has transformed it into a kind of celestial guard of honor. Mughal texts suggest that the vaults provided a visual symbol for the heavens and thus an appropriate setting for the luminous divine person. The interconnection of Solomonic legends and those of Jamshid in the Iranian tradition may have been one inspiration for this combination.

It would be interesting to investigate how frequently Mughal court poets used Solomonic imagery. Jahangir’s particular affinity for such themes may have been sparked by one of the Persians at the Mughal court. Paintings, which probably show a Mughal prince, perhaps the youthful Jahangir himself, in circumstances that stress his possession of luminosity, were painted by two Persians at the Mughal court, Abd al-Samad and his son Muhammad Sharif. The painting by Abd al-Samad is of particular interest because it makes a metaphorical equation between a Mughal prince (Jahangir?) and Jamshid and may have been intended as a Nawruz gift.

The basic design of the Kala Burj vault also reflects Iranian practice, for it echoes decorative schemes used in Safavid architecture. The division of the vault by ribs and the placement of figures within them are parallel to the scheme used in the vault of a palace pavilion discovered at Nayin, probably executed in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. In both cases flying creatures such as angels and simurghs are placed at the vault’s apex in star-shaped panels. The Nayin chamber differs from the one in Lahore, however, in its overall theme, which is devoted to the celebration of various famous lovers—Khusraw and Shirin, Layla and Majnun, Shirin and Farhad. Thus, the Lahore palace vault combines a scheme of Iranian inspiration with the hybrid literary tradition of Solomon and Jamshid to create a scheme which glorifies a Mughal ruler. The addition of exterior tile decoration with Solomonic components also effectively equates a larger section of the palace with Solomon’s platform throne.

With these two instances where Solomonic themes were expressed in Islamic palace architecture or decoration in mind, we can now consider whether the complex at Khirbat al-Mafjar was intended to portray a member of the Umayyad dynasty, possibly Walid b. Yazid, in the guise of Solomon and his retinue. When the sculptural decoration of the bath porch façade and of the domed chamber immediately behind it are viewed against the background of Solomonic legends, several features of the sculptural ensemble gain in significance. Neither Hamilton nor Hillenbrand sees a connection between the figures of these two areas, but the cross-section of the porch and façade gives several indications that these two parts of the building were designed as a unit (figs. 1–3). The “caliph’s” lion pedestal rests on the same level as the standing figures in the niches of the porch drum and the porch itself. The recumbent animals—gazelles, sheep, and ibexes—are also at almost the same elevation from the floor on interior and exterior.

Not only were these two areas designed as an ensemble, but they can also be understood as complementary sections of Solomon’s throne. The exterior figure of the “caliph” can be read as Solomon on his lion-protected throne which rests on the larger platform occupied by his concubines, male attendants, and various animals. This platform, in turn, is shown to be supported by jinn in human form who brace their legs against the dome’s pendentives in order to steady their heavy load. The throne ensemble is completed by a row of birds placed in a circle around the apex.
of the interior niches. These appear to be the throne’s avian sun shade, here shown at rest for the night.

If it is possible to connect both the standing figure and the recumbent gazelles of the façade with the sculptures of the bath porch, then perhaps other aspects of the façade design are also meaningful. Originally the central figure was probably flanked by two more figures who stood in niches to his left and right. Two lions flanked the arch of the entrance below, and they were in turn framed by the heads of horses. A row of crenellations completed the top of this façade.

_taken as a whole, the upper level of this façade bears a striking resemblance to the scene depicted on a silver plate discovered in Iran near the city of Qazvin (fig. 9). It shows a frontal enthroned ruler holding a sword and standing under an arch decorated with rows of birds and surmounted by crenellations. He is flanked by standing figures in Persian dress, and beneath his feet are two lions with outstretched paws. Both the rows of birds flanking the throne and the lion guardians below it link the plate with Solomonic legends. Although clearly reflecting Iranian royal iconography, and similar in its arch and crenellations to a Sasanian pavement known as Taqi Girra, the plate appears to postdate the fall of the Sasanian dynasty, and is perhaps from the eighth or early ninth century.

The importance of this plate for Khirbat al-Mafjar lies in the similarities of its general scheme and that of Solomon’s throne depicted on the upper level of the façade (figs. 2–3, 9). These parallels strengthen the possibility that the façade was intended to portray a throne pavilion and may also suggest that it was designed by Persian craftsmen. The two final sculptural elements of the façade, the lions flanking its arch and the horse protomes located beside them, may also belong to a Solomonic scheme. The lower pair of lions from Khirbat al-Mafjar may be supplemental guardians of the throne above and the horse(s) may have been intended to recall the idea of Solomon’s chariot throne (’ajalā) mentioned by Ibn Munabbih. A plate now in the Hermitage Museum shows a curious blending of a wheeled vehicle and throne pavilion in which a ruler is seated. Schematic renderings of chariots are also known from Sasanian seals and Central Asian murals.

Khirbat al-Mafjar’s sculptural decoration was imposed upon its superstructure in a curious fashion—with birds, animals, and even horsemen standing along cornices and life-sized male and female figures in niches (figs. 1–4). The placement of these figures would suggest that Solomon’s throne with its host of human, demonic, and animal occupants had landed on this bath-palace complex, perhaps in order to enjoy its amenities.

Khirbat al-Mafjar was situated on land which had belonged to the Umayyad family and dynasty from at least the time of Sulaymen b. ‘Abd al-Malik. Archaeological data linking the excavated structures with the reign of Hisham were also presented along with Hamilton’s hypothesis that Walid b. Yazid was its patron. These connections give greater force to the pun in a poem which appears to link Walid with al-Ghawr or the area around Khirbat al-Mafjar. The passage occurs in an account of his quarrels with Hisham and a description of his life wandering from one of his estates to another. Indeed this poem, which also laments the need to wait for Hisham’s death, is said to have been one of the catalysts for Hisham’s revocation of Walid’s allowance.

Composed and recited by his companion ‘Abd al-Samad b. ‘Abd al-’Al, it draws upon astronomical imagery in comparing Walid’s peregrinations to a star wandering in the heavens until it reaches its bayt or mansion in a declivity, or al-ghawr:

Have you not seen the star, when it came to rest Hurrying in its mansion to a point of return? It strayed from its proper path.
It came to the declivity (al-ghawr) and sought its place of rising.
I said while its actions amazed me
And its gleam shone making me hopeful,
“Perhaps the reign of Walid has come near,
And this is the eye of his ascendance.”

It is tempting to extract from this poem a comparison between the image of a heavenly body which has reached its astrological home and the representation of al-Walid portrayed as Solomon on a lion-protected throne on the façade of the Solomonic bath at Khirbat al-Mafjar, ready to rise again when his time arrives. The addition of a Solomonic entourage which has also just landed on these buildings could provide another metaphorical reference to Walid’s life, moving from residence to residence as he awaits his chance to rule. Walid refers to himself as the “son of David” in a poem composed on the eve of his marriage to Salma.
Whether or not the patron of Khirbat al-Mafjar was Walid b. Yazid, the question remains of how the idea of constructing a Solomonic bath could have arisen. Here the evidence is incomplete, but the proximity of Jericho to Tiberias with its strong Solomonic tradition may have been an important factor. Perhaps the familiarity of the Umayyads themselves with the Solomonic baths of Tiberias led to the idea of re-creating such a bath. It is even possible that the fame of the springs of Tiberias was a stimulus to the development of the entire legend of Solomon's bath. Arabian traditions linking Solomon and his jinn with hot springs could have provided another stimulus for such a combination.

The three examples presented here provide an insight into the role of Solomonic themes in Islamic palatial structures. They demonstrate that these themes, although recognizable, were not static but were capable of change and adaptation. In the end, the Umayyad owner of Khirbat al-Mafjar, the Persian ruler Fath 'Ali Shah, and the Mughal emperor Jahangir each shaped the Solomonic tradition according to his own self-image, using the legacy of Solomon to enhance his personal prestige.

There are, however, important qualitative differences among these three instances. In the Iranian example Solomon is essentially assimilated to the Iranian historical heritage; in the Mughal one, Solomon's attributes become an extension of the Mughal language of royal pomp. In both cases the symbolism requires the ruler himself to participate. It is only when Fath 'Ali Shah sits upon his throne or Jahangir appears at the window of his chamber that the ensemble is comprehensible. In the Umayyad building, however, Solomon is himself included in the sculptural ensemble. The placement of figures in the complex at Khirbat al-Mafjar conveys the impression that the structure had two levels. At ground level there was the functional building used by its Umayyad owner and his guests; just above their heads was a second structure populated by sculptures representing Solomon and his retinue of concubines, soldiers, demons, birds, and animals. Thus, Khirbat al-Mafjar may have had a double role as both a sumptuous private residence and a symbolic edifice created to evoke the memory of both Solomon's throne and bath.

Ultimately, the particular fascination of Khirbat al-Mafjar as an example of the Solomonic palatine tradition is the manner in which it offers a glimpse of the beliefs and practices of Umayyad Islam. The building may be understood in part as an exercise of visual exegesis on the Qur'anic story of Solomon, but admittedly an exegesis based not on the deliberations of learned shaykhs in Abbasid Iraq but rather on the vibrant and mysterious evocations of the South Arabian qāss, or storyteller, who sought to harness the power of a rich mythology to the task of Qur'anic explication.
Notes

3. Qur'an, šayāfi' 21:82, 38:36/37-37/38; jinn 27:17, 39, 34:11/12. Some of the šayāfi' were builders (bannā') 38:36/37, as were some of the jinn who made mihrabs, likenesses (tamāthil), and basins (qudūr) 34:12/13-13/14.
6. Qur'an, 38:30/31—32/33.
11. Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar, 7, 42—44, pls. LVII: 1, XCIV—XCV.
17. For the entrance façade, see Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar, 98—108, 172—83, 228—32, 237; for the porch, see 48, 92—98, 183—92, 238—37, 240—41; for the northwest room, see 63—67, 192—212, 239—40.
20. Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar, figs. 50, 52, pls. CVII, CVIII.
22. Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar, 240, pls. XLII, CVII.
24. Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar, fig. 50, pls. XLIV, CVII, CVIII.
25. Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar, 233—34, pls. LV: 3, 4, LVI: 1—4, 9, CVIII.
31. Hamilton, Walid and His Friends, 172—75.


39. Fortunately the Kitāb al-Tijān survives in a version compiled by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Hishām (d. 828/833), better known as the editor of Ibn Ishāq’s Sīra, and based on information transmitted by Ibn Munabbih’s grandson, ʿAbd al-Munʿīm Abū Idrīs b. Sīnān. This version of Ibn Hishām/ʿAbd al-Munʿīm although apparently excerpted from a longer work by Ibn Munabbih, contains details of direct relevance to the questions under consideration that are not found in later sources; Raif Georges Khoury, Wahb b. Munabbih (Wiesbaden, 1972), 287–302; Wahb b. Munabbih, Kitāb al-Tijān fī Mulūk Ḥimyar (Hyderabad, 1347/1928–29), esp. 152–69.

40. Unfortunately the tafsir of Ibn Sulaymān, although published recently in Cairo, is in practice unobtainable, except for the first and last (index) volumes, because of pressure from religious authorities at al-Azhar; Claude Gilliot, "Muqāṭil, grand exégète, traditioniste et théologien maudit," Journal Asiatique 279 (1991): 40 n. 1.

41. Muqāṭil b. Sulaymān, Kitāb Tafsīr al-Khams Miʿat Āya min al-Qurʾān, ed. Isaiah Goldfield (Shfaram, 1980), 3–8; Gilliot, "Les Débuts de l’exégèse coranique," 90–91; Gilliot, "Muqāṭil," 40–50. Two scholars with access to complete copies of this work, Claude Gilliot and Jacob Lassner, are preparing publications which will reveal this text’s value for the topic under consideration. Lassner is preparing a monograph on the story of Solomon and Bilqis (personal communication), and Gilliot has promised an article dealing with Muqāṭil’s treatment of biblical legends ("Muqāṭil," 40).

42. Khoury, Wahb b. Munabbih, 188–90.


48. Wahb b. Munabbih, Kitāb al-Tijān, 152, ll. 1–6, 10–11.

49. Wahb b. Munabbih, Kitāb al-Tijān, 152, ll. 7–10.


54. Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān (Cairo, 1954), 22:69, ll. 7–11.


57. Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, 23:156–60.


59. Khoury, Wahb b. Munabbih, "Geschichte Davids," 23, l. 15–27, l. 10 (pp. 96–107); 29 (pp. 112–15).
60. Ibn Ishâq Ahmad al-Ṭabarî, Kitâb Qisas Al-Anbiya' (Cairo, 1297/1880), 293, ll. 8–10.


63. Tha‘labî, Kitâb Qisas Al-Anbiya’, 292, ll. 3–19.

64. Tha‘labî, Kitâb Qisas Al-Anbiya’, 292 ll. 26–30.


70. Ibn Qutayba, Kitâb Al-Ma‘arif (Cairo, 1969), 32, ll. 2–3.


76. Ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 152.

77. Ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 152, ll. 16–153, l. 1.


80. Ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 161, ll. 5–18.


82. Ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 162, ll. 1–7, quotation ll. 6–7.

83. Ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 162, ll. 8–9.

84. Ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 163, ll. 10–11; for another example of Ibn Munabbih’s colloquial narrative style, see the dialogue between Luqman and his wife, trans. H. T. Norris, “Fables and Legends in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times,” in Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period, 380–81.

85. Ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 162, ll. 11–12.

86. Ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 162, ll. 12–14. This may be an editorial commentary added by a transmitter or by Ibn Hisham.


91. Tabari’s description of the jinn’s activities is very similar to a passage in Shaykh Tabarsi’s tafsîr on sura 34:12/13 (Majma‘ Al-Bayân, 7:599, ll. 5–15). It would be instructive to compare Tabari’s text with the descriptions of both Jamshid and Solomon in the Pseudo-Asma‘î, Nihâyat Al’Arab fi Aḥbârî-l-Furs wa-l’Arab (for references, see above n. 73).


93. Wahb ibn Munabbih, Kitâb Al-Ṭijân, 152, l. 13.


97. Muqaddasī, Aḥsan al-Taqāṣīm, 185, l. 11–186, l. 1; Abū al-Hasan Ṭālī, Kitāb l-Isbaḥār, ed. J. Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus, 1953), 20, l. 16–21, l. 5.

98. Stefano Carboni, Kitāb al-bulhān bi-İstanbul (Turin, 1988), Or. 133, fol. 35v, pp. 8, 75–76, pl. 31. I would like to thank S. Carboni for drawing my attention to this illustration.


100. Although this building was excavated some years ago, the results were never published; Gideon Foerster, “Tiberias,” in Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah and Ephriam Stern (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1978), 4:1171–72.


103. The question of how and when the Byzantine bath became linked to Solomon may be discussed in a book on legends associated with Tiberias (A. Shitoni, Hamei Tveria be-Halacha u-be-Aggade [Tiberias, 1962]).


113. Anonymi Auctoris, Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens, 1:255.

114. Hamilton, Wald and His Friends, 175.

115. Anonymi Auctoris, Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens, 1:255. I would like to thank R. R. R. Smith for assistance in translating this passage.


120. Hamilton, Khirbat al-Mafjar, 2, 4, 6.

121. During the Crusader occupation of Jericho (1099–1187) sugar mills near Mount Dok were powered by a hydraulic system said to be of Herodian origin (Nachman Avigad, “Jericho,” in Israel Pocket Library: Archaeology [n.p., 1974], 121).


128. Hamilton, *Walid and His Friends*, 170, “the establishment in the Ghawr” is “as yet unrecognized among places named in published sources.” Hillenbrand, "La Dolce Vita," 2, "in no single case is there precise evidence as to the patron or the date."


131. Yahyā Žukâ‘, *Tārīkhchah-i sākhṭamānhā-yi arg-i sūfānī-i Tihrān va rāḥnamā-yi kāh-kā Gulistān* (Tehran, 1347/1970), 41–110. I would like to thank Judith Lerner for bringing this publication to my attention.

132. Ebba Koch, “Jahangir and the Angels: Recently Discovered Wall Paintings under European Influence in the Fort of Lahore,” in *India and the West, Proceedings of a Seminar Dedicated to the Memory of Hermann Goets*, ed. Joachim Depper, South Asian Studies no. 15 (New Delhi, 1982), 173–95. I would like to thank Ebba Koch for bringing this publication to my attention.


136. Koch, “Jahangir and the Angels,” 176, 184, 192, nn. 61, 63.

137. Koch, "Jahangir and the Angels," 174, 177, fig. 2. For an exterior view of this structure, see Samina Quraeshi, *Lahore: The City Within* (Singapore, 1988), 151–52.


140. Žukâ‘, *Tārīkhchah*, fig. 38; Lerner, "Rock Relief," fig. 11.


142. Falk, *Qajar Paintings*, pls. 2, 42.


144. Žukâ‘, *Tārīkhchah*, 93–99; the panels contain all of the first qaṣīda but only eight of the thirty bayts of the second, nos. 1–3, 15–16, 20, 23–24.

145. Ll. 23 and 24 which also contains the poet’s pen name “Sabā” and an ambiguous chronogram yielding the date 1221 (1806) or 1226 (1811), Žukâ‘, *Tārīkhchah*, 93 n. 1, 95–96.


147. Žukâ‘, *Tārīkhchah*, qaṣīda 2, ll. 6, 7, 30.

148. Žukâ‘, *Tārīkhchah*, qaṣīda 1, l. 2, Alexander’s mirror; l. 5, homage of the qaṣar of Rum and the


153. “Amal-i kamtaīn ghulām Muhammad Ibrāhīm Isfahānī” (made by the humblest of slaves, Muhammad Ibrahim Isfahani); Zuka, Tārikchah, 99; Tushingham, “The Takhk-i Marnar,” 123.


170. Prudence Harper, “Thrones and Enthronement Scenes in Sasanian Art,” *Iran* 17 (1979): 49, 58–59, pl. IV; the model of a similar domed pavilion which perhaps served as an incense burner was recently excavated from an Umayyad context in Amman (Der Königsweg: 9000 Jahre Kunst und Kultur in Jordanien [Cologne, 1987], no. 369, p. 358).


Fig. 1. Bath porch façade reconstruction. Khirbat al-Majfar. After Hamilton.

Fig. 2. Bath porch façade reassembled plaster ornament. Khirbat al-Majfar. After Hamilton.
Fig. 3. Bath porch cross-section looking south. Khirbat al-Majfar. After Hamilton.

Fig. 4. Bath porch south wall and pendentives. Khirbat al-Majfar. After Hamilton.

Fig. 5. The Solomonic bath at Tiberias. Oxford Bodleian Library, Or. 135, fol. 35v.
Fig. 6. Antoin Sevruguin. Photograph of audience before the Talar-i Marmar. Gulistan Palace, Tehran.
Myron Bement Smith Collection, Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Archives.

Fig. 7. Antoin Sevruguin. Photograph of petitioner before the Takht-i Marmar. Gulistan Palace, Tehran.
Myron Bement Smith Collection, Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Archives.
Fig. 8. Vault. Lahore, Kala Burj. Photo: Ebba Koch, 1980.

Fig. 9. Silver plate found at Qazvin. Tehran, National Museum.
THE QUBBAT AL-KHAḌＲĀ? AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF HEIGHT IN EARLY ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

BY JONATHAN M. BLOOM

It has long been known that several important palaces constructed by Muslim rulers in the seventh and eighth centuries had a feature medieval sources refer to as a qubbat al-khāḍrā?, which is usually understood in the secondary literature to mean “a green dome.” Although K. A. C. Creswell briefly discussed this feature in his magisterial works on early Islamic architecture, its importance was first noted, although not pursued, by Oleg Grabar over thirty years ago.1 A reexamination of the early Islamic qubbat al-khāḍrā? shows that it was a critical link between the palace traditions of the pre-Islamic Mediterranean lands and those of later Islamic times.

The earliest example of the qubbat al-khāḍrā? was built in Damascus during the caliphate of ʿUthman (644–56) by Muʿawiya, later the first Umayyad caliph. Adjacent to the first congregational mosque in the city, Muʿawiya erected a residence which was referred to as the qubbat al-khāḍrā?. It was built of baked brick and had a door which led into the maqsūra of the mosque. It was still standing at the end of the ninth century when the geographer and historian Yaʿqubi saw it. According to ʿIlmawi, a sixteenth-century source quoted by Creswell, a Greek ambassador to Muʿawiya had said upon seeing it, “The upper part would do for birds and the lower for rats.” Although Creswell followed ʿIlmawi’s late and probably unreliable account in his assessment of the building, Herzfeld correctly interpreted Yaʿqubi’s account to mean that it must have been substantial, a “famous and splendid building.”

Yaʿqubi is also the source for another example, for he noted that the Umayyad governor of Iraq, al-Hajjaj, built a palace in the western city of Wasit, the Umayyad capital of Iraq. The palace was crowned by a qubbat al-khāḍrā?, known synecdochically as the khāḍrā? of Wasit. According to Ibn Rusta, an early-tenth-century source, this structure was so high that it was visible from thirty miles away. A third qubbat al-khāḍrā? was built over the audience hall at Rusafa, al-Walid’s capital in northern Syria and the royal city of the Umayyads during the long reign of Hisham (724–43). Grabar toyed with the idea that these domed structures at Damascus, Wasit, and Rusafa belonged to an Umayyad tradition of building royal symbols, but dismissed it because the impact of Muʿawiya’s palace could have been little more than symbolic.2

That this architectural form was not exclusively an Umayyad type is shown by the example at Hashimiya, one of the early Abbasid administrative capitals in the region of Kufa, which probably had one as well. According to the ninth-century historian al-Ṭabari, the caliph al-Mansur (r. 754–75) had been in his khāḍrā? when the Rawandiyya rebels approached him and attempted to fly out the window, a context suggesting that the structure was elevated.3 Perhaps the most famous qubbat al-khāḍrā? was the example in the Round City of Baghdad, ordered by al-Mansur when he founded the city in 762. At the back of the central palace, there was a reception hall (iwān) measuring 30 x 20 cubits leading to a domed audience chamber twenty cubits square. The sources do not state how one ascended to the similar domed audience hall that surmounted it, but the springing of this upper dome is known to have begun twenty cubits above the second floor. This upper dome was known as the qubbat al-khāḍrā?, the top of it stood eighty cubits (forty meters) high and was crowned by a weathervane in the shape of a horseman. Contemporaries considered the horseman “the crown (ṭāqī) of Baghdad, a guidepost (ṭalām) for the region and one of the memorable things (māṭhara) that one associates with the Abbasids.”4 It was also a convenient metaphor for the caliph’s power and authority. “If the sultan saw that figure with its lance pointing to a given direction, he knew that some rebels would make their appearance from there: and before long word would reach him that a rebel had appeared in that direction.”5 Like a weathervane, the horseman was supposed to predict storms before they blew in. Consequently the collapse of the qubbat al-khāḍrā? and the horseman on it during a storm in 941 was indeed an omen: within four years the Buyyayhids had entered Baghdad and established themselves as “protectors” of the Abbasid caliphs.

Over each of the four gates to al-Mansur’s
Round City other elevated domed chambers marked the extent of the caliph's personal domain and authority. These audience rooms stood over the inner gates of the city and were reached by staircases or ramps. Each was crowned by a dome fifty cubits high and a moving figure similar to the one over the central palace. The caliph used these satellite audience halls when he wished to look at whoever might be approaching or whatever lay beyond the city walls.8

The Arabic expression *qubbat al-khāḍīr* has been consistently translated into English as “green dome,” for indeed *qubba* is the Arabic word for “dome” or “cupola” and *khāḍīr* is the feminine form of the adjective “green.” Since glazed tiles were not yet used to cover domes, such scholars as Creswell were led to propose that the “green dome” would have been a structure of wood covered with sheets of copper, which, when oxidized, would have acquired the requisite green patina. This logical interpretation has been universally accepted and elaborated. The example of the Dome of the Rock, the earliest (691–92) and perhaps greatest of Islamic monuments, supports this interpretation, for it is contemporary with the structures under consideration and its wooden dome was covered with lead sheets. Evidence against this interpretation, however, is provided by the rules of Arabic grammar, which insist that the expression *al-qubbat al-khāḍīr* be used to render “green dome,” where both the noun and the adjective are preceded by the definite article *al-.* The words in the expression *qubbat al-khāḍīr* are in construct (Arab. *iḍāfā*), and must therefore be construed as “the dome of *al-khāḍīr*.” Although the most familiar meaning of the Arabic root *kh-d-r* (from which *khāḍīr* derives) is “green,” it is often also found as a synonym for “nature” and “life” and can also refer to herbs. The adjective *akhḍar*, formed from the same root, is associated with darkness and sometimes denotes black, dark blue, and gray, as well as darkness.9 The noun *al-khāḍīr* can also consequently refer to the sky, and *akhḍar* is the normal adjective for the heavens. *Al-khāḍīr* “is an epithet in which the quality of a substantival predominates,” so the construct form *qubbat al-khāḍīr* must therefore be translated as “the Dome of Heaven.” The expression *qubbat al-khāḍīr* thus referred initially not to a colored dome but to a celestial one. In later times, the original meaning of this expression was lost, whether from disuse or conflation with actual green (or blue) domes.10

This explanation of the *qubbat al-khāḍīr* as a celestial dome allows several extant examples of heavenly ceilings in early Islamic architecture to be integrated with the early Islamic structures known only through texts. At Qusayr ‘Amra, the small bath complex in the Jordanian desert, decoration transforms a domed bathing chamber into an architectural expression of royal splendor.12 The decoration of the building has been attributed to the patronage of the profligate prince al-Walid II (r. 743–44) in the decades before his accession. The main hall of the building is a three-aisled basilica; its royal content in both form and decoration has long been appreciated, as have the Roman origins of the astronomical ceiling in the domed room of the bathing suite.13 There, a map of the heavens has been projected onto the undersurface of a cupola. Saxl recognized that the projection is not that of the heavens as they appear to an observer who looks up at the sky, but as they would have been reproduced on the outer surface of a celestial globe or in a book illustration. This celestial dome has the distinction of being the only extant example of a type known from antique texts, but it was rather prosaic in execution. The painter copied his model with little understanding, and the building’s patron (or interior decorator) displayed a bizarre sense of humor or over-eager imagination when using celestial imagery over the medieval equivalent of a hot tub. Such an interpretation accords well with the character of al-Walid as delineated by Robert Hamilton.14

The other extant example of a *qubbat al-khāḍīr* in early Islamic architecture is found at Khirbat al-Mafjar, the ruins of an Umayyad palace near Jericho. Like Qusayr ‘Amra, the building has also been attributed to the patronage of al-Walid II before his accession.15 In the small domed and vaulted room at the rear of the bath hall, fragments of painted stucco reliefs have been reconstructed as showing four winged horses in roundels on the pendentives, which support a circle of birds. This circle in turn supports the drum, containing eight grilled windows which admitted a gentle light, and the dome, from the apex of which peer six heads of handsome young men and women emerging from lush acanthus leaves. This apical composition replaces the *oculus*, which in the symbolic cupola paintings of late classical and later times indicates the “great beyond” or the domain of the all-highest divinity.16 The symbolic depiction of the heavens on the ceiling at
Khairbat al-Mafjar, which combines winged horses of Sasanian art with heavenly birds and the hours of a verdant Qur'anic Paradise, represents a long architectural tradition in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds.\(^{17}\) The ceiling also nicely complements the splendid mosaic pavement in the apse of the same room, which depicts a rug on which two gazelles are shown grazing peacefully on the left side of a quince tree, while a ferocious lion devours the crumpled body of a third gazelle on the right. The image was probably intended as a representation of earthly power.\(^{18}\) This small room, usually known as the diwān and recently identified by Hamilton as the bayat, was probably used for private audiences and assignations.\(^{19}\)

These two examples of the qubbat al-khaḍrā\(^{\circ}\) do not, however, show the elevation characteristic of those Domes of Heaven known from literary sources, but this apparent anomaly may only be the result of the accidental survival of two examples built by an unconventional prince prone to witty gestures in his private architecture. Unlike the Domes of Heaven at Qusayr ‘Amra and Khirbat al-Mafjar, those at Damascus, Rusafa, Wasit, Hashimiyya, and Baghdad were not only visible from a great distance but their reception rooms were elevated above the ground floor. This attribute of height links these early Islamic palaces with those of pre-Islamic southern Arabia, such as Ghumdan, the famed pre-Islamic palace at Sa‘d in the Yemen. Ghumdan is said to have had twenty stories, each ten cubits (five meters) high, and was allegedly destroyed when Muslim armies conquered the city and established the first mosque opposite it and using its stones.\(^{20}\) This tradition of tall palaces has been preserved into the twentieth century in the multistoried houses of Yemeni cities. Many examples in Sa‘d have more than five stories; the largest commonly have seven, eight, or even nine, and the main entertaining room is invariably located on the top floor.\(^{21}\)

The tradition of palaces with elevated reception rooms in southern Arabia is quite distinct, however, from the palatine tradition in the Mediterranean world, where the elevation of the audience hall does not seem to have been very important. One need only think of such examples as the Palatine in Rome, Diocletian’s palace at Split, and the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors, where the necessary impression of grandeur was conveyed by the great extent of the structure, rather than by height.\(^{22}\) The southern Arabian—early Islamic tradition is also quite distinct from the Sasanian tradition in Iran and Mesopotamia.\(^{23}\) At the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon, for example, there was a colossal vaulted iwan in which the emperor sat under a suspended and ponderous jeweled crown; parting curtains revealed him seated on a magnificent carpet spread on the ground.\(^{24}\) Although many Sasanian techniques and decorative motifs were adopted in early Islamic architecture, their palaces seem to have had little impact on the development of the qubbat al-khaḍrā\(^{\circ}\).

There was a notable change, however, in the spatial organization of Islamic palaces in the ninth century (and probably as early as its beginning), when horizontal extension began to be the characteristic feature of such enormous palaces at Samarra as the Dar al-Khilafa (or Jawsaq al-Khaqani) and the Balkuwar, which cover immense tracts and are hidden behind blank walls.\(^{25}\) This change in the spatial organization of the palace is revealed in the account of the reception of the Byzantine ambassador by the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir in his palace in Baghdad in 917.

The caliph impressed the ambassador by keeping him moving through a succession of palaces, courtyards, corridors, and rooms. After cooling his heels for two months in the palace of Sa‘id, the ambassador was conducted to the Dar al-Khilafa palace. He passed by 160,000 cavalry and infantry before reaching a vaulted underground passage, through which he walked. He was then conducted about the palace in which 7,000 eunuchs, 700 chamberlains, and 4,000 black pages were stationed “along the rooftops and in the upper chambers.” Later, he was conducted from the Bab al‘Amma to the Khan al-Khayl palace, and from there through corridors and passageways which connected to the zoological garden. The entourage was then brought to a first court where there were four elephants and to a second with one hundred lions. They were then taken to the New Kiosk, a building situated amidst two gardens, from which they were conducted to the Tree Room and then to a palace called Qasr al-Firdaws. Next they were taken to a passageway 300 cubits long. After touring twenty-three palaces, they were conducted to the Court of the Ninety. Because it was such a long tour, the author of the account adds, the ambassador’s retinue sat down and rested at seven particular places, and were given water when they desired it.\(^{26}\) Literary and archaeological evidence suggests
that the celestial dome favored in early Islamic palaces for the reception room was replaced by the vaulted iwan, and upper chambers and such high places as rooftops, which had once been places of prestige, became service areas for eunuchs and pages. The splendor of the ruler was conveyed by the distance the courtier had to traverse and the retinue in front of which he had to pass. A special treat was the subterranean passage, through which the ambassador was conducted. Such passages seem to have become *de rigueur* in Islamic palace design of the tenth and eleventh centuries.\(^{27}\)

This change in the spatial organization of the Islamic palace is contemporary with a change in the spatial relationships seen in Islamic cities between the palace and the congregational mosque. These had normally been adjacent structures in the first two centuries of Islam, but throughout the ninth century the palace was built at an increasing distance from the mosque. This is evidence not only of the decreasing involvement of the caliph in matters of religion, but also of the growth of the mosque as an independent institution. The changed horizontal relationship between the palace and the mosque is also observable in the vertical dimension. In early Islamic times the palace had been visible from a great distance, while the mosque normally had few if any features to mark its presence from afar. In the ninth century, just as palaces became hidden behind blank walls, mosques began to acquire architectural features that made their presence known from a distance.

The first of these features, introduced in the early ninth century, was, of course, the tower.\(^{28}\) Towers and tall structures, including the *qubbat al-khadir*, generally disappeared from palaces when they became associated with mosques. An exception is the building known as the Qubbat al-Himar (Dome of the Donkey), built by Caliph al-Muktāfi (r. 902–8) within the grounds of the Taj Palace at Baghdad, after he returned there from Samarra. It seems to have been a tower, semicircular in plan, ascended by a spiral ramp with a gradient gradual enough to allow a donkey to carry the caliph to its summit, whence he could enjoy the view of the surrounding countryside.\(^{29}\) The second new feature introduced into the mosque was the monumental portal, which had also been a feature of secular architecture. The first appearance of this feature in religious architecture appears to be in the early ninth-century renovations of the *Masjid al-Haram* at Mecca. Elaborate portals quickly became a common feature of mosque architecture, for example in the ninth century at Cordoba or in the tenth century at Mahdia and Isfahan.\(^{30}\) The third feature, the monumental dome with a clearly visible profile, was not normally a part of the mosque until the eleventh century, apart from the idiosyncratic examples at Damascus and Jerusalem. This delay may have been the result of the multivalent associations of the dome, which had previously been used for palaces and was increasingly used for tombs.\(^{31}\)

The dome in the palace, however, was abandoned neither as a formal unit nor as a metaphor; it was just no longer visible from the outside. The cruciform suites of rooms at the centers of the Jawaq al-Khaqani and Balkuwara palaces were probably domed, although they are not mentioned in texts and were probably too low to have been visible from the exterior of the buildings.\(^{32}\) The representation of the Dome of Heaven also continued to be important, at least in the interior of the palace. It was certainly the intention of the makers of the extraordinary wooden ceiling of the Hall of the Ambassadors at the Alhambra, whose starry sky depicts the seven heavens, and this same concept was also invoked in the splendid fourteenth-century muqarnas ceilings at the Palace of the Lions there.\(^{33}\)

The high dome, however, continued to be a recurrent feature of palaces in Islamic literature, but the limits of space prevent more than a sampling of examples. The tenth-century poet Ibn Hānī al-Andalusi described the residence of the Banū Hamdun in Algeria, for example, in such phrases as “O Palace whose high domes overlook the Zab!” or palace “covered with a very high white dome, so high that even the winds cannot touch it and [have to] blow underneath it.”\(^{34}\) The eleventh-century Jewish poet of Granada, Ibn Gabirol, wrote of a palace which had a dome: “At dusk it looks like the sky whose stars form constellations.”\(^{35}\) The verses of the Andalusi poet Ibn Zamrak that are inscribed on the walls of the Hall of the Two Sisters at the Alhambra speak of a “cupola which by its height becomes lost from sight.”\(^{36}\)

This literary image remained potent for centuries in Islamic palace design, albeit with a change of name. The fifteenth-century Çinili Kiosk at the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, for example, has long been recognized as the only surviving example of
the so-called Hasht Bihisht (Eight Paradise) plan of Persian palaces of the fifteenth century. The Persian foundation inscription for the building specifically compares its “emerald dome” (qubbat-i zumurrudin), which was decorated with stars, to the Dome of Heaven, and compares the pavilion itself to the heavenly mansion (qasr-i falak) reaching to the constellations. The present dome is hardly visible from the exterior and it is not green. The reference to an “emerald dome” makes sense, however, when it is understood to be the longstanding equivalent of the Arabic qubbat al-khadra, the “Dome of Heaven.”

This example from a fifteenth-century Ottoman palace points out the essential role of literature and particularly of poetry in the preservation of the image of the qubbat al-khadra over the centuries. The history of the qubbat al-khadra is not that of a visual form which was repeatedly copied, but of a visual form known primarily through its verbal representation, which was repeatedly re-created from the text. This process should not be a surprise in a culture which tended to value the word far more than it did the image; indeed there were few means available to create the necessary images or maintain their integrity. Rulers in the Islamic world were far more likely to preserve the literature of their predecessors than their palaces, so the physical presence of the qubbat al-khadra as the Dome of Heaven was far less important than its perpetuation in the literatures of the Islamic world.
Notes


2. EMA 1:40-41.


7. Lassner, Topography, 52-53.

8. Lassner, Topography, 54.


10. Lane, Lexicon, 756b.

11. What twentieth-century Americans understand to be the meanings of "green" and "blue" do not have exact equivalents in medieval Arabic. See the Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954-); hereafter EII, s.v. "Lawn," by A. Morabia, 5:700 and 706. Cf. also the article by Nasser Rabbat in this volume.

12. Creswell (EMA 1:390-415) identified this room as a calidarium, but was puzzled because it was not, as was normal, a dead end in a series of increasingly hot rooms. Instead, a vaulted passage leading from this room was built as though "it were intended to be left open, and then closed by a thin wall of bad masonry" (p. 395).


15. Hamilton, Walīd and His Friends.


20. EII, s.v. "Ghundān."


23. See the discussion by Lionel Bier in this volume.

24. Ettinghausen, From Sasanian Iran, 28.

25. In addition to K. A. C. Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1940), see the contribution of Alastair Nortridge to this volume. One important transitional feature at the Dar al-Khilafa is the broad staircase ascending from the Tigris to the Bab al-ʿAmma, a principal and ceremonial gate. It is perhaps the only example of a processional stairway in Islamic architecture before the introduction of European styles of stairs in Ottoman and Qajar architecture in the nineteenth century.


27. The Fatimid caliphs of Cairo had such a passage between their two palaces. See al-Mawḍūʿ, al-Mawḍūʿ wa-l-ʿibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭat wa-l-ʿibār (Cairo, 1853), 1:457. For another subterranean passage from the citadel at Aleppo, see the contribution of Yasser Tabbaa in this volume.

31. That the dome and the portal had been features of palatine architecture is striking indeed; that the tower also had specifically palatine origins makes a coincidence improbable. The present context does not allow sufficient space to follow this line of reasoning further, but it raises important questions about the relationship between the palace and the mosque in early Abbasid times. Sauvaget believed, probably erroneously, that the Umayyad mosque developed out of the royal audience hall; it now seems likely that many of the most distinctive features of the mosque had palatine origins in the Abbasid period. See Jean Sauvaget, *La mosquée omeiyade de Médine* (Paris, 1947).
32. The Haruni palace at Samarra had a *qubbat al-mintaqa* according to al-Ṭabarî, 9:126.
37. The prestige of the pavilion can be measured by the vast number of Persian and Turkish poems composed in its praise, which show that the heavenly associations of the Tiled Kiosk, built as a variant of the Hasht Bihisht pavilion type, were recognized by contemporaries. Typical of them is Veliuddin Ahmed Pasha’s long poem, which says that the lofty pavilion reproduced the structure of the heavens on earth with its arches and numerous domes. Its gilt tiles resembled the sun and the moon, the cypresses painted on its walls were like the Tuba tree in paradise, and the projecting alcove (sahnijin) where the sultan sat on his throne provided a vision of the gardens of paradise; it had a pool (hav) and a waterwheel (dolâb). See Gülrü Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York: Architectural History Foundation and Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 216–17.
AN INTERPRETATION OF THE PALACE OF THE CALIPH AT SAMARRA (DAR AL-KHILAFA OR JAWSAQ AL-KHAQANI)

BY ALASTAIR NORTHEdge

The main palace built by al-Mu'tasim at Samarra at the time of the foundation of the city in 221/836 is one of the most famous of Islamic palaces, although it is not in fact preserved in very good condition. Nevertheless, it is one of the few examples of a great imperial palace of (at least later) antiquity where the complete plan is also known.

The site is best known from Creswell's Early Muslim Architecture, based on the work of the German Samarra Expedition of 1911-13.1 Although Herzfeld's plan of the palace (fig. 1) is frequently published, the reader is often left with the impression of an incomprehensible and unanalyzed grand mass of rooms, although sometimes tacit editing of the plan is done, perhaps to make the plan fit the page.2

A new overall presentation of the palace is needed, and it is hoped that this will eventually be done within the context of a proposed publication of the excavation sites of the Samarra Expedition. Several constraints limit me to a kind of preliminary report on this objective. In the first place the subject is a large one, requiring the correlation of the small finds, the stucco and other decorations, and the wall paintings. Secondly the field journals have not yet been worked through, nor all the drawings prepared for publication. Nevertheless it was thought worthwhile to publish the progress that has been made, although the ideas presented are not necessarily final.

It should be said at the beginning that the designation of the palace—al-Jawṣaq al-Khaqani—used by Herzfeld,3 subsequently by Creswell, and which has come to be used generally in Western scholarly circles, cannot be correct. The reasons for this will be explained below, but it is evident that the name used in Iraq—Qasr al-Khalifa (Palace of the Caliph)—is in fact quite close to the terminology used in the third/ninth century. Al-Jawṣaq al-Khaqani may be an attractive and exotic name—though one which incorrectly suggests that the palace was in some way Turkish4—but the palace of al-Jawṣaq must have been part of the overall complex, not the entire complex itself. Some name such as Palace of the Caliph or Dar al-

Khilaifa is more appropriate for English-language usage.

Past Work on the Palace

It was not surprising that the site should have attracted the interest of Western visitors in the nineteenth century.5 In June 1834 the surgeon of the British Residency at Baghdad, John Ross, visited Samarra, and published the following careful description:6

The Kasr-el-Khalifah, or Khalif's palace, is a long T-shaped mass of ruins on the edge of a high bank, divided by three cross walls: its extreme length landward is about 900 paces, the breadth of face towards the river 130 paces, and of the landward face 580; and it consists of ranges of gateways, arched rooms, vaults under ground, &c., with empty areas divided by cross walls. One vault excavated to a great depth, called Jibb, is pointed out as the prison: its entrance is by a narrow shaft, and people must have been lowered into it and hauled up by means of a rope. Another deep square hollow close to it is called Birket-el-Seba'6, or the Lions'—den. A narrow subterranean passage is cut from the Jibb to the Birket, from the door of which, criminals are said to have been thrown to the wild beasts. From the face towards the river, an inclined platform, resting on arches, leads down to the hewi; and outside of the palace, at its N.W. corner, stand fine ruins of a turreted building called Hamam, or the bath.

In April 1846 Lieutenant J. F. Jones of the Indian Navy also visited the site.7 However, it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century—half a century after the opening of Western archaeological work on the Assyrian royal cities, for example—that Samarra became the object of more serious scholarly attention.

The first efforts were French: General L. de Beylié published in 1907 the results of a visit to Samarra and other sites in Iraq.8 The French architect Henri Viollet prospected and surveyed the site in 1908, and then returned to excavate in the palace in June 1910, digging twenty-four small sondages in six weeks. He published his work promptly, bringing out a short but
excellently illustrated monograph on each of the two campaigns.9

The German interest in Samarra began with a visit by Herzfeld in 1903,10 but came to fruition later in the German Samarra Expedition, which conducted two field campaigns in 1911 and 1913.11 Herzfeld turned his attention to excavating the palace in the second campaign. Some 11,000 m
square (equal to about a quarter) of the square reception-hall block were cleared, and about 5,000
m square elsewhere, for a total of 18,000 m
square.

In 1923, after the First World War, Herzfeld noted his regret that the excavated remains
had been robbed out.12 This was not unusu-
al; the robbing of fired bricks was common
throughout Iraq before the introduction of
concrete construction. The city walls built
in the 1830s were entirely constructed of
Abbasid bricks.

In 1914 a preliminary report on the excavation of the palace was published in Der Islam.13 In this article the first version of the grand plan of the palace was published. The plan (fig. 1) was, of
course, mainly the result of surface reconna-
sissance, but also incorporates the excavation areas.14 Herzfeld's reading of the surface remains seems to have been good, and there is much drawn
which would be difficult to recover today. The
main failure seems to have been in the northeast
corner, where he only drew parts of the small
palace-type units at H283 and H294 (see fig. 2 for
building numbers).15 However, after the graphi-
cally primitive version published in the report of
1914, the final version, as published by Creswell,
was “corrected,” with a number of buildings
squared up, where air photographs show the
original version to have been more accurate. The
capo maydan at the east end is in fact a parallelo-
gram, not a rectangle.

In 1923, in volume 1 of the Ausgrabungen von
Samarra, Herzfeld published the wall decorations
uncovered by the expedition; in 1927, in volume
3, the wall paintings; and in 1948, in the posthu-
moys volume 6, his analysis of the historical
topography.16 However, as is well known, the
volumes planned on the architecture of Samarra
were never published; to be more precise, it was
the final report on the excavation itself that was
not published. Creswell, in his Early Muslim Archi-
tecture, straightforwardly quotes Herzfeld, using
the preliminary report of 1914. Unpublished
drawings and the field journals are in the Herzfeld
Archive at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in
Washington, D.C., and the negatives of the
expedition's photographs, taken by Sarre, are in
the Staatliche Museen in Berlin.

Fieldwork on the complex was subsequently
taken up again by the Iraqi Directorate of Antiq-
uites, although only after a long delay.17 The Bab
al-Amma was cleared and consolidated, and the
rooms on its north side were excavated sometime
in the 1960s or 1970s. However, for the most part
excavations were conducted elsewhere at Samar-
ra, and it was only with the beginning of the
"Project for the Revival of the Two Archaeologi-
cal Cities of Samarra" and "Mutawakkiliyya" in
1981 that new work was done on the palace. In
1981 a certain amount of clearance work was
done in Herzfeld's excavation area in the recep-
tion-hall block, but it was given up as unprofit-
able. However, the tunnel which runs under the
great courtyard—the Great Esplanade, to use
Herzfeld's terminology—was excavated, togeth-
er with six secondary buildings on the north side
of the courtyard.18 In 1983 work turned to clear-
ance and restoration of the Small Serdab (Haw-
iyat al-Siba'). The project was finished in 1986,
and published in the same year.19 Work began in
1986–87 on the excavation of the Large Serdab;
by early 1989 the excavation was fairly complete,
and the restoration was finished before my visit
in early 1990. Unfortunately the publication in the
journal Sumner, the manuscript of which has been
completed, has been delayed by the effects of the
Kuwait war. Work has also recently been done on
the range of rooms on the south side of the Bab
al-Amma, and on a poorly preserved octagonal
fountain or pavilion in the great courtyard.

Description of the Site

The palace complex is located on the conglomer-
ate of the east bank of the Tigris, which was laid
down by earlier river beds in Tertiary times. The
relative softness of this material made possible
the cutting of underground structures on a large
scale. On the west side of the palace, there is a
steep descent of about 10 m to the flood plain
of the Tigris, and the garden on this side is located
in the flood plain. Although the frequent move-
ments of the Tigris bed within the flood plain are
not capable of carving away much of the con-
glomerate, the river has removed the southwest
part of the western garden since the third/ninth
century. In the middle of the 1950s a barrage was
constructed at Samarra to divert flood water from
the Tigris into the Tharthar depression. The lake behind the barrage flooded the low-lying land of the flood plain, including all parts of the complex west of the Bab al-'Amma. By the end of the 1980s deposition of silt carried by the Tigris had turned the lake area into a marsh, and the area of the garden has reemerged as wetland. It is uncertain whether it will ever be possible to recover material from this area, where nothing is visible today.

The layout is based on two architectural palace units. The first, on the south side, is composed of a square building of 180 x 200 m (H343), containing the Bab al-'Amma, the throne halls, and the harīm, with a large courtyard on the east side (the Great Esplanade; H302). This layout of square building and courtyard can be paralleled at Balkuwara,28 and the palace at P16 at Qadisiyya.29 On the north side a second palace structure, termed by Herzfeld the “treasury” (H293), with a smaller square reception-hall block and residential apartments, is situated within an outer enclosure wall, as one sees at al-Ukhaydir and the Dar al-Imara at Kufa.30

On the west side of the southern unit is a large formal garden; there is probably another garden of a different type on the south side. Between the two palace units there is a large circular sunken basin, termed by Herzfeld the Large Serdab, and in Iraq the Birka Handasiyya (H1301). Further to the east is a complex including what Herzfeld termed the Rotundabau (H353), and, at the east end, a smaller square sunken basin, termed the Small Serdab, and in Iraq Hawiyat al-Siba’ (Lions’ Den).31 On the north and south sides of the basin are courtyards with two pavilions, and lines of parallel halls, which Herzfeld called the “stables.” On the east side there is a maydan with a spectators’ lodge, and the start line of racecourse 2, stretching away to the east.32 On the south side of the main courtyard is an iwan pavilion in an enclosure (H313), adjacent to what must have originally been the main entrance of the complex leading to the city, and a further square building, adjacent to the main reception-hall block (H311). The palace may be described as a complex of architectural units.

Construction was evidently begun in 221/836, and the last reference to it as an occupied building dates to 269/884.26 The known occupation lasted forty-eight years. It is obvious that a considerable process of change must have taken place during this time. The palace is not one which was designed, constructed, and then abandoned in its original state, although there are many such buildings in early Islam; rather over the years units may have been added, rebuilt, or abandoned.

The first interpreter of the palace, Viollet, starting from the Bab al-'Amma, saw the complex as consisting of the square building, the great courtyard, and attached buildings—the two Serdabs, the maydan, and racecourse 2. It was Herzfeld who included the northern palace building in the complex, and called it the treasury. Buildings H326 and H327 in the southeast corner, although included in Herzfeld’s plan, probably have no connection with the palace.

The area defined by Herzfeld is 175 ha. The dimensions are 1,346 m east-west from the pavilion on the Tigris to the spectator’s lodge overlooking racecourse 2, and 1,160 m north-south from the north palace to the south gate.

The western garden (H339; fig. 3). The western formal garden appears to have led down to the Tigris, whose exact course in the third/ninth century is not known. A flight of monumental steps, 60 m wide, leading down from the Bab al-'Amma cannot be seen today, but can be seen on aerial photographs (fig. 5). On the west of the steps was a square ornamental pool 115 x 130 m.

From the pool a pair of walls 220 m apart defining a longitudinal axis run directly west to the end of the garden as it survives. Perhaps this was a formal avenue for the approach of the caliph to or from a landing stage on the river. Such a procession is mentioned on the occasion of the investiture of the heirs of al-Mutawakkil in 235/849–50.37

When al-Mutawakkil appointed his heirs from among his children, he rode at Samarra in a procession, finer than which had never been seen. The heirs rode in front of him, and the Turks in front of them, and their children marching in front of al-Mutawakkil, with belts of gold in their hands... then he descended into the water, and sat in it, and the army with him in jawānkhīyat and the rest of the boats, and he came until he stopped in the ghawr which is called al-'Arus, and he gave permission to the people, and they entered into his presence.29

At the far western end a square raised terrace 48 x 40 m appears to represent the site of a garden pavilion.

A pair of walls 47 m apart also define a north-south axis on the west side of the pool. It is possible to make out the plan of several small buildings between the walls.
The garden may be the Bustan al-Khaqani mentioned in an event of 254/868, and which apparently lay between the Jawsaq and the Tigris:

Bugha came to the bridge [al-jisr] in the first third of the night, and when the boat approached the bridge, those entrusted with it sent for those in the boat... and Bugha disembarked into the Bustan al-Khaqani, and a number of [the guards of the bridge] attached themselves to him... and he rushed to al-Jawaq. He asked permission of al-Mutazz [to enter], and al-Mutazz gave permission to him.50

The Bab al-Amma and the square reception-hall block (H343; figs. 6–7). The main reception-hall block of the southern palace is nearly square in form, measuring 180 x 200 m. The Bab al-Amma is the only part still standing; elsewhere only fragments of walls remained above floor level, and in places the bricks have been robbed down into the foundations.

In the center of the west side stands the main outside entrance, the famous triple iwan known as the Bab al-Amma. This consists of a main central tunnel-vaulted iwan, and two shallow side iwans, each of which has a semi-dome carried on squinches, which lead into closed tunnel-vaulted halls behind.

The photographs taken by Viollet and those taken by Sarre for the German Expedition show quite clearly a block of masonry projecting from the top of the building. This suggests that there was a second story. A ramp has also been excavated on the south side of the gate. Presumably there was a majlis (formal reception room) in this second story, with a view over the Tigris and the flood plain (fig. 8), on the pattern of similar rooms described over the gates of the Round City of Baghdad,31 and the rooms found over the gates of Umayyad desert qasārah.32 However, there are no indications that the remainder of the square building had two stories.

After the Bab al-Amma, the visitor passed through five rectangular halls placed transverse ly, to reach, at the center of the building, a courtyard with a basin. The courtyard was excavated by the German expedition, together with a bath on its south side. On the north side of this axis was a courtyard building with a central circular feature 31 m across, almost certainly a basin. There are several underground vaulted rooms in this area. The south side of this western part has not been clarified, although a sequence of rooms has been excavated in recent years on the south side of the Bab al-Amma.33

At the east end of the central axis was a cruciform plan, more normally found in the center of such a square building. The centerpiece was a dome chamber with four pillared halls. On the east, west, and south sides were courtyards beyond the pillared halls; on the east side a large transverse hall, which led straight out into the great courtyard (Grand Esplanade). It is possible that this last hall is a subsequent addition, as the wall thicknesses do not match those of the remainder of the square building.

The courtyard on the north side of this central dome chamber has not been excavated, but those on the west and south sides were excavated by Herzfeld. That on the south side constituted what Herzfeld called the harem. On the south side of this courtyard there was a square room with four piers, and this contained a circular basin carved from a single piece of Egyptian granite, which was named Kasat Firūn (Pharaoh's cup), and is thought to be of ancient Egyptian origin.34 The remainder of the surround of the courtyard consisted of a warren of small rooms, which Herzfeld says had been repeatedly rebuilt.

The harem was richly decorated, notably with wall paintings published in Herzfeld's Malereien von Samarra.35 Its identification as a harem rests principally on the figural character of the paintings, which is comparable with the art of the private palaces of the Umayyad period. Without doubt these paintings should belong to the last period of occupation of the palace: Herzfeld notes the rebuilding, and elsewhere at Samarra up to three layers of wall painting can be seen on fragments.36 By that time, in the reign of al-Mu'tamid, the area of the complex occupied may have been reduced. This part of the palace may only have become a private residence at a late date in its occupation.

The great courtyard (H301). On the east side of the square building the principal feature is the great courtyard, a rectangle measuring 360 x 186 m, and called by Herzfeld the Great Esplanade. The courtyard is surrounded by a wall of mud brick with arched niches and stucco moldings. The wall was topped with stepped merlons.37 The courtyard was divided in two by a depression, which Herzfeld thought in his preliminary account to be a canal.38 Excavations in 1982 showed this to be a tunnel leading under the courtyard, the roof of which had fallen in.39 Clearance of the
north wall at this time also produced evidence of six small secondary courtyard buildings. These were well aligned with the enclosure wall and were evidently constructed before the abandonment of the palace. On the west side of the tunnel, Herzfeld’s plan indicates two circular features; recent excavation has shown the eastern one to be a poorly preserved octagonal fountain. The plan also shows a series of rectilinear lines in the eastern part; photographs confirm the existence of these lines, but it is not known what they represented, and they have now disappeared. Herzfeld thought they were canals, based on his supposition that the transverse depression was a canal. Perhaps they were walls delimiting a reduction in the size of the courtyard to accommodate the secondary buildings mentioned above.

The south side of the complex. The area on the south side of the great courtyard is one of the most difficult to explain. There are a great number of different buildings, and no excavation has taken place in this part, except for a small area excavated by the German expedition on the north side of building H313. The area is demarcated by an exterior enclosure wall running east-west 390 m south of the great courtyard (H363), and divided by a north-south wall running on the west side of building H323 (H364).

A monumental avenue, 65 m wide and narrowed by later overbuilding to a width of about 12 m, approached the point where this north-south wall joined the outer enclosure wall (fig. 9). It is evident that this avenue is not to be identified with the Grand Avenue (Shari' al-'Azam) described by al-Ya‘qubi, which passed by the palace, but with the Shari’ Abi Ahmad, which ended at the Bab al-Bustan (Gate of the Garden) and the qusūr al-khāliḍa (palaces of the caliph). As this avenue, the most monumental of Surra Man Ra‘a, is not highly regarded by al-Ya‘qubi, it must belong to the early period at Samarra, the original layout of al-Mu'tasim. Therefore a main south gate probably stood at this point, with a passage into the great courtyard. On Herzfeld’s plan, on the west side of the north-south wall, a passage can be seen turning west around building H313. However, on the aerial photographs the avenue definitely approaches the east side of the wall, through the space occupied by building H323, and to an inner gate by courtyard H314 (H374). If this latter situation were the case, then the entrance may have been moved later to west of the wall, and building H323 may be a late construction.

At any rate the idea of a double gate is given support by an event in 256/870: al-Muhtadi “left through Bab al-Masaff, until he went out through the gate known by the name of Itakh, then to Siwayqat Masrur, then Darb al-Wathiq, until he came out to the Bab al-'Amma.” Al-Muhtadi’s itinerary is to leave the palace by the south gate, turn west, and then go north to the Bab al-'Amma. The house of Itakh was next to the south gate, and evidently the name Bab al-Bustan has here been replaced by the Gate of Itakh.

Building H313 on the west side at the north end of this proposed passageway has a building with a single iwan in a courtyard and small courtyard buildings around the periphery. If Herzfeld’s plan is correct, then the building corresponds with a pattern quite common in Iraqi Abbasid architecture. At Ukhaydir there is a separate single iwan structure between the inner building and the outer wall. At al-Musharrah a similar separate building is to be seen in the northeast corner of the enclosure, with a slightly variant plan. There is a further separate building with an iwan and a mosque by the entrance of Sur ‘Isa at Samarra. These buildings give the impression of being the majlis of someone responsible for the building itself, or for its security. One is reminded of the situation in the Round City of Baghdad, where the central circular courtyard contained a building for the guard (karas) and a portico for the police (shurta), but it is not possible to be certain. To the east of this north-south alignment, buildings H324, H325, H337, and H357 seem to be store and service buildings.

At the west end of the south side, directly south of the square reception-hall block, a building 70 m square has been built on a slightly different alignment (H81), and this has been linked with the south side of the reception-hall block.

Between this building and the north-south alignment of the entrance from the south gate the terrain is uneven, cut by a wadi with three branches. There are three groups of lines of rooms with courtyards on different alignments—H316, H317, and H358. These buildings are indistinct on the aerial photographs, and were apparently not of solid construction. In fact there are two references in the texts that suggest that the area was once a garden—firstly the name of the gate discussed above as the Bab al-Bustan, and secondly a reference in 248/862 to going from al-'Umari “through the gardens.”
interpretation is supported by the plan of al-Jaffari (fig. 18), which also has an empty enclosure on the south side. It would evidently be a garden of a different type from the formal layout on the west side.

The building complexes at H316, H317, and H358 can probably best be explained by noting that the palace was the center of disturbances and military operations during the 860s, notably in 248/862, 252/866, and 256/870. On the first day of Rajab, 252 [866], a battle took place between the Maghariba and the Turks. They overcame the Turks at al-Jawsaq and expelled them, saying, “Every day you kill one caliph, depose another, and kill a vizier.” When the Maghariba expelled the Turks from al-Jawsaq, and overcame them at the treasury (bayt al-mātb), they seized fifty mounts from them. At times the palace was evidently an armed camp, and temporary pisé barracks would no doubt have been put up in any empty space to accommodate a garrison.

The Large Serdab (H301; fig 10). On the north side of the great courtyard the main feature, lying between the two palace units, is the Large Serdab. It is not a genuine sirdāb—that is, an underground room for use in summer—but rather a sunken basin cut into the conglomerate with surrounding rooms intended for the same purpose of escaping the heat of summer. A number of the surface buildings were excavated by the German expedition. The sunken area was excavated by the Iraq Directorate of Antiquities between 1987 and 1990, and called the Birka Handasiyya (Geometric Basin).

There is an outer buttressed wall 180 m on a side, with courtyard buildings on the inside at the surface level. Herzfeld noted that some of these rooms contained stores: Chinese pottery, materials for pavements, and luster tiles. In the southeast corner Herzfeld excavated half of a rectangular building composed of five thick parallel walls. Obviously these were supports for a thick-walled elevated building. Al-Jaffari has a similar building type: a central building supported on heavy walls, surrounded by courtyard buildings (building A12; fig. 11). It is apparently a traditional Mesopotamian building type, for a similar structure exists in the northeast corner of the South Palace at Babylon, constructed by Nebuchadnezzar at the beginning of the sixth century B.C., called by Koldewey the “vaulted building.” The building type is presumably a storehouse for valuable objects which needed to be raised above ground level for security.

The sunken center of the structure is cruciform in shape and 115 m across. At the center there is a circular basin 65 m in diameter, with amphorae set into the brick walls, in which fish bones were found. Straight monumental staircases lead down to the interior from north and south. The basin is fed by a qanāt coming from the east, which is not visible on the surface; and a further drain qanāt exits to the west. At all four points of the cross there are service ramps at right angles to the monumental staircases, although not all were in use: on the west side one was used for a rubbish dump and found full of ash, pottery, and glass. The rooms around the basin were arranged radially, although based on a four-iwan plan. In the southeast corner there is a large bath, with furnace and hypocaust.

The rooms surrounding the basin are extensively decorated with stucco dados, which are all of the vine-leaf ornament, style A. While the sequence of Samarran stuccoes needs new work, it is certain that this style was already in existence before the foundation of Samarra in 221/836, but also continues later than Samarra. The buildings at Samarra, which are extensively decorated with the vine-leaf ornament, that is, the Bab al-ʿAmma with its mixed style A and style B ornament, and the upper and lower palaces at al-Huwaysilat, one of which is to be identified with the Qasr al-Juss of al-Muʿtasim, are normally attributed to the beginning of the Samarra period. The dating evidence of the stuccoes, though weak, suggests that the Large Serdab is an early building, part of the original plan of the palace.

The Rotundabau (H353; fig. 12). To the east of the Large Serdab, there is a further complex of courtyard buildings (H333, H353). The reception room was excavated by Herzfeld and called by him the Rotundabau or Rundsaal. The plan was never published. It consists of a typical Samarran grand house—a reception block followed by a courtyard and a further iwan. There is a further building with rooms around a courtyard on the west side (H333), and four more indistinct enclosures on the east and north sides.

The reception block itself consists of a transverse hall measuring 18 x 7 m projecting into the great courtyard, which seems to be an addition to the original structure. Then there is a further transverse hall 13.8 x 4 m, similar to the portico of a T-shaped iwan, and this is flanked by two rooms.
with niches. The niches were subsequently covered up by beveled-style, style C, stucco dados. The principal hall is circular, 9.4 m in diameter, with four curious small hexagonal rooms with low vaults on the east and west sides. The plan indicates that the circular form is secondary and that the hall had originally been square, with doorways into side rooms decorated with engaged piers.

The building and its associated dependencies give the impression of being the majlis of an official closely associated with the functioning of the palace, one who had need of work space and service buildings.64

The east end and the Small Serdab (fig. 13). The east end of the great courtyard is marked by a group of structures: a smaller, square sunken basin (the Small Serdab, or Hawiyat al-Siba‘: H29), six long galleries, two pavilions, a polo maydan, spectators’ lodge, and racecourse.

The Small Serdab (H29; fig. 14) was first investigated by Viollet65 and then by Herzfeld, who cleared the surface entrance and one staircase and prepared a plan. The Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities and Heritage began work on the site in 1983 and cleared and reconstructed the site, finishing it in 1986.66

The entrance was situated in the center of the east wall of the great courtyard. Herzfeld describes this entrance as a square room in which was found a frieze of painted stucco representing two-humped camels.67 It has been reconstructed as a domed chamber with niches, much as a typical entrance to one of the grand houses at Samarra. On the surface level the structure measures 60 x 54 m, and is represented by Herzfeld as a series of rooms around the basin. It has been reconstructed as an arcade, with the arches perpendicular to the sides of the basin.

The basin itself is functionally the same as the Large Serdab, but smaller and square (21 m a side), and sunk about 8 m into the conglomerate. There is a triple iwan on each side of the basin, and all are decorated with stuccoes of the beveled style, style C. A qanāt enters by the north central iwan, and the water drained by a further qanāt towards the south. One staircase descended from the south side of the main entrance, and a second descended to the northeast corner of the basin.

The stables and pavilions. On each side of the Small Serdab there are three long galleries (H330, H320); four of the six measure 106 x 11 m, and the remaining two 96 x 11 m. There are five entrances into the adjacent courtyards. Herzfeld identified these galleries as the stables for the polo maydan.68 Although it may seem surprising that the stables should have been built adjacent to a pleasant spot intended for the caliph’s repose, with the obvious inconveniences of smell, he may have been right. The form of the galleries resembles a building plan which exists also in a group of buildings at al-Ja‘fari (A208–16; fig. 15). At al-Ja‘fari the galleries surround a central courtyard, and the group of buildings is placed at a distance from the inhabited parts of the palace—al-Ja‘fari being later, this placement was possibly the result of an unpleasant experience with the complex under discussion here.69 This arrangement of galleries around a central courtyard is in fact the same as the usual arrangement of the stable-galleries in Iranian caravansarays, also found in Iraq.

Al-Yaqubī, however, describes the caliph’s public and private stables as being located in the center of the city on the Sharī‘ al-Sarija (=Sharī‘ al-A‘zam).70 The site can be identified approximately, and there is no sign of this type of building (fig. 9). Nevertheless it is evident that stables located in the center of the city, five kilometers from the palace, were concerned with the long-term questions of raising and provisioning mounts for the palace and the army, rather than the day-to-day stabling of animals available to the palace, and particularly the polo ponies and racehorses.

North and south of these courtyards with stables, there are two courtyards (H321 and H331) with pavilions (H322 and H332). The north pavilion is constructed of mud brick and is still partly standing to the transition of the dome of the side iwan. The building was excavated by Herzfeld (H382; fig. 16), but never published.71

The building consists of a central T- iwan, of which the front portico measures 16 x 5 m, and the iwan itself 5.5 x 8.5 m. In addition there are two shallow side ivans, measuring 4.2 x 3.2 m, which were covered by semi-domes mounted on squinches. These side ivans obviously resembled those of the Bab al-Amma, but had no door through into the hall behind. The exterior is rectangular, measuring 38.5 x 22.5 m, and has round buttresses. The southern pavilion (H322) seems to be similar. The two pavilions would appear to be intended for inspections of the caliph’s polo ponies and racehorses.
The polo maydan (H328) and the spectators' lodge (H329). From the Small Serdab a passageway led through into a square courtyard and then to a long rectangular maydan. The gateway into the maydan was excavated by Herzfeld. The long rectangular maydan with half-round buttresses measures 525 x 66 m. According to the evidence of robbing, the walls were of fired brick.

On the far side of the maydan there is a spectators' lodge (H329), which looks out both onto the maydan and the start of racecourse 2. This building measures 28 x 45 m and is constructed of fired brick, with two buttresses on the eastern corners. The plan is one of a chamber running through east-west, which represents the passageway of a gate. On each side there are five chambers arranged north-south. This is obviously the substructure of an upper story, where the viewing platform would have been.

The maydan is identified by Herzfeld as intended for polo. This judgment is obviously correct, for the arrangement of a long rectangular maydan and pavilion with a viewing platform on the upper story has a close parallel in the Safavid Maydan-i Shah in Isfahan (524 x 159 m), built in 1590-1604, with its pavilion, the 'Ali Qapu. Ibn Qutayba confirms that polo grounds in the Abbasid period were much like the maydans of Samarra by remarking that “the width of the maydan is made 60 cubits [31 m] so that [the spectators] who are sitting on its wall will not be interfered with or assaulted.” There are twelve examples of similar maydans at Samarra, all smaller than H328 and all located in or adjacent to palaces.

Racecourse 2. Racecourse 2 is an out-and-back racecourse, which stretches east in a bottle shape from the spectators' lodge. The sides of the course diverge from the pavilion, and then on the south side there is an S-bend after 1,510 m. After the bend, the sides are more nearly parallel with one another, and there is a straight of 2,200 m before the curve. The track is 80 m wide; the length seems to have been 10,420 m.

These units discussed at the east end seem to represent a single coherent entity. The Small Serdab, stable galleries, and two pavilions are approximately symmetrical. There is a change of alignment at the polo maydan, but the north and south walls of the maydan retain the original alignment, creating a parallelogram, and the stables and pavilions take account of the existence of the maydan. So the maydan is contemporary with this first group, in spite of the change of alignment. The maydan is aligned with the racecourse; the only reason it has been possible to detect why the racecourse should have a different alignment from the axis of the palace in the flat terrain is that, had it followed that original axis, it would have cut a musalla (Y6) in the steppe, used for the festival prayers of 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adha (fig. 9). Y6 is the musalla closest to the palace, and was perhaps sufficiently popular to force a change of alignment in the racecourse.

It is not certain that racecourse 2 is part of the same constructional program as the maydan, but it seems probable. There is some relative dating on racecourse 2: it is later than racecourse 1, which it cuts.

The implication would be that this east end group is a secondary addition to the palace. There are some minor points which tend to support this idea: the east end group is not perfectly aligned with the great courtyard. The Small Serdab is decorated with beveled-style style G stuccoes. Evidently the group is a sports and leisure complex, for racing, polo, and passing the summer days comfortably.

The barracks. In the northwest corner of the palace complex, Herzfeld included a group of three blocks of courtyard buildings (H286, H288, H291), enclosed within a compound. H286 consists of 62 units round three sides of a courtyard, and H288 consists of 34 such units. H291 has 8 units with rooms on opposing sides of the courtyard, making a total of 104 units. In addition there are three small mosques (H287, H290, H292).

Herzfeld identified this area as the barracks of the palace guard. This seems possible; there are many different patterns to military accommodation at Samarra, the only unifying factor being that accommodation is always in the form of courtyard houses, rather than barracks of single rooms. Some confirmation is to be seen in the striking fact that there are three mosques, implying three separate groups. Presumably these were ethnic groups, who had to be kept apart, such as the Turks, the Faraghina, and the Maghribia. The pointed provision of mosques seems to be part of an ostentatious display of Islam for the lightly Islamized steppe Turks, and is noticeable again at Sur Ashnas (see below).

Al-Hammam (H345). To the south of the barracks area and northwest of the square reception-
hall block, at the edge of the slope down to the flood plain, there is a small square building with heavy walling and three round buttresses. The building was identified by Viollet with that described as al-Hammam by John Ross. Two sondages were dug in the area by Viollet, and extensive stucco decorations were recovered, of styles A and B, similar to those of the Bab al-ʿAmma.  

The building appears to be an elevated belvedere. Similar structures are known on the east and west sides of the Qasr al-ʿAshiq.

The north palace (H293; fig. 17). The major structure on the north side of the complex is a palace building within a buttressed outer enclosure. The remains have never been excavated, and were not included in the complex by Viollet. Herzfeld included it, because he correctly thought that there was no logical northern limit to the palace complex without it. Regrettably many crucial details are obscured by the front-line trenches dug by the British Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force in 1917.

The rectangular outer enclosure, oriented east-west, is 330 m wide and can be traced for a distance of 462 m eastwards. The wall is equipped with massive half-round buttresses about 11 m in diameter. The remains give the impression that the east wall was later demolished, and replaced with a new wall which is aligned with the maydan (H328).

At the west end there is a square reception-hall block (H352), measuring approximately 120 x 130 m, with a buttressed exterior. It is raised on a terrace, and seems to have been of the type of plan with a domed chamber at the center. However, a correct plan is unlikely to be recovered without excavation.

On the east of the reception-hall block, the main body of the building (H297) is 220 m wide, and can be traced for a distance of 285 m to the east. The east end is not clear. If the building were symmetrical, it would have been about 340 m long. If it had originally been of this length, it would have corresponded to a rectangle with the proportions 2:3, as found in the Samarran mosques, but would have been cut by building H294. Like the outer enclosure wall, it appears to have been truncated by demolition at the east end, to make way for new construction.

Apparently at the original center, there was a courtyard measuring 80 x 55 m, approached by two streets on the north and south sides. On the east side there appears to be a further courtyard of similar dimensions, separated by a wall. On the west of the central courtyard, there is a long hall about 25 m long and 12 m wide, followed by a transverse hall. Then there is a square courtyard and the approach to the raised terrace. On the north and south sides of the central courtyard, there are courtyard buildings which appear to be residential apartments. All the construction of major reception rooms was in fired brick, and has been robbed out; the residential apartments appear to have been constructed in mud brick or pisé.

In the area where the enclosure was extended, to the southeast of the main building, Herzfeld's plan marks two further building complexes (H295 and H296); their plan was not elaborated by him, nor are their remains very clear on the aerial photographs. However, in the northeast corner of the compound, there is a very clear plan of a residential building, apparently a small palace (H294), not on Herzfeld's plan. It has the form of a parallelogram, measuring 169 x 90 m. There is a square reception block in fired brick—which has been robbed out—adjacent to the north wall, and a further reception room on the south side of a central courtyard.

Outside the enclosure of the complex at the northeast corner, there is a further small palace (H283), measuring 106 x 170 m. This has a central square reception block in fired brick, with courtyards on the north and south sides.

Discussion of the archaeological evidence. In its latest form, then, the palace consisted of two major palace structures, each of which is larger than other Samarran palaces, with the exception of al-Jafarı. The south palace had a square reception-hall block with a large courtyard, but very little residential accommodation in the form of courtyard houses, normally an important feature in early Islamic palaces. The north palace, on the other hand, consists almost entirely of residential accommodations.

Although it is not possible at the moment to date all the structures described here, it seems that the original elements of the palace included the square reception-hall block and great courtyard—and possibly the western garden. Attached to this, the Large Serdab (H301) and al-Hammam (H345) seem to be original on the basis of their decorations. The north palace must also be original, partly because of its plan which recalls that of earlier palaces, but also because the Large Serdab, itself apparently early, has monumental
stairways leading to both the north and south palaces.

The major later additions seem to be, firstly, the east end of the south palace, including the Small Serdab, the north and south pavilions, the maydan, and probably racecourse 2. Secondly, there is the east extension of the north palace. The one identifiable building in this extension is a palace (H294), which perpetuates the residential character of the compound. It is strange that part of the original palace would appear to have been demolished, but the evidence is not clear enough to be certain what happened. There are also many other structures whose relative dating within the complex is uncertain.

The Topography of the Palace in the Texts

The most recent traditional name for the palace has been Qasr or Bayt al-Khalifa, which is still used today in Iraq. However, by the time of his preliminary report of 1914, Herzfeld was calling the site al-Jawsaq al-Khaqani, possibly relying on the work of Schwarz. In 1985 al-Ani pointed out that there are two different palaces mentioned in the texts, al-Jawsaq and the Dar al-'Amma, and that Herzfeld could not be right in applying the name of al-Jawsaq to the palace complex. The crucial text is from the Tarikh of al-Ya'qubi.

He [Mu'tasim] stopped at the site on which is the Dar al-'Amma, and there was a monastery of the Christians, and he bought the land from the people of the monastery, and he laid out [buildings] on the site, and he went to the site of the palace known as the Jawsaq on the Tigris, and built there a number of palaces.

All the texts confirm that two buildings are in question, but other texts mention events at both together, as though there was no great distance between them.

The Dar al-'Amma. At the top of the range of terminology are expressions which call the palace the House of the Caliph or House of the Caliphate. Al-Ya'qubis places Dar al-Khalifa, Tabari uses Dar al-Khilafa, Dar al-Sultan, and Dar Amir al-Mumimin. Dar al-Khilafa could also have the abstract meaning of the caliph's household. In 256/870 the complex is simply called al-Dar. This type of terminology predated the use of Dar al-Khilafa for the caliphal palace complex in Baghdad from the reign of al-Mu'tadid (892–908) onwards. It is clear that the modern traditional name of Qasr al-Khalifa is a descendant of this term.

This group of names may have represented an overall designation of a complex which had a number of palaces within it, as was the case for the Dar al-Khilafa in Baghdad; but it is perhaps more likely that they were simple synonyms of Dar al-'Amma; al-Ya'qubi in fact explains Dar al-Khalifa in this latter way.

The Dar al-'Amma was the public palace in which the caliph sat in audience on Mondays and Thursdays. The caliphs also seem to have conducted a large part of their business there. Only the caliph had the right to make appointments there, the oath of allegiance was taken to al-Musta'in there in 248/862, and al-Multadi sat in the court of justice (mazālim) there.

It is specifically stated that the Dar al-'Amma was built on the site of the monastery which had previously been there, and the monastery building became the treasury (bayt al-māl). All texts link the bayt al-māl with the Dar al-'Amma, notably an occasion in 231/845–46 when "thieves made a hole into the bayt al-māl which is in the Dar al-'Amma in the heart of the palace, and took 42,000 dirhams." One may suppose that as a result of this event the monastery was replaced with a more secure building, for there is no sign of a monastery building on the ground.

Also closely associated with the Dar al-'Amma is the Bab al-'Amma. In the texts, the Bab al-'Amma is the site for formal arrivals at the palace. For example, when the rebel Babak was brought to Samarra in 223/838, "the people came to look at him from al-Matira to Bab al-'Amma, and he was brought into the Dar al-'Amma to the Prince of Believers." In 241/855–56 al-Qummi "stood at the Bab al-'Amma with some of the Bujja, 70 ghulāms on riding camels." These events were triumphal processions, reminiscent of Roman triumphs.

However, the Bab al-'Amma is also identified with public punishments. In 226/841, they "crucified [al-Afshin] on the Bab al-'Amma so that the people should see him. . . . The body was burnt, and the ashes taken and thrown in the Tigris." In 256/870 the head of Salihe b. Wasif "was hung up at the Bab al-'Amma for an hour." In 259/872–78 "they beat [a Christian secretary of Kanjur] . . . 1000 lashes at Bab al-'Amma, and he died." It seems that the sinister reputation of the palace in the modern tradition (in the description
of John Ross above) derives from these events, although it has spread from the Bab al-ʾAmma to other parts of the palace.\(^{109}\)

In the texts the Bab al-ʾAmma is localized in the west of the palace—one could go out from the Bab al-ʾAmma towards al-Haruni, which lay in the flood plain of the Tigris—and in relation to the "avenue," that is the Shariʿ al-ʾAʿzam or Shariʿ al-Sarīja.\(^{111}\) One could see the Bab al-ʾAmma and the Dar al-ʾAmma from the avenue.\(^{112}\) So the traditional identification of the Bab al-ʾAmma with the triple iwan on the west façade of the palace must be correct, and the square reception-hall block of the south palace must be the Dar al-ʾAmma.

It seems strange that the main avenue should have passed through the formal, presumably private, garden of the caliph, and the identification of the Bab al-ʾAmma has been doubted for this reason.\(^{113}\) The solution appears to lie in a chronological sequence. The archaeological evidence of the western garden is compatible with, although it does not prove, the hypothesis that it is early in date and belongs to the original period of construction at the palace.\(^{114}\) The first mention of the Bab al-ʾAmma as a place open to the public dates to 223/838, and the description of the Shariʿ al-ʾAʿzam by al-Ŷaʿqubi dates to after the death of al-Mutawakkil in 247/861.\(^{115}\) It may not have been possible to keep private what was planned by the architects as a private garden, when the palace itself was dedicated as a public building. At any rate the most logical place for the avenue to have crossed the garden is between the north-south walls (figs. 3 and 9).

The bayt al-māl is associated with the Bab al-ʾAmma and the avenue in an event of 248/862, and thus may be building H311 on the south side of the square reception-hall block.\(^{116}\) If this were not so, one would have preferred to identify the bayt al-māl with the vaulted building (H338) in the enclosure of the Large Serdah, which seems more secure, and could be described as a Mesopotamian version of the raised bayt al-māl in the Umayyad mosque of Damascus.

Al-Jawsaq. According to al-Ŷaʿqubi al-Jawsaq belonged to the original construction of Samarra, and was called al-Jawsaq al-Khaqani, after Khaqan ʿUrtuj Abu al-Fath b. Khaqan, who was responsible for its construction and who was assigned a qalīṣa adjacent to it.\(^{117}\) An iwan is mentioned in it.\(^{118}\) There was also a tower called al-Luḥra (the Pearl), which was built as a prison for al-Afšin; it was possible for a guard to walk around underneath it.\(^{119}\)

Al-Jawsaq is clearly signaled in the texts as the private residence where the caliphs lived. Al-Muʿtasim was buried there in 227/842.\(^{120}\) Al-Wathiq (227/842–232/847) built and moved to al-Haruni, where al-Mutawakkil also lived for most of his reign (232/847–247/861). But al-Mutawakkil settled his son al-Muntasir at al-Jawsaq,\(^{121}\) and according to Ibn ʿAṯham al-Kufi (d. 314/926) al-Muntasir was buried there in 248/862.\(^{122}\) Al-Muṣṭaʿin, al-Muʿtazz and al-Muḥtadī all lived in al-Jawsaq,\(^{123}\) and the latter two were buried there, together with al-Muntasir.\(^{124}\) Al-Muʿtamid lived in al-Jawsaq, until a move to al-Maʿṣhuq, and returned there for a last time in 269/884.\(^{125}\) In 290/903 al-Muktafi decided to reestablish the capital at Samarra, but seems to have found al-Jawsaq a ruin, for he was forced to camp there.\(^{126}\)

The limited evidence for women in the palace is related to al-Jawsaq: in 255/869 Qabiha, the mother of al-Muʿtazz, "brought out the money, jewels, and valuable possessions in the stores within al-Jawsaq" to pay the Turks.\(^{127}\) In 256/870 a letter was published, which a woman had brought "from the area adjacent to the Qasr al-Aḥmar (normally associated with al-Jawsaq)."\(^{128}\)

Al-Jawsaq was used to jail distinguished prisoners. The first in 225/839–40 was al-Afšin Khaydar b. Kawus al-Uṣrusani, for whom a special prison was built.\(^{129}\) In 248/862 al-Muṣṭaʿin imprisoned the sons of al-Mutawakkil, al-Muʿtazz and al-Muḥayyad in a room in al-Jawsaq.\(^{130}\) Released in 251/865, al-Muʿtazz was made caliph, and reimprisoned the unfortunate al-Muḥayyad, who ultimately died in prison.\(^{131}\) In 256/870 al-Muʿtamid was brought out of prison in al-Jawsaq to be made caliph.\(^{132}\)

When one approached the palace by the Shariʿ Abī Ahmad, according to al-Ŷaʿqubi, one approached the Bab al-Bustan and the quṣūr al-khaṭṭa (palaces of the caliph, a phrase which appears to mean the private residences of the caliph). Al-Ŷaʿqubi does not mention al-Jawsaq or al-Jawsaq al-Khaqani in his description of the avenues of Samarra, and one must presume that it is here subsumed among the residences of the caliph.\(^{133}\) In some way the residences of the caliph lay at the east end of the palace. In 256/870, also, Musa b. Bugha "took to al-Hayr...until he came to the gate of al-Hayr which is adjacent to al-Jawsaq and al-Qasr al-Aḥmar,"\(^{134}\) Al-Jawsaq is described as looking out over al-Hayr—to the east, though also mentioned as "al-Jawsaq on the Tigris."\(^{135}\)
The obvious candidate for the identification of al-Jawsaq is the north palace in the complex (H293). It is the only building of the appropriate scale to serve as the residence of the caliphs—it has residential apartments, which the square building does not. The cantonment to the north (site X) is a good candidate for the qa'fa of Khakan ‘Urtuj, which is mentioned as having been adjacent to al-Jawsaq.  

The palace at H294, in the added eastern extension of the compound, could be identified with the palace of al-Kamil, built for al-Mu'tazz by al-Mutawakkil within al-Jawsaq, and perhaps added to in his own reign by a building designed by his mother. Al-Qasr al-Ahmār, closely associated with, but separate from, al-Jawsaq, and located near an east gate into the complex, could be identified with H283.

Discussion

The dual nature of the palace, in both the textual sources and the archaeological evidence, is quite striking. On the one hand, there is a square palace with no residential accommodation, facing onto the Shari‘a al-'A'zam and the garden on the west and onto a grand courtyard to the east. On the other hand, there is a palace with residential accommodation, enclosed within a massive buttressed wall. In the textual evidence there is the Dar al-'Amma, a public palace where caliphs are made and unmade and sit in audience and judgment. On the other hand, there is a private residence, al-Jawsaq, where caliphs live, die, and are buried, and which seems to be the domain of the women.

These features are confirmed by the similarities and differences in the plan of al-Ja'fari (fig. 18). Without doubt the caliphal palace of al-Mutawakkilīya, built in 245/859–247/861, was intended to match, and was to a certain extent a copy of, the caliphal palace of Surra Man Ra‘a. The area of the main palace, 176 ha., is almost identical to that of the Dar al-Khilafā, but the building is separated from the city by a space of between 1,100 m and 2,300 m, which can only have been intended for the caliph’s peace and security. The reception-hall block on the Tigris is smaller (125 x 125 m), and the body of the palace is dominated by blocks of courtyard houses, obviously used as residential apartments. To the north and east, the large area and organization of storehouses and workshops is impressive, by comparison with the apparently piecemeal arrangements of the Dar al-Khilafā. According to Tabari, there was a Bab al-'Amma at al-Ja'fari, which is not yet precisely identified, but it is obvious that the role of public palace was, firstly, integrated into an overall design, and, secondly, far less important than at the Dar al-Khilafā. Al-Mutawakkilī had been caliph for twelve years when he began al-Mutawakkilīya in 245/859, and had no doubt grown tired of the hurly-burly of politics.

This failure on the part of al-Mutawakkilī emphasizes al-Mu'tasim’s political vision in constructing a prominent public palace. Al-Mu'tasim had his relationship with his people foremost in his mind when he laid out the Dar al-'Amma. There are only two other extant early Islamic palaces where orientation towards the public is regarded as important; one is the four-iwan reception hall at the entrance of the Umayyad palace in Amman, and the other is the palace of Ashnas at al-Karkh, Sur Ashnas, where the main entrance leads into a courtyard with a mosque in its center.

It is striking that it is the public palace which received the attention in terms of additions, improvements, and quality of construction, although the two structures are of similar dimensions. The square palace is entirely constructed of fired brick; the north palace is partly constructed of mud brick and pisé. Several complexes were either built originally or subsequently added to the great courtyard of the south palace, including the sports and leisure complex at the east end. The only addition made to the north palace was the small palace H294, whereas part of the original structure appears to have been demolished.

This disparity could be explained if one considers the public palace as the domain of the men and the private palace as the domain of the women. No doubt the caliphs spent their days in the Dar al-'Amma, not merely the two days of public audience. The sporting facilities are attached to the public, not the private, palace. It is common for more to be spent on the facilities for those who control the finances.

Lastly there is no doubt that some of the more peculiar features can be attributed to the complex history of the palace. In particular, towards the end, under al-Mu'tasim (256/870–279/892), who had little power or influence, occupation may have been reduced, and the square building may have been the last to be occupied, which may explain the private nature of the wall paintings in the so-called harīm.
Notes

I am grateful to the Iraq Directorate of Antiquities, notably its Director-General Dr. Mu'tayyad Damerji, and the head of the project in Samarra, Dr. Hafiz al-Hayani, for their kind reception and sharing of information on a site on which I did not myself work. I would like to thank the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C., for access to the Herzfeld Archive, and the Islamisches Museum, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, for access to materials of the Samarra Expedition. The archaeological analysis depends upon publication work for the archaeological survey of Samarra carried out with the support of the Fondation Max van Berchem, the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, and the British Academy. The research for the textual part of this study was carried out during the tenure of a fellowship of the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung at Universität Tübingen in 1989–91, and I am grateful to Professor Heinz Gauß and the students of the Orientalisches Seminar for their stimulating reaction to the first presentation of this subject.


2. This has happened in James Allan’s new edition of Creswell’s Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture (Aldershot, 1989), fig. 210. In Creswell’s original edition of the Short Account, the plan of the palace was not included at all, no doubt for reasons of space.


5. There was, of course, no question of rediscovery of the site, whose location had always been known.


10. Ernst Herzfeld, Samarra: Aufnahmen und Untersuchungen zur islamischen Archäologie (Berlin, 1907).


12. "The excavations in the palaces have been completely robbed of bricks; one sees only the trenches, instead of walls. No pavements. The other excavations are blown away [i.e., silted] and vegetation begins to grow over them" (Journal N-85, p. 16, in the Herzfeld Archive, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C.).

13. Herzfeld, "Mitteilung über die Arbeiten."

14. The original field notes still exist in the Herzfeld Archive.

15. For the purposes of my survey and catalogue of sites at Samarra, the various site areas have been allotted letter designations from A to Z, to identify them. For individual buildings and archaeological sites, numbers are added to the letters in the series. For example, P 7 is a group of three brick kilns in site P.


17. Khalid Khalil Ḥammūdī, "Qaṣr al-khalīfa al-Muṭaṣim fī Sāmārā," Sumr 38 (1982): 168–205; on 168, he remarks that work on the palace was
carried out from 1936 onwards, although it is not evident what this work was.


19. The publication is Hâfîz Husayn Ḥayântî, "al-Ḥîr," *Sumer* 44 (1985-86): 139-57 (Ar. sect.). The structure is identified in this article and on the information signs at the site as "the palace of al-Hayr," a building whose location is not given in the texts which refer to it (Wáltîd b. ʿUbây al-Buḥtūrî, *Dâna al-Bohtûr* ed. Ḥasan Kamûl-Sârîfî [Cairo, 1963-64], 1.44; Yâqût b. ʿAbdallâh al-Hâmawî al-Rûmî al-Baghdâdî, *Kiāb al-Mas'îm al-Bûlât* 6 vols., ed. Wûstenfeld [Leipzig, 1866-73], s.v. *al-Hayr*). Hayântî does not explain the identification or tell us who first proposed it.


24. Ḥayântî, "al-Ḥîr."


28. A type of boat.


32. E.g., Qasr Kharanâ (Creswell-Allan, *Short Account*, 96-105); or Jabal Sais (pp. 118-22).

33. Not so far published.

34. In 1977 this basin was in the courtyard of the Abbasid Palace in Baghdad. Previously it had been in the Khan Mirjan (F. Basmach, *Treasures of the

*Iraq Museum* [Baghdad, 1976]).

35. Herzfeld, *Die Ausgrabungen*, vol. 3.


38. Herzfeld, "Mitteilung über die Arbeiten."


41. Information from Sd. Hafiz Hayântî.

42. Herzfeld, "Mitteilung über die Arbeiten."


44. The name Surra Man Ra'a, which appears to have been the formal name of the city of al-Mu'tasîm, is used here to refer to the central city, in contrast to the outlying cantonments of al-Ma'tûra and al-Karkh, and the city of al-Mutawakkiliyya.

45. The full argumentation of the subject of this avenue and its relationship to the layout of the original Surra Man Ra'a must be reserved for another publication.


48. It should be remembered that the written sources are of varied origins. Consistency in naming structures cannot be expected.

49. Herzfeld excavated the entrance to this building from the great courtyard. However, his reading of the plan differs somewhat from the impression given by the aerial photographs.

50. Creswell, *EMA*, fig. 64.

51. The plan of the palace at al-Musharrahat can be
consulted in Northedge, "Creswell, Herzfeld and Samarra," fig. 12, and Northedge, "The Palace of al-Istabulat at Samarra," Archéologie islamique 3 (1993), fig. 8; a publication is being prepared by Petersen and Northedge.


53. Al-Ya'qūbī, Buldān, 240.

54. Ṭabarī, Tārikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk, 3:1503, 1504.

55. Ṭabarī, Tārikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk, 3:1504.


59. J. Oates, Babylon (London, 1979), 151, ill. 101; R. Koldewey, Das Wiederaufstehende Babylon (Leipzig, 1925). Koldewey in fact proposed that the vaulted building was the site of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, although he recognized that the hypothesis "bristled with difficulties." The building contained an archive of tablets detailing lists of rations for foreign exiles in the city and an unusual type of triple well. A series of wells is also to be found in the similar building A12 at al-Ja'fārī.

60. By contrast no examples of the cross-hatch style, style B, or the beveled style, style C, are yet known dating from before the foundation of Samarra.

61. It is of course possible that the decoration of the Bab al-'Ammā is later than the building itself. In fact, one would expect the building to have been redecorated during its occupation.


63. Herzfeld Archive, drawings D-1049 and D-1125.

64. It is assumed that a service department of the palace would require a majlis for the chief which would be impressive in proportion to the individual's importance, and that the work areas would lie behind and perhaps out of sight. An alternative explanation might be that this complex is the residence of someone close to the caliph, although this building does not have any apartments for the accommodation of dependents.

65. Viollet, Fouilles à Samarra, pl. III.


67. Herzfeld, "Mitteilung über die Arbeiten."

68. Herzfeld, "Mitteilung über die Arbeiten."

69. Modification of building plans to correct problems evident in earlier versions is known elsewhere at Samarra: one can argue that the plan of the cloverleaf racetrack was dictated by the obvious difficulty of the traditional out-and-back plan (racetracks 1 and 2), that the caliph could not see the whole race (Northedge, "Racecourses at Samarra"). The cloverleaf racetrack also appears to date to the reign of al-Mutawakkil. One suspects that these modifications were the result of the personal intervention of al-Mutawakkil, who was a greater lover of architecture, and personally supervised the construction of al-Mutawakkiliyya from the palaces of al-Muhammadiyya on the raised canal levee of the Qatul al-Kisrawi to the east of the site of the Abu Dulaf mosque (Ṭabarī, Ṭārikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk, 3:1438).

70. Al-Ya'qūbī, Buldān, 260.

71. Viollet, Fouilles à Samarra, pl. III; Herzfeld Archive, drawings D-1031 and D-1124.

72. Herzfeld Archive, drawing D-1044.

73. Herzfeld, "Mitteilung über die Arbeiten."

74. Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, eds., A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1938–39), 1407, fig. 512. R. D. McChesney, "Four Sources on the Building of Isfahan," Muqarnas 5 (1988): 103–35, quotes the Muqarnāt al-ʿAṯār of Maḥmūd b. Ḥidāyāt Allah Nāṭanī on the purpose of the Madanī Shah: "For polo (ḥuḡān-bāzī) and horse racing (asb-bāzī) the maidan was leveled." In a second phase, however, the purpose of the maydan was changed.

75. Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyūn al-Akhbār, 2 vols., ed. Brockelmann (Berlin, 1900), 1:166; A. Mez, Die Renaissance des Islams (Heidelberg, 1922), 385. Mez incorrectly noted the width as 60 meters. The caliph's maydan was no doubt larger than those of ordinary notables.

76. For a detailed discussion of the sport of horse racing, see Northedge, "Racecourses at Samarra."

77. In Northedge, "Racecourses at Samarra," the figure of 10,500 m was quoted as the length of racecourse 3. The new figure of 10,420 m is based upon electronic measurement of the same map source dated 1917, cf. Northedge, "Racecourses at
Samarra,” n. 87. Nevertheless the new figure seems to be more correct, for it matches a corrected measurement for racecourse of 10,417 m. If these distances represented 20,000 cubits, then the cubit was 0.52 m.

78. Yô is one of a group of five identical structures in the steppe which are orientated to the qibla and would appear to be musallâs.

79. Northedge, “Racecourses at Samarra.”

80. Viollet, Foulles à Samara, 25, pls. XIV, XXI.

81. The buttresses were presumably 20 cubits in diameter (20 x .52 m = 10.4 m).

82. Demolition seems to be the most logical explanation for the disappearance of the east end which appears on Herzfeld's plan and seems to be confirmed by examination of the aerial photographs. Regrettably I did not address this question during a visit to this site in 1989.

83. This plan is paralleled in a building in al-Jâ'fârî (A188), but not in any of the excavated buildings.

84. Cf. above, description by Ross, “Journey from Baghdad.”

85. E.g., Hammûdî, “Qasr al-khalîfa al-Mu'tasîm”; Hayânî, "al-Hîr.”


88. Al-Ya'qûbi, Tâfikh, 2:473.


90. Al-Ya'qûbi, Buldàn, 261.

91. Ta'barî, Târikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulûk, 3:1350, 1788.


94. Ta'barî, Târikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulûk, 3:1383.


96. Lassner, Topography of Baghdad, 85–91. The possibility that the usage of Dar al-Khilafa at Samarra is a back projection from later times seems to be excluded by its use by a contemporary author such as al-Ya'qûbi.

97. Al-Ya'qûbi, Buldàn, 261.

98. Al-Ya'qûbi, Buldàn, 261.


100. Ta'barî, Târikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulûk, 3:1503, 1788. The mâzâlim was the law court presided over by the caliph.

101. Al-Ya'qûbi, Buldàn, 255.


103. Dominique Sourdel (“Questions de cérémonial abbaside,” Revue des études islamiques 38 [1960]: 121–48) must be right in saying that the Bab al-'Amma was not itself a reception room.

104. Ta'barî, Târikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulûk, 3:1230.


106. Ta'barî, Târikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulûk, 3:1318. The bodies are said to have been crucified after execution.


109. The sinister reputation of the Bab al-'Amma may also explain why it is that the fired bricks of the triple iwan have not been robbed out along with the rest of the palace.


112. Al-Ya'qûbi, Buldàn, 261.

113. Sourdel, “Questions de cérémonial,” 126–27. There is no sign of a monumental avenue on the
east side of the palace, a possibility suggested by Sourdél.

114. The principal arguments for proposing that the garden is original are (1) what did the Bab al-'Amma look out onto if the garden was not there? (2) There is no evidence that it replaced other construction, and it is well adapted to the architecture of the palace. (3) The palace of Balkuwara, which is a single-phase building, was constructed with a garden facing onto the Tigris (Creswell, EMA, fig. 214).

115. Al-Ya'qūbī, Buldān, 260.


117. Al-Ya'qūbī, Buldān, 258. There is also a mention of “al-Jawṣaq al-Ibrahīmī,” which cost 2 million dirhams (Abū al-Faraj ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Isfahānī, Kitāb adab al-ghurbā, ed. S. Munajjid [Beirut, 1972], 47–50), and “al-Jawṣaq fi Maydān al-Sāmīn” or “al-Sakhr,” which cost 500,000 dirhams (Al-Isfahānī, Kitāb adab al-ghurbā'; Yaqūt, Muʿjam al-Buldān, s.v. Sāmīrā). Both constructions are attributed to al-Mutawakkil.


120. Al-Ya'qūbī, Tārikh, 2:478.

121. Al-Ya'qūbī, Buldān, 265; Tabari, Tārikh al-Rusūl wa'l-Mulūk, 3:1446.


123. Al-Ya'qūbī, Buldān, 267.


125. Al-Ya'qūbī, Buldān, 267; Tabari, Tārikh al-Rusūl wa'l-Mulūk, 3:2040.


128. Tabari, Tārikh al-Rusūl wa'l-Mulūk, 3:1791.


130. Tabari, Tārikh al-Rusūl wa'l-Mulūk, 3:1507, 1545.


133. Cf. also “al-Jawṣaq and other maqṣūṣ” (Tabari, Tārikh al-Rusūl wa'l-Mulūk, 3:1820); “al-Jawṣaq and the palaces of the Caliphate” (al-Ya'qūbī, Buldān, 267).

134. The hunting reserve east of the city. The area seems later to have lost its specific function, but the name remained in use.


137. The evidence of relationship with racetrack I and Tell al-ʿAlī shows that site X must be early in date (Northedge, “Racecourses at Samarra”).


142. Al-Mutawakkil was said to have neglected his public duties in the weeks before his murder (Tabari, Tārikh al-Rusūl wa'l-Mulūk, 3:1453–54).


Fig. 1. Herzfeld's plan of the palace. After Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 2. fig. 194.
Fig. 3. The western garden (H339).
Fig. 4. Vertical aerial view of the palace.
Fig. 5. Oblique aerial view of the Bab al-'Amma and the square building, taken in 1936. Courtesy the Library of the Institute of Archaeology, University College, London.

Fig. 6. The square reception-hall block (H343).
Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the square reception-hall block.
Drawing D-1104a in the Ernst Herzfeld Papers.
Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 8. Reconstruction of the approach to the Bab al-'Amma.
Drawing D-1101 in the Ernst Herzfeld Papers.
Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Washington, D.C.
Fig. 9. The central area of Samarra, showing the location of the palace and other sites mentioned in the text.
AN INTERPRETATION OF THE PALACE OF THE CALIPH AT SAMARRA

Fig. 10. The Large Serdab, in the course of excavation and restoration by the Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities in 1989.

Fig. 11. Building A12 in al-Ja'fari, showing the central "vaulted building" surrounded by courtyards, perhaps representing workshops and offices.

Fig. 12. The Rotundabau (H353). Redrawn after drawing D-1049 in the Herzfeld Archive, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C.
Fig. 13. The east end complex, including the Small Serdab, the stables, the north and south pavilions, the maydan, the spectators' lodge, and the start of racecourse 2.

Fig. 14. Plan of the Small Serdab, lower level. Redrawn after Hayani 1985–86.
Fig. 15. The stable block at al-Jaffari (A208-16).

Fig. 16. The north pavilion (H382). Redrawn after drawing D-1031 in the Herzfeld Archive, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 17. Plan of the north palace (H293).
Fig. 18. Plan of al-Ja'fari.
ARABIC POETRY AND ARCHITECTURAL MEMORY
IN AL-ANDALUS

BY D. F. RUGGLES

Palaces figure more prominently in Islamic architectural mythology than other building types because from the Abbasid period onward they contained a half-hidden world of courtly splendor spiced by political intrigue and amorous adventures. Although these palaces, which were never fully disclosed to visitors to the court, were already extravagant in the extreme, they prompted exaggerated descriptions that went beyond historical fact. The Abbasid palaces of Baghdad and Samarra merely partook of a much longer tradition of legendary palaces, from the mythic Persian palace of Shirin built for the most beautiful woman in the world to Solomon’s Palace built of colored marbles and rock crystal columns, its roof encrusted with precious gems, its floor paved with turquoise. Accompanying the descriptions of each fabulously established were topoi such as the search for the prophesied site, the search for the richest materials from the four quarters of the earth, and the story of the brilliant architect killed to prevent him from ever building a better palace for another king.1 In the Islamic period al-Muqtadir’s early-tenth-century palace in Samarra and Khumarawayh ibn Tulun’s palace in al-Qata‘a2 (Egypt), among others, were said to contain wonderful pavilions and gardens adorned with strutting peacocks, fountains, and palm trunks sheathed in gold.2 These establishments also had their stories telling of a fiat foundation, predesignated sites, superior materials, and skilled artisans collected from around the world.

The Abbasid model was used to advantage by the Umayyads of Cordoba during the period of eclecticism and artistic experimentation in the ninth and especially the tenth century. In particular, the Abbasid apparatus for enhancing the prestige of a palace through fabulous stories was used by ‘Abd al-Rahman III al-Nasir (912–61) for precisely the same purpose. Madinat al-Zahra3—the palace built only a few years after ‘Abd al-Rahman assumed the caliphal title of amir al-mu‘minin—was supposedly a fiat construction built at the command of the caliph who employed skilled artisans from near and far and imported the best materials from Constantinople, Carthage, the kingdom of the Franks, and various places on the Iberian Peninsula.3 Although not the first palace-city to be built by a Hispano-Umayyad ruler, Madinat al-Zahra4 was the first to be endowed with a detailed building account, enriched by completely fantastic tales of its foundation at the behest of the caliph’s lover, al-Zahra5 (a character surely invented by later historians).4 ‘Abd al-Rahman and his chroniclers borrowed the Abbasid model of semi-mythical palaces to give the palace an aura of mystery. Like the Abbasid rulers he restricted access so that most of the populace only saw Madinat al-Zahra6 from its exterior, or from the low-lying areas within it where service activities and food cultivation were carried out. Aside from family and personal slaves, only the Cordoban aristocracy and select guests were allowed into the elite zone of the palace, and the latter saw only the reception halls and gardens.

Madinat al-Zahra7, like the Abbasid palaces of Samarra, had a short life (fig. 1). It was founded in 936 by ‘Abd al-Rahman III to provide an appropriate architectural frame for him in his new role as caliph. The palace-city was built well apart from Cordoba in a green landscape irrigated by water from the mountains and planted with gardens and orchards. It was built in a series of stepped levels cut into the southern side of a sloping mountain, the highest level roughly sixty meters above the lowest. The buildings of the upper level were situated to take advantage of the views below: palace gardens with fragrant flowers, water channels, and pools, and beyond and below, the cultivated landscape of the river plain (fig. 2). The prototype of the new grand style when it was built, it became obsolete when the all-powerful hājib al-Mansur (or Almanzor), regent for the child Caliph Hisham, supplanted him in all but name, and built for himself an equally sumptuous, lavishly appointed and gardened palace-city called Madinat al-Zahira on the other side of Cordoba in 978.

On November 4, 1010, a civil war erupted, a result of the struggle for dynastic succession between al-Mansur’s grandsons and the legitimate Umayyads. The discord was further fueled by
social and ethnic tension between new Berbers from North Africa and the older, established community of Cordoba. Because Madinat al-Zahra served as the rebels' headquarters, it was sacked and burned and its inhabitants murdered. Most of the handsome palaces and estates surrounding Cordoba were destroyed at that time as well, and the city collapsed inward upon itself.

After the downfall of the Umayyads, al-Andalus became a self-contained system and remained so throughout the Taifa period. Although the Berber Almoravids of Morocco with their severer taste in the arts were admitted to the peninsula at the end of the eleventh century, al-Andalus was not significantly reopened to outside influences until the twelfth century. Furthermore, the kingdom thereafter did not participate in the making of new decorative and building types, as demonstrated by the fact that the Alhambra, reflecting Nasrid and probably Merinid tastes of the period, was largely a refinement of an already existing concept of the royal palace. And in any case it was not exported to Islamic lands beyond the western Mediterranean but remained a self-contained Iberian and Maghribi phenomenon.

Architectural development was insular, and in like manner the poetic discourse on architecture was introspective and nostalgic. Because al-Andalus was one of the few lands to be lost to non-Muslim conquerors (Sicily being the other notable instance), its palaces acquired legendary status not as the reincarnation of past citadels, but as sites for reflection on bygone glories. No palace provoked the contemplation of the past more than Madinat al-Zahra. In the words of one Andalusian, Madinat al-Zahra after its destruction became a place of wild birds and beasts. Ibn Hayyan lamented that the Umayyad palaces ultimately became quarries for whoever wanted them: "Most of the structures were destroyed . . . the copper was pulled off the doors, the lead of the pipes and other materials taken away. With this ruin, that carpet of the world was folded up and that beauty which had been an earthly paradise was disfigured."

During the eleventh century, materials from the Umayyad palaces were sold and taken off to Seville, Granada, and Morocco, and by the twelfth Idrisi commented that Madinat al-Zahra was so badly ruined it was on the verge of disappearing altogether. The palace had become, not a site to be preserved, but a place from which precious materials could be extracted for reuse in other palaces.

Madinat al-Zahra continued to serve as a quarry through the remainder of the Islamic period. Then, after the conquest of Cordoba in 1236 by Ferdinand of Castile, the identity of the site was gradually forgotten. In 1408 its grounds were ceded to the monks of San Jerónimo who systematically removed stone and marble to use in the construction of their monastery on the hill above. By the sixteenth century, the Islamic origins of "Córdoba la Vieja," as it was called, had been forgotten; instead it was believed to be the foundation of the Roman Colonia Patricia established by Marcellus.

Although the Arabic name and identity of the site itself had been lost under the Christians, the memory of Madinat al-Zahra was sustained by the poets and historians of al-Andalus long after weeds had sprouted in the gaps of the pavements and in the cracks of its crumbling walls. The tragic circumstances of Madinat al-Zahra's fall pushed it from an already fantastic realm of grandeur and magnificence into a truly mythological realm in which the human imagination enhanced the sumptuousness of its architecture and the brilliance of its inhabitants. Ironically, the palace acquired a deeper significance as a ruin than it had had as the caliphal seat. In this way, memory is often more powerful than reality because it engages the imagination: ruins remind us of what was, allowing the mind's recollection to reconstruct the place as it might have been and as it ought to have been. The ruins of Madinat al-Zahra remained for several centuries as a reminder of the splendor of the Umayyad golden age, evoking a time when the kingdom had been unified under one caliph. Even in its collapse and slow decline, the memory of Madinat al-Zahra was kept alive in the new palaces built after it in Seville, Toledo, Malaga, Almeria, and Granada.

The ruin was not forgotten, despite its abandonment. It was, in fact, visited many times in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the visitors often recording their responses to the devastation seen there. Madinat al-Zahra remained as a reminder of the monumental architecture of a bygone dynasty, and its deterioration inspired verses describing the abandonment of its halls and the tragedy of its decay. There are several accounts of trips to the site in the eleventh century. One visitor was the poet Ibn Zaydun who, returning from self-imposed exile after the civil war, hid in the halls of the palace where white lilies and red roses bloomed. From there he sent pleading poems to his beloved Wallada in Cordoba, reminding
her of former trysts in the gardens of al-Zahra. Whereas formerly "the landscape was gay-looking and the earth shining with dew," when Ibn Zaydun was spurned by his sable lover, the dew fell on him like "glittery tears."12

A less despondent visitor was al-Mu'tamid, the Taifa ruler of Seville in the mid-eleventh century. Mu'tamid and his courtiers made a day trip to the palace while staying in Cordoba, and they gamboled about the fallen stones, hacking away at the brambles, drinking wine and reflecting upon the strange beauty of its ruins:

They climbed to the topmost rooms ... until they arrived finally in the garden after having examined the ruins closely, their view increasing in increments as they went. In the garden they settled themselves on springtime carpets striped with white flowers and bordered with streams and water channels ... overlooked by the ruins of those halls which, like bereaved mothers, mourn the devastation and the end of the joyful gatherings, now that the lizard plays among the stones and cracks on the walls. Nothing remained except holes and stones: the pavilions had collapsed and youth had become old age, as occasionally iron softens and that which is new rots. All the while they drank cups of wine and wandered about, both enjoying themselves and yet pausing for reflection.13

The site was also visited by the Christians, as is clear from a strange request made to al-Mu'tamid by King Alfonso VI. Al-Mu'tamid paid tribute to Alfonso as part of a treaty agreement, but the treaty was ruptured when Alfonso demanded that his pregnant wife be allowed to visit the Great Mosque of Cordoba and to take temporary residence in Madinat al-Zahra where she would benefit from the excellent air.14 Among the palace's visitors was the Almohad Caliph Ya'qub al-Mansur in 1190. The palace-city was already a field of ruins at that point, and he took away with him a female statue reputed to be a representation of the woman al-Zahra for whom the palace was supposedly built.15

The sight of Umayyad period ruins, some of which had been formerly inhabited by the same poets and historians who then wrote about their destruction after the war, gave rise to a new sense of foreboding and doom, as if the fall of Cordoba foreshadowed the loss of all al-Andalus. The ruins of the Umayyad palaces offered a presentiment of worse things to come, and in many cases prompted the viewer to draw the moral of what can happen to a society when its leaders cannot command. Thus, Ibn Hayyan who had seen al-Zahra and other palaces when they were the palaces of kings, said, "What a lesson for the survivors!"16 Writing of the Umayyads at their zenith, later authors recounted stories in which the Caliph 'Abd al-Rahman ignored the warnings of the imminent collapse. For example, the twelfth-century writer Ibn Ghalib told the fable of 'Abd al-Rahman who, one night when he could not sleep, climbed to the highest room in Madinat al-Zahra. He heard a voice that spoke to him:

O Lord of the palace, great and wonderful,
Listen to my two-word warning!
You are at the brink of leaving it
For a pit two palms in breadth.17

Historians writing decades and even centuries after the fall of the Umayyads commented, with the perfect vision that hindsight brings, that Cordoba fell because of its rulers' extravagance. This is also, no doubt, why the medieval histories harped upon the subject of Madinat al-Zahra's opulence. 'Abd al-Rahman's excessive use of marble, ebony, gold, and silver in his buildings was a source of amazement and fascination to the chroniclers, but it was also regarded as hubris and a harbinger of the ultimate fate of the Umayyad house. Of the palace's destruction, Ibn Shuhayd wrote:

I am sadly affected by the death which has befallen you. But was it not divine justice, since, during your life, you were so endlessly proud of your own splendor?18

From the perspective of the following decades, poets and writers lamented the passing of what seemed to have been an age of innocence. Like an elder bemoaning the passing of youth to one who is too innocent to recognize that it will ever fade, they implied that the Umayyads did not fully appreciate the prosperity they had enjoyed.

The nostalgia for the lost place and the contemplation of the deserted or ruined palace had been common subjects in Arabic poetry during the early period, a kind of Islamic vanitas theme.19 Oleg Grabar has pointed out that the theme of "pride goeth before a fall," evoked by the image of a ruined palace, became a common motif in later Islamic painting.20 However, the wreckage of Cordoba in the civil war was the first direct experience with such ruins in al-Andalus, and it was shocking. The decayed Roman and Visigothic palaces, temples, and churches that the early Muslims had encountered on the Iberian
Peninsula did not provoke such melancholy because the Roman remains were regarded as foundations upon which to build, literally, the new order. They posed no reason for regret or nostalgia for a time when life was simpler and fortunes more secure. The Umayyad ruins, in contrast, were not rebuilt; and instead of presenting an opportunity for creating a new order, they symbolized the passing of a better one. Muhayi al-Din ibn al-Arabi, visiting Madinat al-Zahra sometime at the end of the twelfth century, was so moved by the sight of al-Zahra’s desolation that he composed the following verses:

Halls alongside of playgrounds gleam, but they have no occupants and they are in ruins.

Birds are lamenting in them from every side, At times they are silent, other times cooing.

I addressed one of the wingborn singers, who was sad at heart and aquiver.

"For what do you lament so plaintively" I asked, And it answered, "For an age that is gone, forever."21

And in a similar mode, the eleventh-century ruler of Cordoba spoke of the empty halls of al-Zahra:

One day I asked the house of those who had passed on, "Where are your inhabitants to us so dear?"
They replied, "They lived here for a short while, Then they went away, but I know not where."22

Ibn Hazm, who was forced to leave Cordoba after the civil war, suffered terribly from homesickness for the city in which he had grown up and where his father had served as vizier. When he asked a traveler for news of Cordoba, especially of his family’s houses, he was told that they had so deteriorated as to be unrecognizable. The image of the abandoned halls became for Ibn Hazm a tragic sign for the destruction of the Cordoba he once knew and the passing of a time of peace, security, and happiness. His response was a profound statement of despair:

It was as though the graceful palaces and embellished chambers which were as radiant as the sun, the beauty of their views crasing all cares, now that ruin and utter destruction was all around, were as the gaping mouths of wild predators announcing the annihilation of the world.

I seemed to see before my eyes the destruction of that noble citadel which I had once known as beautiful and prosperous, in the stable, well-ordered atmosphere in which I had grown up; its courtyards once full of people, now empty. . . .23

The uninhabited palace and its neglected gardens are particularly appropriate symbols for the passage of time. In current historical discourse, landscape is a subject for the discussion of space and its allocation among social groups. However, gardens and landscape were profoundly temporal creations, for gardens die and are reborn each season. As the plants within them bud, bloom, and wither, the entire composition of the garden is changed. Thus, the garden is a performance that cannot be fixed in one absolute moment but lasts for a duration of time and must be repeated cyclically to be reexperienced. Also like a performance, the garden’s unfolding is recorded in the eyes of the spectator.

In the medieval Islamic world, the agricultural literature revealed the finely tuned awareness of garden temporality, for the works were primarily about time (measured and recorded in calendars) and performance (the act of planting, tending, and reaping). Similarly, the garden was used as a metaphor for the passage of time in Arabic verbal and visual imagery. For example, the sultan of Valencia (probably ‘Abd al-Aziz), when washing his whitening beard, equated the withering of a green plant with the wasting of his own body.24

Ibn Hazm used images of the deterioration of nature and architecture to express his sadness for the demise of Cordoba’s beauty. To emphasize his sorrow, he chose images such as herbs and the youth of a human being in which the passing of time was irreversible. He wrote of his infatuation with a lovely sixteen-year-old girl with whom he was acquainted when his family lived in Cordoba. With the political upheavals that accompanied the fall of the Umayyads, he fled to another city, losing touch with the girl. When he saw her almost ten years later, he scarcely recognized her, so much changed for the worse was she:

...withered was the bloom which the eye once contemplated and had to turn away from in complete dazzlement. Nothing remained of it except a few traces and the experience of the past to tell of what had been. . . . For women are as aromatic herbs which, if not tended, lose their freshness; they are as buildings which, if not well cared for, fall into ruin.25

As Ibn Hazm described his friend’s sorry state and his sadness at witnessing it, he may as well have been describing Cordoba itself.
The abrupt decline and abandonment of Cordoba and its palace were constant reminders of how quickly even the most stable of kingdoms can collapse. Madinat al-Zahra, a dynastic monument associated with three Umayyad caliphs, had a meaning markedly different from the Alhambra, which was identified with many rulers. Madinat al-Zahra’s ruin increased the Andalusian sense of the passage of time because it made them tangibly aware of the misfortunes of history: the fallen roofs of al-Zahra and the stripped walls and cracked pavements connoted the loss and ruin of all al-Andalus. No other site in Spain provoked such a romantic, backward-looking response. It gave rise to a nostalgic yearning for an irretrievable time when Islam ruled a unified al-Andalus and its territories were expanding under the capable leadership of ‘Abd al-Rahman and his descendants.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Christian Reconquista was of grave concern. Muslims watched the erosion of the edges of al-Andalus, as piece by piece the country fell into Christian hands and the Muslim rulers were forced into humiliating pacts with their enemies. From 1055 onward, the reconquest became a real threat as Saragossa, Toledo, and Badajoz became Christian tributaries. Nothing was more alarming than Alfonso VI’s capture of Toledo in 1085 because it was the first Islamic kingdom to fall completely into the hands of a Christian king. Equally disturbing was the ease with which it fell. The Christian menace so terrified al-Mu’tamid of Seville, al-Mutawakkil of Badajoz, and ‘Abd Allah of Granada that they sought help from the Almoravids of Morocco who repelled the Christians and then annexed al-Andalus.

The Almoravids were soon replaced by the Almohads, who were eventually defeated by the Christians, so that by the mid-thirteenth century only the Nasrid kingdom of Granada was left. With large portions of the peninsula taken by the Christians, never to be regained, the theme of “paradise lost” reverberated in the Arabic literature of the west. In the battle of Cejja in 1234, the Muslim general al-Kalafi led his troops against the Aragonese, crying, “Are you going to flee from Paradise?” And for centuries afterward, Muslim writers would append to the names of Seville, Cordoba, Valencia, etc., the words, “May God restore it to Islam” (at-tahā Allah bi-l-Islām).

The fall of Toledo marked the beginning of the end of self-rule, and verses by Ibn Ghassal convey the sense of urgency felt by Muslims on the city’s loss:

O people of al-Andalus, spur your mounts, for our place here is but a deception.

The fabric of the peninsula is unraveling from the edges, and the cloth even unravels from the center.

We are in the midst of enemies we cannot get rid of. What kind of life is this, living in a basket of vipers?

Likewise, regarding the loss of Valencia after its conquest by El Cid, another poet wrote:

A land whose dwellers were scattered by dire events, Fate’s blows have scattered it by cruel blasts,
The hand of Destiny wrote on its courts: You are not you, these dwellings are not yours.

Toledo’s capture marked the first great success of the Reconquista, yet it was to Madinat al-Zahra and the fall of Cordoba in the tenth century that the Andalusians gazed with regret, interpreting its fallen stones as the first signs of the fall of al-Andalus. Thus, in retrospect, the historians and poets perceived that the golden age had already come to an end with the death of Cordoba’s great leaders.

Although the civil war left Madinat al-Zahra in ruins, it was visited regularly to pilfer what fragments of valuable building material remained and to linger among the fallen walls and reflect upon the bygone splendor of the Umayyads. To Cordobans of the years immediately following the war, it was a reminder of the fall of the caliphate; to Andalusians of a later period, it came to represent the political decadence of al-Andalus and the despoilment of its splendid cities by the reconquerors.

Madinat al-Zahra was an oddly chosen image in some ways, for on the strategic playing board of the peninsula, Cordoba was not as politically important a piece as Toledo, Seville, or Granada. But because the Umayyad palace stood as a testament to the disintegration of Hispano-Islamic unity that would ultimately prove the kingdom’s downfall, it became a symbol of the loss of al-Andalus to Christianity. For this reason, its ideological importance was unequaled by any other site. It even surpassed the Great Mosque of Cordoba, because by the time the mosque was converted to a church, Islamic al-Andalus was already
vastly reduced, and many other cities with their mosques, palaces, and beautiful monuments had been ceded to the Reconquista. The Great Mosque was converted to Christian use without causing a stir among the historians and poets. Madinat al-Zahra', in contrast, was the first in a long series of losses. Ruined and never rebuilt, it was a blank page on which to inscribe a variety of meanings. After it became clear that the fortunes of al-Andalus were declining, historians and poets read degeneration into the site, interpreting its ruin as a metaphor for the ruin of al-Andalus.

It is fitting to close with verses by the poet al-Sumaysir who had lived in Cordoba and, like Ibn Hazm, fled elsewhere after the war. He addressed the palace as if it were a lover:

I stopped at al-Zahra' weeping, looking at it
I lamented its slow decay.

And I said, “al-Zahra’, come back.” And she responded, “Who can return from death?”
I continued to cry, crying in that place.
   But the tears were of no avail; no, none at all.
Rather, they were the traces of tears shed by those
   hired to mourn the dead.30

But of course Madinat al-Zahra’ did return from death to figure prominently in the architectural memory of the Iberian Peninsula. Its reception halls and gardens provided not only the typological model for subsequent palaces but an ideal of cultural refinement, opulence, and caliphal grandeur which continued long after it had ceased to serve as a visible architectural prototype. Through its destruction, Madinat al-Zahra’ was ensured immortality as a symbol of “paradise lost.”
Notes


2. "Los palacios míticos de los árabes," in Rubiera, *La arquitectura en la literatura árabe*.


8. One wonders if the columns, wooden panels, and objects thus obtained were especially valued as part of the tangible legacy of the Umayyad palace over and above their worth as material; I have not encountered any statement to that effect in the histories, however.


Fig. 1. Madinat al-Zahra. Covered passage near the reception hall called the Salon Rico. Stucco fragments on the floor are all that remains of the rich wall decorations.

Fig. 2. Madinat al-Zahra. View over excavations in garden opposite Salon Rico.
PART 3

PALACES OF THE SELJUQ
SUCCESSOR STATES
(ELEVENTH–FOURTEENTH CENTURIES)
CIRCLES OF POWER: PALACE, CITADEL, AND CITY IN AYYUBID ALEPPO

BY YASSER TABBA

Citadels were intended to dominate cities, and in this respect the citadel of Aleppo perhaps succeeds a little too well. Built over a partly natural outcrop with numerous building levels, it soars above the city like a great cone with a chamfered top. Its massive elliptical base, measuring 450 meters on its east-west axis and 325 meters on its north-south axis, tapers steeply to a smaller but still quite large ramparted ellipse, 285 by 160 meters (fig. 1). Nearly fifty meters high with its ramparts intact, its already dominant image would have been immeasurably more powerful when its glacis was still paved with polished limestone and its moat filled with water.

Its height, impregnability, and apparent timelessness have long fascinated poets:

A citadel whose base was embraced by the Pleiades while its peaks surpassed the orbit of Gemini
Its watchtower would be counted among the celestial bodies were it only to move in their courses Arrogant, it laughs in the face of Time, who has long ridiculed such lofty buildings.

But this hyperbolic imagery of power seems flawed or, one might say, it is inhabited by a number of paradoxes. The citadel of Aleppo, like other urban citadels, was not just a military garrison but also the royal palace and the center of government and administration. Although constructed materially and metaphorically as a closed system, it had by necessity to interact with the city and its population. Furthermore, it was a hard shell with a soft center, an image of power and dominance that envelops and protects an atmosphere of royalty and elegance, the palace of the Ayyubid dynasty of Aleppo.

These visually arresting contrasts between impregnability and linkage, militarism and luxury may be taken at face value as true reflections of the distant and strained relationship between ruler and ruled in the Islamic Middle Ages. Foreign, in this case Kurdish, dynasties rule an Arab population; their illegitimate status and distance from the population are manifested in the semiotics of the very architecture of power that they create. While this is generally true, this paper attempts in the first place to provide nuance for this seemingly stark separation between the enclosed and the displayed, between citadel and city, and consequently between ruler and ruled. This will be done by examining the religious, pietistic, ceremonial, and administrative links the citadel had to the city. In the second place, the paper examines the Ayyubid palace in the citadel, proposing that, despite its modest proportions, it was formally and iconographically associated with a well-established iconography of power, an iconography that was first conceived in classical Islamic palaces and later perpetuated in the palaces of the Ayyubid and Artuqid dynasties.

Before proceeding with this investigation, it seems necessary to stress the fact that the institution of the palatial citadel is not contemporaneous with the beginning of Islam but represents the third stage in a series of discrete urban transformations. The first stage is represented by a centrally located palace (dār al-imāra) adjacent to the great mosque, as in Kufa or the Round City of Baghdad. In the second stage the palace shifted to a suburban location, a development initiated by the Abbasids in Samarra and imitated by many tenth- and eleventh-century dynasties, including the Hamdanids of Aleppo. The third and equally pivotal stage occurred when the Samarran model for royal architecture was gradually supplanted by that of the citadel palace. Aleppo was the first city to undergo this transformation, which occurred in the middle of the eleventh century under the Mirdasids.

Contexts

The fortification and building of various parts of the citadel continued unabated during the successive periods of the Seljuqs, the Zangids, and the early Ayyubids. But the citadel—in fact the entire fortification of Aleppo—did not come into its own until the time of al-Zahir Ghazi (1186–1216), the most important architectural patron in the medieval history of the city. Contemporary sources and epigraphic evidence (in the form of five preserved inscriptions inside the citadel) attest to the fact that he was responsible
for the total rebuilding of the citadel, including its impressive ramp and entrance block, its mosque, and its palace, and for the restoration of the Maqam Ibrahim. Indeed, one might even suggest that nearly all subsequent work on the citadel and the fortifications of Aleppo by his successors proceeded in accordance with his plan. At the highest point in the citadel, al-Zahir Ghazi in 1214 built a mosque whose lofty minaret even today dominates the city (fig. 2). It was one of the first mosques in an urban citadel, and although more symbolic than functional, it served as a model for most other citadels, including those in Damascus and Cairo. As the primary Islamic institution, the mosque at this site declared Islam triumphant in a city that a century earlier had almost fallen to the Crusaders, while it also affirms the role of the Ayyubids as guardians of the faith. The great height of the minaret (21 meters), on top of 40 meters for the citadel, created a towering structure visible from every corner of the city. Conversely, many parts of the city were at least potentially visible from the minaret, which, from the vantage point of the inhabitants, could have meant a tower of observation and surveillance. That function has been attributed to the minaret of the Juyushi mosque of 1085 in Cairo, and it was perhaps more common than we might imagine.8

Nearly midway between the mosque and the palace stood the small but highly significant Maqam Ibrahim (fig. 3). First built by Nur al-Din and his son Isma'il, this shrine underwent some restorations and additions during the reigns of Ghazi and his son Muhammad.9 As the patron saint of Aleppo10 and the traditionalist figure par excellence, Ibrahim was venerated by the Zangids and the Ayyubids in order to enhance their authority and legitimacy by deepening their roots in Aleppo and to reinforce their image as the safeguard of Sunni Islam. Another even more important shrine for Ibrahim stood about one kilometer south of the city, and it also was the object of some attention by the Ayyubids.11

Another component of the citadel’s context actually lay outside its confines in the region commonly known as Taht al-Qa‘a. Under al-Zahir Ghazi, a systematic attempt was begun to convert this region into an extension of the citadel, or better into a zone of official exchange between the Ayyubids and the city. Two major institutions contributed to the official image of this region, which is located just east of the citadel’s entrance block or directly opposite the palace. These are the still extant intramural funerary madrasa of al-Zahir (al-Sultaniyya) and the dār al-ṣadl (court of grievances or tribunal), which has disappeared almost without a trace. The Sultaniyya Madrasa was founded for both Hanafis and Shafi‘is by al-Zahir Ghazi, who died in 1216 before completing it (fig. 4).12 It remained in its unfinished state for five years, at which time the al-tāheb Tughril completed it in 1221. He was most likely responsible for the two rows of student cells that extend between the portal and the tripartite prayer hall. Ghazi’s mausoleum, which was ready to receive him at the time of his death, stands at the southeastern corner of the building. It projects slightly into the urban space and has windows with inscriptions on three sides (fig. 5). With its minaret-topped portal facing the citadel and Ghazi’s mausoleum originally facing the dār al-ṣadl, this two-madhhab madrasa reaffirmed the traditionalist orientation of the Ayyubids and reinforced their links with the ulama. The location of Ghazi’s mausoleum confirms the existence of a street next to it, since urban mausoleums in Syria and Egypt nearly always had street frontage.13 This street would have run parallel to the old wall of the city, passing through the southern gate of the Bab al-Ma’qam, and ending at the Maqam Ibrahim and the nearby Ayyubid madrasas.

Where the dār al-ṣadl in Aleppo was has been the subject of some debate. Some writers place it to the west of the citadel’s entrance block14 and others to the east of it.15 It suffices here to say that both archaeological evidence and a number of statements by Ibn Shaddad leave no doubt that it was located to the east of the entrance block, underneath the present municipality building, between the old and the new eastern wall of the city. The wall seems to have been shifted slightly to the west for no other reason than to create a defensible space for this important institution.16 It was also provided with a wall on its southern side; its northern side faced the moat of the citadel. These walls were pierced by four gates: the Bab al-Jabal, the secret gate connecting the dār al-ṣadl to the palace; the Bab Dar al-Ṣadl on the south, for the procession of al-Zahir Ghazi; and the two gates called Bab al-Saghbir near the edge of the moat, one in the old wall and one in the new (fig. 6).17

The dār al-ṣadl communicated directly with the palace through a subterranean passage. The passage itself has largely disappeared, but its location may be determined by following in a
southerly direction the vaulted corridor that currently separates the bath from the arsenal (fig. 18). After making a 90-degree turn to the right, this corridor ascends to the level of the lower ramparts, where it would originally have connected with a vaulted passage that led directly to an arched opening that still remains in the curtain wall (fig. 7). Peering through this opening, we glimpse the modern municipality building directly ahead of us and leading in its direction, remnants of stairs, at the end of which are ruins of a vaulted tunnel. With a little reconstruction, we can postulate that the stairs leaving the palace area would have led directly to a vaulted passage which would have gone through an opening in the wall of the citadel and descended to the dâr al-"adl.18

The palace, the symbol of absolute authority, therefore literally presided over the dâr al-"adl and was directly linked with it through a secret passage. Underground passages, known to have linked various parts of Abbasid palaces in Bagh-
dad,19 are rather commonplace in Islamic citadels. Most often they are used for escape in time of danger or to reach provisions, but the link between palace and tribunal is rather unusual and seems to have more serious implications. On the surface it simply facilitated the sultan’s movements between palace and tribunal during his routine audience on Monday and Thursday, visits that were intended to foster the essential link between authority (mu'lb) and justice ("adl). In his important treatise, the Sīyāsatnāma, Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092) expatiates upon the concept of justice, which he saw as the foundation of statey power and the primary attribute of correct government.

It is absolutely necessary that on two days in the week the king should sit for the redress of wrongs, to extract recompense from the oppressor, to give justice and to listen to the words of his subjects with his own ears, without any intermediates. It is fitting that some written petitions should be submitted if they are comparatively important, and he should give a ruling on each one. Fourthly the king should go through the kingdom that on two days in the week The Master of the World summons complainants and petitioners before him and listens to their words, all oppressors will be afraid and curb their activities, and no one will dare to practice injustice or extortion for fear of punishment.20

A decade later Ibn al-Balkhi expressed a similar view: “Those possessed of learning have said: ‘When a king is adorned by religion and his rule is stable because of justice, kingship will not disappear from his house unless, God forbid, some disorder appears in religion or he commits tyranny.”21

The dâr al-"adl was therefore a direct outgrowth of formulations that were themselves based on earlier conceptions of Islamic rule. Despite its physical separation from the citadel and its relative importance under the Ayyubids and the early Mamluks, the dâr al-"adl was by no means an autonomous institution subject to its own charter and body of laws. It was an appendage of royal power, and it received its ultimate authority neither from the city elders, as was the case in the communal courts of medieval Europe,22 nor from the chief justice (qâdi al-qâdi) but from the sultan, who alone embodied the state and was responsible for directing its affairs in accordance with the Sharâ’a.23

The invisibility of the link between the palace and the tribunal has further covert implications, in that the sultan could presumably observe the proceedings at the dâr al-"adl anytime he wished without being seen and could even interrupt them if he heard something not to his liking. The secrecy of the ruler’s movements through this passage would make it more a vehicle for monitoring and surveillance than for observing with detached interest the progress of justice. This surveillance should be understood in terms of control and coercion, directed at curtailing the authority and independence of the judges.24

The street between the Madrasa al-Sultaniyya and the dâr al-"adl originally proceeded southwards, where it left the city through the Bab al-Maqaam and ended at the shrine of Abraham. Unlike all other medieval Syrian gates, which have a single bent entrance between two towers, the Bab al-Maqaam is a straight tripartite gate without towers, a form that could not have served any defensive functions (fig. 8).25 Most likely it was built as a ceremonial gate that stood in the middle of the street connecting the secular and religious domains of the Ayyubids.26 The Ayyubid palace in the citadel was, then, linked to the city and the southern suburb on a number of levels: physically through the tunnel and the southern road; ceremonially through the dâr al-"adl and the Bab al-Maqaam; pieistically through the Abra-
hamic connection; and religiously through the double madrasas of al-Zahir Ghazi, one facing the citadel and the other near the Maqam Ibra-

haim.
**Precedents for the Palace and Its Contemporaries**

The palace complex is located in the southern part of the citadel to the right of the ascending ramp that begins at the entrance block and ends at the mosque of al-Zahir above. Before reaching it, one has to pass through the colossal entrance block, one of the most impressive gates in the medieval world (fig. 9). Built in its entirety by Ghazi between 1189 and 1214, this entrance block has three monumental gates, two of which, the Gate of the Serpents and the Gate of the Two Lions, are interesting for their figural sculpture. The first gate has inscribed in its vousoir a relief sculpture in the form of two knotted and intertwined dragons, each with two heads (fig. 10). This is one of four roughly contemporary gates with intertwined dragons on them, suggesting that this protective emblem was thought in some way to contribute to the power, impregnability, or even good fortune of the structure. The fantastic and ferocious aspects of the dragons would have enhanced the imagery of power, while their mysterious knotting would have suggested a magical apotropaic symbolism.

The third gate is flanked by a pair of recumbent lions which jut out like consoles from the masonry of the door jambs. They have schematic features typical of sculptural representations of lions in medieval Islamic art, such as those on the Fountain of the Lions at the Alhambra Palace. Lions, like dragons, were commonly used in medieval Islamic sculptural ornament, including several examples on military and palatial monuments in Anatolia and Aleppo (see Redford, figs. 1, 8, 11). Indeed, their use in pairs as guardian figures can be traced back to the ancient Near East, one of the earliest instances being the two terra-cotta lions flanking the entrance to the early-second-millennium palace at Tell Harmal. All this suggests that lions were associated with kingship and royal glory, which is quite appropriate in the case of the Aleppo citadel, given their proximity to the palace.

The palace is entered from the west through a monumental portal fronted by a fairly spacious area that may have served a ceremonial function. Though traditional in form, the portal is striking in its richness and complexity, combining as it does striped masonry, joggled vousoirs, and geometric ornament within the standard format of the muqarnas entry (fig. 11). It consists of a recessed door whose jambs and lintel are made of joggled vousoirs, which are all overlaid by a network of geometric ornament. A superb muqarnas vault of four tiers and a scalloped half-dome rises above the lintel and is crowned by a panel of black and white stone marquetry. Two rectangular windows topped by a braided motif are symmetrically placed on either side of the portal.

Although related to the portals of contemporary religious structures, it differs from them in its higher degree of elaboration and complexity. In fact, the only other comparable portal known to me is that of the Ayubid palace at Qal‘at Sahyun in the ‘Alawite mountains (fig. 12). In addition to their overall formal similarities, both portals contain an element of structural mystification, especially apparent in their joggled vousoirs. Although too small a sample for any definite conclusions, the occurrence of such suspended forms in other palatial contexts suggests that they may have had royal or authoritative associations.

The palace comprises a rectangle, approximately 45 meters north-south and 40 meters east-west, which is bordered on its western and northern sides by access streets (fig. 13). Three fairly distinct functions are contained within this rectangle: a palace in the northern two-thirds; a bath in the southeastern corner; and what appears to be guard rooms and arsenals in the southern third. The palace proper consists of two cruciform units of unequal size centered around squarish courtyards, the smaller being about 4.5 meters per side and the larger 9.5 meters.

Much has been written about the problem of cruciform plans, particularly in reference to the madrasa, although the form has not been discussed within the context of palatial architecture. At the center of the controversy regarding cruciform four-ivan plans is Creswell’s theory about the strict correspondence between the four Sunnī sects and the number of iawns in Cairene madrasas. Critics of this hypothesis have stressed the Persian ancestry of this plan, seeing it originally in the vernacular architecture of eastern Iran. But this hypothesis is equally problematic in at least two other respects. The first is that it rests on the faulty assumption that vernacular architecture is changeless, so that the existence of four-ivan village houses in the late nineteenth century suffices as a proof for their existence in the tenth century. The second is that the hypothesis is based on a transmission from vernacular to monumental, the opposite of the far more likely process of vernacular architecture appropriating
the basic design idea of contemporary monumental architecture, perhaps that of an important palace.\(^{36}\)

What is missing in all these four-iwan hypotheses is any mention of palatial architecture as a possible prototype. This omission is especially striking when we consider the relatively large number of extant palaces from the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods and the fairly continuous history of four iwans and other quadripartite forms in their plans. Such a quadripartite division is first seen in the Parthian palace at Assur (first to third centuries A.D.).\(^{37}\) The type becomes especially common in early Islamic palaces, including the seventh-century dār al-imāra at Kufa, the Umayyad palace at the Amman citadel,\(^{38}\) the palace of Abu Muslim at Merv from 750–55,\(^{39}\) and the so-called Victory Monument of Harun al-Rashid (786–809) at Hiraqlah (fig. 14). The last two examples represent a variant of cruciform planning, in which four iwans converge on a square chamber that is usually covered by a dome.

Both variants of cruciform design are found at Samarra (833–92), whose palaces display a bewildering array of innovations and original combinations. In all five primary palaces—Jawaq al-Khaqani, Qasr al-Jiss, Qasr al-Haruni, Qasr Balkuwar (fig. 15), and Qasr al-Asīq—a cruciform design occupies the center formed by a domed throne hall with four axial iwans.\(^{41}\) It should also be added that, whereas none of these palaces has the traditional four-iwan plan with an open court, the plan nevertheless does exist in the official architecture of the period, as is demonstrated by a recently excavated example, the so-called resthouse of Caliph al-Mutawakkil. This building was located adjacent to the mihrab of the Abu Dulaf mosque and consisted of two courtyards, each with four iwans.\(^{42}\)

It is clear from this brief look at early Islamic palatial architecture that cruciform plans played a dominant role in their design, occupying the most privileged part of the palace and imparting a sense of order and monumentality to the courtyard form. What functional or symbolic values lie behind this formal order? And how did these ordered forms in turn contribute to the iconography of power? The quadripartite division as a symbol of universal power is deeply rooted in the ancient Near East, where it can be traced back to the time of the Akkadian sovereign Naramsin (ca. 2250 B.C.), who called himself the “King of the Four Quarters of the World.”\(^{43}\)

Although no medieval Muslim caliph or sovereign is known to have borne this exact title,\(^{44}\) the underlying concept of universal rule is quite explicit in the form of the Round City of Baghdad,\(^{45}\) and somewhat less so in the ceremonial practices of the Abbasid caliphs and their successors and emulators, the Ghaznavid kings. Cursory references in Hilal al-Sabī\(^{46}\) and somewhat more detailed ones in Bihāqī\(^{47}\) paint a picture of a formalized court ceremonial in which the caliph is described as surrounded on the four directions by contingents of honor guards (ghulāms). Within the fourfold composition of the throne hall, contingents of ghulāms, whose distinctive clothing and headdress made specific references to different parts of the Islamic world, defended the right, left, front, and rear of the sovereign.\(^{48}\) It seems fairly certain, therefore, that the cruciform divisions of the courtyards and throne halls at Lashkar-i Bazar and somewhat earlier at Samarra played an important role in organizing the form of the ceremonial and in codifying the roles of its participants. Conversely, the complex ceremony and its highly conventional character would seem to recharge the meaning of an ancient symbol, converting it from a static symbol of royalty to a dynamic attribute of authority.

Given the royal and authoritarian associations of the four-iwan plan, its predominant use in medieval Islamic palaces comes as no surprise. In fact, it is used in eight other palaces that I know of, ranging in date from ca. 1170 to 1260.\(^{49}\) These are: the so-called Qasr al-Banat in Raqqa (fig. 16), possibly built by Nur al-Din;\(^{50}\) the early-thirteenth-century ʻAjami palace in Aleppo (fig. 17); the Ayyubid palaces at Qalat Sahyun\(^{51}\) and Qalat Najm near Raqqa; the so-called saray in the Bosra citadel, the Ayyubid palace at the Kerak citadel, the late Ayyubid palace on Roda Island,\(^{52}\) and the Artuqid palace in the Diyarbakir citadel.\(^{53}\) Of course, the essential difference between these palaces and their early Islamic predecessors is their reduced scale, a question to which I will return.

The northern façade of the Aleppo palace consists of an iwan flanked by narrow doors surmounted by arched windows, a composition repeated by the eastern and western façades (fig. 18). This tripartite composition is nearly standard in this period; it appears in all the eight medieval palaces. The same composition is also used in pious buildings, including madrasas and \textit{bimāristāns} beginning with their earliest examples in Syria: the madrasa of Gümüşhtekin in
Bosra (1136) and the Bimaristan al-Nuri in Aleppo, datable to ca. 1150.

Tripartite courtyard façades have a long history in Middle Eastern architecture; the composition is first seen in Parthian temples and palaces, such as the Parthian palace at Assur. Possibly originating in Roman gates and triumphal arches, this composition is combined in Parthian and Sassanian architecture with the iwan form. Subsequently, tripartite iwan compositions are documented at a number of early Islamic palaces, including those at Kufa, Ukhaidir, Samarra, and Lashkar-i Bazar, which is known to have been modeled after Samarran prototypes. In view of the pivotal importance of Samarran and east Persian palaces for the overall development of the medieval Islamic palace, one may propose that the tripartite façade of the latter owes its origin to classical Islamic prototypes.

But a closer and somewhat more concrete prototype is provided by the early Christian churches of northern Syria, which contain several examples of this composition in their façades and, even more closely, in some of their interior divisions. The medieval specimens closely resemble their late-antique predecessors in the quality of their stonework and the use of lintels, but differ from them in the use of the iwan for the central space. It would therefore seem that the tripartite façade composition as known in medieval Syria and the Jazira was ultimately based on the fusion of the eastern tripartite-iwan composition with the local architectural tradition of northern Syria.

To what extent can we attribute any specific meaning to this highly ubiquitous form? Although one might reasonably argue that the Parthian palace at Assur still retained some of the specific meanings associated with the triumphal arch, the medieval examples are too chronologically and culturally removed to allow for any such associations. At this point the most we can say is that by the middle of the twelfth century this form had become one of the necessary elements of a royal palace or aristocratic residence, perhaps even an important component of palatial iconography.

Also part of this aristocratic iconography may have been the elaboration of the vousoirs of the arch framing the main iwan, as we see in a single outstanding example in Aleppo, about 200 meters west of the citadel (fig. 19). This site is commonly called the majbak (kitchen) of al-‘Ajam, but there is no doubt that it was originally a palace, perhaps belonging to the Banu al-‘Ajam, a noble family of Aleppo. The vousoir of the arch has here been transformed into two staggered rows of arrow-shaped pendants, creating a powerful and luxurious effect. Although there is no supporting archaeological evidence, it seems reasonable to assume that the arch of the northern iwan of the palace was elaborated in like manner.

The northern iwan is also distinguished from all the others by having in its rear wall a muqarnas vault beneath which once flowed a shādirwān fountain (fig. 18). Only traces of this fountain exist, but a passage in a later medieval text describes how the water flowed down a marble-inlaid shādirwān, into a channel beneath the iwan, and finally emerged as a water jet in the middle of a pool. This type of fountain was quite common in medieval Islamic palaces from Iran to North Africa. In addition to its association with images of paradise and fertility, the elaborate use of water in palatial courtyards must also have reflected the power and sophistication of the patron. In the specific case of Ghazi, this fountain also celebrates his outstanding efforts at expanding the underground water network in the city and within the citadel, where he was responsible for enlarging a vast underground cistern.

It becomes clear from this discussion of five components of the medieval palace—sculptural ornament, muqarnas portal, four-iwan plan, tripartite courtyard façade, and shādirwān fountain—that they were all part of the repertory of significant forms in medieval Islamic palaces and that, with the exception of the muqarnas portal, they all echoed well-established formal types in early Islamic palaces. Indeed, the correspondences between the two kinds of palaces are at times so striking that they have almost led us to forget about the crucial difference of scale. This essential difference can best be understood by comparing in table form the courtyard dimensions of some early and medieval Islamic palaces (table 1).

The average courtyard dimensions of a medieval palace come to approximately 7.57 x 7.25 meters; those of an early Islamic palace come to a gigantic 62.17 x 42.50 meters. Dividing the corresponding average linear dimensions of the two groups, we get an average linear ratio of approximately 1 to 8 (8.21) for the longer (usually north-south) dimension and 1 to 6 (5.85) for the shorter one. What this in effect means is that the surface area of the courtyards in early Islamic palaces is on the average 48 times that of medieval ones, a striking disparity that clearly underlines
Table 1. Courtyard Dimensions of Some Early and Medieval Islamic Palaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medieval Palaces name</th>
<th>court dimension</th>
<th>Early Palaces name</th>
<th>court dimension</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banat</td>
<td>9.95 x 9.15 m</td>
<td>Kufa</td>
<td>57 x 57 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahyun</td>
<td>6.65 x 6.73</td>
<td>Ukhaidir</td>
<td>32.70 x 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>9.72 x 9.49</td>
<td>Jawsaq</td>
<td>110 x 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyarbakir</td>
<td>3.50 x 3.80</td>
<td>Balkuwara</td>
<td>105 x 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʿAjami</td>
<td>9.10 x 9.90</td>
<td>al-ʿAshiq</td>
<td>40 x 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najm</td>
<td>7.05 x 7.05</td>
<td>Lashkari So. Palace</td>
<td>60.5 x 47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosra</td>
<td>8.05 x 6.38</td>
<td>Ghazna Palace Mus'ud III</td>
<td>50 x 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roda</td>
<td>6.50 x 5.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>average</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.57 x 7.25</strong></td>
<td><strong>average</strong></td>
<td><strong>62.17 x 42.50</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>linear dimension</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.88 sq. m</strong></td>
<td><strong>linear dimension</strong></td>
<td><strong>2642.23 sq. m</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the basic differences between the two groups of palaces and hence between the two periods in which they were built.

This difference in scale is so startling that it should lead us to reevaluate all the implied similarities and the overall relationship of the two classes of palaces to each other. Clearly, what we have is not a relationship of equals, but rather one of petty dynasties looking at a distant golden age—nineteenth-century Samarra or tenth-century Baghdad—which they are unable to supersede and yet unwilling to ignore.61 The palaces they built were not just miniature versions of classical Islamic palaces, but essentially constituted a new palace type, some of whose most important forms and images were derived from the past. The originality of these palaces stems not so much from their smaller size as from the fact that this down-scaling in itself seems to have led to the sharpening of the appropriated images and the enhancing of their iconography. This is easily observable in the precision of the plans, the complexity of portals, the dramatic use of water, and the employment of a variety of architectural devices, such as muqarnas and pendant arches, whose desired effect was to induce wonder and amazement in the viewer.

I have attempted in this paper to place the Ayyubid palace in Aleppo within a complex matrix of relationships that included its urban context, its typological parentage, the symbolic associations of some of its forms, and its links with contemporary and classical Islamic palaces. What distinguished this palace from all its cognates was not so much its formal qualities as its contextual relations, both inside and outside the citadel. Its overall significance derived equally from its formal and typological associations and from its multiple links with Aleppo, its history, its patricians, and its general population.

Viewed from this multifaceted perspective, the citadel appears less impregnable and isolated and more firmly linked with the city. Through overt and subtle means, it broadcasts political and religious messages that were heard throughout the town. Conversely, the soft and luxurious image of the palace and even its smallish size are partly modified by the apotropaic and authoritative symbolism of its gates and the royal associations of its plan and forms.

To some extent, however, the contradictions between the image and intent of citadel and palace remain unresolved. And this may be seen as a reflection of the special situation of the Ayyubid dynasty of Aleppo, an alien dynasty that, perhaps more than any other, attempted to integrate its authority with that of the city.62 Painfully aware of their arriviste status and of the limitations of brute force, the Ayyubids of Aleppo seem to have left no stone unturned in their attempts to establish the foundations of their rule while effectively and justly dealing with an urban population. The measure of power and dominion that they attained was not simply handed to them through their noble lineage and their links with the Abbasid court, but was constructed through historical, social, pietistic, and symbolic means. The resiliency of this construction ensured a century of prosperity and relative stability for Aleppo, but its inherent weakness could not withstand the onslaught of the Mongols and the more centralized rule of the Mamluks.
Notes


3. The need to provide nuances for this too rigid formulation has already been suggested by urban historians. According to Ira M. Lapidus, Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 78: “Regime and society did not confront each other, reacting only on the interface between them; rather they permeated each other, the stronger pressing its way through the structure of the latter.”


6. This is quite explicitly stated by Ibn Shaddād (Ḥalab, 29) who adds that the Mirdasids (1023–79) established a practice (sunna) that was followed by later princes of the city.


9. Ernst Herzfeld, Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, deuxième partie: Syrie du Nord. Inscriptions et Monuments d’Alep, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Cairo, 1955), 125–31, has suggested that the marble revetment and all the carved wood paneling except the mihrab belong to the periods of al-Zahir Ghazi and his son al-ʿAziz Muhammad.

10. For Ibrahim’s links with Aleppo, see Herzfeld, Alep, 1:3–5. According to a widely accepted legend, the very name of the city, Halab, was related to Ibrahim’s milking of his goats (ḥalaba ʿibrāḥīm) in the vicinity of the citadel; see, for example, Ibn Shaddād, Ḥalab, 15.


12. This would make it the only extant two-madhhab madrasa in Aleppo, a type that was in any case quite rare in Syria. Hanafis and Shafiʿis were by far the two most important Sunni sects in Aleppo, a fact that is clearly reflected in the large number of madrasas (22 for Hanafis and 21 for Shafiʿis) that were built for them during the Ayyubid period and the negligible number dedicated to the other two sects. See the statistical tables in K. A. C. Creswell, “The Origin of the Cruciform Plan of Cairene Madrasas,” Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale 21 (1922): 1–54; updated in Creswell, Muslim Architecture of Egypt, 2:122–23. See also J. Lauffray, “Une madrasa ayyoubide de la Syrie du Nord. La Soutlanía d’Alep,” Les Annales archéologiques Arabes syriennes 3 (1953): 49–66.

13. The earliest known occurrence of such a mausoleum is in the funerary madrasa of Nur al-Din in Damascus (1172), which may have set a precedent for later Ayyubid and Mamluk funerary madrasas.

was copied by Dominique Sourdel, “Esquisse topographique d’Alep intra-muros à l’époque ayyoubide,” Annales archéologiques Arabes syriennes 2 (1952): fig. 2.


16. This may sound strange, but it seems to be the only likely explanation for moving a short section of the eastern wall of the city a distance of no more than 40 meters to the east. See Herzfeld, *Alep*, 1:15–16.

17. These details are culled from Ibn Shaddād, *Halab*, 17, 21, and 25.

18. Contrary to what one would have expected, this opening is located above instead of below the glas of the citadel, suggesting that the vault of the connecting tunnel would have been at least partly visible above the glas. This is indeed a problematic and unsatisfactory solution, but it seems to be dictated by the archaeology of the site.


24. Are related, though not identical, clandestine means of surveillance is reported for the Madrasa al-Mustansiriyya in Baghdad. There, it took the form of an elevated window (*shubbāḥ*) that directly overlooked the lecture hall below, allowing the caliph to eavesdrop without being seen. See Hussein Amin, *al-madrasa al-Mustansiriyya* (Baghdad, 1960), 142.

25. Straight tripartite gates were not built during the Islamic Middle Ages, and even ones remaining from the Roman period (e.g., the Bab Sharqi in Damascus) were rebuilt with a single bent entrance (see Herzfeld, *Alep*, 1:68–69).

26. This gate seems to have enjoyed a ceremonial role until almost the very end of the Mamlūk period, as we can deduce from the two round shields added to it by Barsbay between 1428 and 1437. I was not able to find any textual descriptions for this ceremonial.

27. These dates can be surmised from the information provided by Ibn Shaddād, *Halab*, 17 and 24–25.

28. For the chronology of this gate complex, see Herzfeld, *Alep*, 1:87–91. Meanwhile, it suffices to note that the entire superstructure above the two Ayyūbid towers belongs to the late Mamlūk period, when it served as the palace of the Mamlūk governors of Aleppo. This palace, which still awaits study, contained a very prominent and lavishly decorated *shubbāḥ* that may have served a ceremonial function. It seems fairly certain that the original Ayyūbid entrance block did not contain such a window for appearances.

29. These are (1) the now-destroyed Talisman Gate in Baghdad, which depicts a seated figure (presumably the caliph al-Nasir) grabbing in each hand the tongue of a rather ferocious dragon whose serpentine body fills the rest of the archivolt (F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris Gebiet*, 4 vols. [Berlin: D. Reimer, 1929], 2:153–56); (2) the gate of a khan in Sinjar from the reign of Badr al-Dīn Laʾluʾ (1219–59) depicting on each half of the archivolt a nimbed and bearded man attacking a knotted dragon with a spear (Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 1:13–15); (3) a fragmentary example that once decorated a portal in the Konya citadel, showing a knotted double-
headed dragon with a ferociously open mouth at each end of its scaly body: discussed by Gönül Öney, Anadolu Selçuklu Mimarisinde Süsleme ve el Sanatları (Ankara: Türk Matbaacılık Sanayii, 1978), 46, fig. 32; (4) another fragmentary example in a reused state in the western wall of the citadel of Damascus.

30. Cf. Herzfeld, Alep, 1:259–60, where he suggests a similar symbolism for any of the many knotted forms common in this period. Willy Hartner in “The Pseudoplanetary Nodes of the Moon’s Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies,” Ars Islamica 5 (1938): 113–54, has argued for an astrological interpretation of the dragon in Islamic art as the eclipse monster, but his interpretation seems to work best in a very restricted context.

31. See, for example, Herzfeld, Alep, pls. VIII and IX.


33. The only study so far published on this curious palace (wrongly called a hammam locally) is Maurice Eechard, “Notes d’archéologie musulmane, 1: Stéréotomie de deux portails du XIIe siècle,” Bulletin des études orientales 7–8 (1937–38): 98–112. Although undated, this palace is undoubtedly Ayyubid and possibly contemporary with that of the Aleppo citadel. Saluyun (the Crusader name is Soane) was taken in 1186 by Saladin who gave it as igi’ār to the amir Nasir al-Din Mankuras ibn Khumartekin and his descendents, who ruled it until 1272.


42. Northedge, “Creswell, Herzfeld and Samarra,” fig. 10.

43. Henri Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient (Hammondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1970), 84 f. Although no work of art from the time of Naramsin represents this conception of kingship in an emblematic fashion, Frankfort suggests that it was nevertheless “expressed” in some of his works. Indeed, the closest that we seem to come to a symbolic representation of this concept might be in the depiction of Assyrian camps as a circle or an oval divided into four quadrants. See Amiet, Art of the Ancient Near East, fig. 599.


47. Abū l-Fażl Bayhaqī, Taʾrikh-i Marāṣid, ed. Q. Ghanī and A. A. Fayyād (Teheran, 1945), 539–41. These passages are quoted at length by C. E. Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1973), 135–38. Bosworth also concludes, p. 104, that “the literary descriptions...of these levées have in recent years received striking confirmation from the researches of the French Archaeological delegation in Afghanistan in 1949–51 at the Ghaznavid palace of Lashkar-i Bāzār at Būst.”
48. Baihaqī, as translated by Bosworth, Ghaznawids, 136, states: "All around the hall, standing against the panels, were the household ghulāms (ghulāmān-i khāyṣāt) with robes of Saqāṣīn, Baghadātī and Isfāḥānī cloth, two-pointed caps, gold-mounted waist sashes, pendants and golden maces in their hands. On the dais itself, to both left and right of the throne, were ten ghulāms, with four-sectioned caps on their heads, heavy, bejewelled waist sashes and bejewelled sword belts. In the middle of the hall [serai] were two lines of ghulāms; one line was standing against the wall, wearing four-sectioned caps. In their hands they held arrows and swords, and they had quivers and bow-cases. There was another line, possibly down the centre of the hall, with two-pointed caps, heavy, silver-mounted waist sashes, pendants and silver maces in their hands. The ghulāms of both these lines all wore cloaks of Shushtarī brocade." This ceremony was immediately followed by a feast for all soldiers and gentry and terminated by a smaller majlis that lasted until the evening prayer.

49. The one discrepancy in this consistent typological sequence appears most unexpectedly in the Damascus citadel, whose palace—if it is indeed that—has been identified by Sauvaget as a series of interconnected two-storied chambers in the southwestern corner of the enclosure. See Jean Sauvaget, "La citadelle de Damas," Syria, 1930:217–18 and figs. 21 and 22.


52. Creswell, Muslim Architecture of Egypt, vol. 2, fig. 38.


54. Roman Ghirshman, Persian Art, The Parthian and Sassanian Dynasties, 249 B.C.—A.D. 651 (New York: Golden Press, 1962), 32. At Hatra, another important Parthian site, the tripartite form is also used as a gate and in the exterior façades of temples; Ghirshman, Persian Art, 35–36.

55. Some of these are illustrated in Georges Tchalenko, Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord, 3 vols. (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1953).

56. No less than thirteen members of Banu al-'Ajami are mentioned in Ibn Shaddād, Ḥalab. They were builders of mosques, madrasas, khanqahs, baths, and palaces. They seem to have inhabited the privileged quarter between the Great Mosque and the citadel, where their two extant monuments—the Madrasa al-Sharafiyya and the matbakh of al-'Ajami—are located.


60. Although no trace remains of any painted decoration in the Ayyubid palace, it may once have existed. A short passage in Ibn Shaddād, Ḥalab, 26, describes an earlier palace on the same site that was called dār al-shukhūs (house of images) because of the many images decorating it.

61. The Ayyubids were tradition-bound in many other respects, including the adoption of classical poetic genres (see, for example, A. F. Hayb, al-Harrakah al-ṣhirīyyah zaman al-ayyūbiyyīn fi Ḥalab al-shahāb [Kuwait: Mu'alla, 1987], 167 ff.) and the use of proper names with historical associations (e.g., Mohammad, Abu Bakr, Yusuf and Qsa).

62. The acculturation of the Ayyubids to local Arab culture stands in some contrast to the exclusionary policies of other alien dynasties, including the Rum Seljuqs and especially the Mamluks. Alone among these dynasties the Ayyubids adopted Arabic names, conversed and wrote in Arabic, and a number of princes even became proficient in poetry and theology. On the contrary, there is very little likelihood that the Rum Seljuqs ever learned Kurdish or Armenian, the main languages in Anatolia until recently. While a few Mamluks were indeed given Arabic names, the majority were not. In any case, their well-known exclusionary policies stood firmly in the way of their integration into Egyptian society.
Fig. 1. Aleppo, Citadel. Distant view from southwest.

Fig. 2. Aleppo, Citadel. Mosque, 1214, from south.

Fig. 3. Aleppo, Citadel. Maqam Ibrahim, 1168, from north.
Fig. 4. Aleppo, Madrasa al-Sultaniyya, completed 1221. Plan. After Laufray, fig. 1.

Fig. 5. Aleppo, Madrasa al-Sultaniyya. Mausoleum of al-Zahir Ghazi with entrance block in background.
Fig. 6. Aleppo. Citadel and Southern Quarter.
Fig. 7. Aleppo, Citadel. Opening to tunnel between palace and dār al-ādl.

Fig. 8. Aleppo, Bab al-Maqam. Ayyubid with late Mamluk repairs.
Fig. 9. Aleppo, Citadel. Entrance block, 13th–15th centuries.

Fig. 10. Aleppo, Citadel. Gate of Serpents, ca. 1195 and later.

Fig. 11. Aleppo, Citadel. The Ayyubid palace, ca. 1190–1230. Portal.

Fig. 12. Qal'at Sahyun. Ayyubid palace, ca. 1200–1230. Portal.

Fig. 15. Samarra, Balkuwara Palace, 854–59. Plan of central unit. From Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, vol. 2, fig. 214.
Fig. 16. Raqqā, Qasr al-Banāt, ca. 1168. Plan. After Toueir, "Qasr al Banāt," fig. 2.

Fig. 17. Aleppo, Matbakh al-'Ajami, first half of 13th century. Plan and section, present condition. Drawing: courtesy of the Directorate General of Antiquities, Aleppo.
Fig. 18. Aleppo, Citadel. Ayyubid palace, central courtyard.

Fig. 19. Aleppo, Matbakh al-ʿAjami. Arch of north iwan.
The Mamluk sultans of Egypt and Syria were associated with the citadel of Cairo from the foundation of their regime in 1250 until its ultimate fall in 1517. In the early part of this long period, four prominent sultans, al-Zahir Baybars (1260–77), al-Mansur Qalawun (1280–90), al-Ashraf Khalil (1290–94), and al-Nasir Muhammad (1294–1340), with two interruptions developed the citadel they had inherited from their masters the Ayyubids to become both their seat of government and their royal residence. They established a palatial complex in its southern part and separated it from the northern part which was reserved for the administrative functions and for the lodging of the royal mamluks. Each of these four sultans is known to have ordered the construction of a number of palaces and audience halls, which either replaced or complemented those of his predecessors and which extended the citadel’s southern enclosure to the west and south while maintaining its overall spatial division. Three of the four, Baybars, Qalawun, and al-Nasir Muhammad, instituted ceremonies and processions which followed a strictly prescribed order aimed at engendering the rigid hierarchical structure of the Mamluk sultanate in the form and plan of the palatial complex. In fact, the ceremonial program they followed seems to have been so pervasive as to govern not only the relationships between the various components of the northern and southern enclosures but also those between the entire citadel and the city outside.¹

One royal structure, the public audience or throne hall, was so pivotal in the representation of the Mamluk hierarchy with the sultan at its apex that it persistently played a central role in the conception of the citadel’s layout. Each of the four sultans destroyed the throne hall constructed by his predecessor and built a new one in its place soon after he ascended the throne. Early in his reign, Baybars built a throne hall as a replacement for, or as an addition to, the original one in the citadel. Qalawun ordered the demolition of Baybars’s hall in 1284 to build a new one in its stead. The building of the new hall can be ascribed to Qalawun’s desire to be the patron of this most visible and most public structure in the palatial complex, for otherwise he did not demolish any of the other structures Baybars had built. Both the sons and successors of Qalawun, al-Ashraf Khalil and al-Nasir Muhammad rebuilt the citadel’s audience hall within the next half century, presumably because they too wanted to have their own names attached to it. In 1293, al-Ashraf Khalil restored, or perhaps rebuilt, the structure attributed to his father, as the sources are unclear about the extent of the work achieved during his short reign. This last structure was in turn destroyed by Khalil’s brother and successor al-Nasir Muhammad, to be replaced by his famous hall, the Iwan al-Nasiri, concurrently called the Dar al-ʿAdl (Palace of Justice) and used as the official setting for the royal dispensation of justice, also called dâr al-ʿadl.

The Iwan al-Nasiri remained in use throughout the Mamluk period, was neglected in the Ottoman period, and was finally razed to the ground during the reign of Muhammad ʿAli (1805–48), who replaced it with his monumental mosque. Its location and form, however, are known, for it was still standing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it was documented for the Description de l’Égypte. Its site is marked on the Description map where it is labeled “le Divan de Joseph” (fig. 1). Its plan, elevations, and sections were reproduced in a series of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources of which those of the Description are probably the most accurate.²

An interesting and revealing aspect of these four Mamluk halls is the vocabulary used to designate them in contemporary sources. Instead of standard Arabic terms, such as qaṣr, qāʿa, majlis, or Takht, they are consistently named either qubba or iwān in the sources. More interesting is the interchangeability of iwān and qubba in naming the halls of Baybars and Qalawun. The use of the term iwān only became fixed with the building of al-Ashraf Khalil ibn Qalawun, which was called the Iwan al-Ashrafi. Al-Nasir Muhammad’s hall was always referred to as the Great Iwan throughout the Mamluk period. But its name became distorted as the diwan of Sultan al-Ghuri under the Ottomans,³ and it changed again at a certain point to become Divan Yusuf, which is the name the French cartographers heard from the local
residents and recorded on their Description map in 1800.4

The two words iwán and qubba present complex ranges of meaning in the medieval context. Both normally denoted architectural elements: the first a vaulted hall open at one end or a raised portion of the floor in a vaulted hall, the second any kind of dome. Yet both words were used to designate the whole structure in a number of instances throughout pre-Islamic and Islamic history. In commemorative architecture, the word qubba often signifies the mausoleum of an amir or a pious man, which was usually, but not always, a cubical structure covered with a dome.5 In the palatial context, qubba appears less frequently as the name of an entire structure, but it is still encountered in a few famous examples, especially in the early or classical period. There are references to the Qubbat al-Khadra (the Green Dome) as the name of a number of Umayyad palaces in Damascus, Wasit, and Rusafa, and the early Abbasid palace built by Abu Jaffar al-Mansur in the center of the Round City of Baghdad.6 Later palaces with the same generic name, qubba, are also attested as far afield as Egypt and North Africa. They include the palace known as the Qubba (la Cutha) in Palermo, Sicily, built for the Norman king William II in 1182,7 and the famous Qubbat al-Hawa (Dome of the Winds) which was built in 809–11 by Hatim ibn Harithama, the Abbasid governor of Egypt, on the hill upon which the citadel was later constructed, and which was used as a pleasure pavilion by all subsequent rulers of the country until the end of the Tulunid period.8 Similarly, the word iwán is used in several instances to designate an entire palace. The most important examples are the legendary Iwan Kisra (Arabic for Chosroes), the Sassanian palace in ancient Ctesiphon,9 and the Iwan al-Kabir (Great Iwan) which was the main ceremonial hall in the Fatimid Eastern Palace in Cairo built by al-Aziz in 979.10

These palaces were presumably named after their most visually impressive element, be it the iwan or the dome. Both features appear to have represented one underlying concept: monumentality, in both its formal and spatial aspects. The iwan in a palace seems to have conveyed, in most cases, a ceremonial value as the place of honor in which royal audiences took place. The dome, too, seems to have symbolized authority and domination.11 But, as the examples at the citadel of Cairo suggest, the process of naming structures was not always connotative. This paper proposes a different explanation for the terminology used in Mamluk throne halls that raises a number of wider questions about the conscious use of the past in Mamluk architecture, and about the survival of ancient architectural paradigms in the medieval Mediterranean world in both its Islamic and Christian parts.

The Sequence of Building Throne Halls at the Citadel

At the citadel of Cairo, the structure known as Iwan al-Qa’fa (Iwan of the Citadel) is first mentioned in the sources during the reign of al-Zahir Baybars.12 He, however, is not credited with its building, nor are any of his Mamluk predecessors. The iwan was most probably built by al-Kamil Muhammad (1218–38), for he is the sultan credited with most major structures at the citadel in the Ayyubid period. In fact, one early Mamluk chronicler, Baybars al-Mansuri, calls it the Iwan al-Kabir al-Kamil (the Great Iwan of al-Kamil), when he reports the ceremony of recognition of the second Abbasid caliph, al-Hakim, in 1261.13 To Baybars, however, is attributed another structure called the Qubba which he ordered built in the main court at the citadel. It was supported by twelve colored, marble columns, was profusely ornamented, and figures of the sultan and his amirs were painted on its interior surfaces.14

The Qubba was most probably added to, or part of, the iwan of al-Kamil for we have no report that the iwan was demolished when the Qubba was constructed. Ibn al-Dawadari, who generally speaks of Baybars holding audiences in the iwan, says in one instance that the sultan “sat in al-iwan wa-l-qubba with the newly appointed caliph,” implying that the two words refer to a single structure.15 Maqrizi offers us another clue in his description of the circumcision celebration of Baybars’s son in 1273: “He sat in the seat of his sultanate in the qubba al-sa’ida” (the exalted qubba),16 which indicates that the same throne hall called in the earlier reference iwán and qubba could also be referred to simply as qubba.

The use of these two terms together or interchangeably in designating a single structure could be interpreted in one of three ways. It may signify that the original structure of al-Kamil did not have a dome, and that the building of Baybars added a dome to it and caused viewers to shift their emphasis from the iwan to the dome when they mentioned the new audience hall. It may
also mean that both architectural elements belonged to Baybars’s rebuilding and both were prominent in the perception and description of the new hall so that the authors used them at will. The third possibility would discount the notion of looking for a correspondence between the name of the hall and its most impressive architectural element and seek an explanation for the shift in terminology in the wider context of early Mamluk architecture and its use of historical references. The nascent Mamluk architectural style appears to have developed a visual and symbolic system of references to venerated predecessors, references that may also have been reflected in the terminology of buildings.

The Qubba al-Zahiriyya did not last for long, nor was it described anywhere, so there are no data on which to base an analysis of its possible referential or historicizing form and layout. In 1284, al-Mansur Qalawun ordered its demolition and the building of a new qubba in its place. From the wording of the report on Qalawun’s order, it is very difficult to know whether the demolition of Baybars’s qubba was total or partial, and other Mamluk sources tend to pass the event over in silence. Another source tells us that the Qubba al-Mansuriyya (of Qalawun) had ninety-four small and large columns, not counting those on the porticos or aisles (depending on how we interpret the word riwaq). This number, if correct, must have included all the columns in the qubba, both those supporting the dome and those adorning the interior and exterior surfaces of the building. Decorative columns could be numerous, especially in the early Mamluk period when double-arched windows with three engaged columns each were the norm, as shown in other structures of Qalawun, such as his mausoleum (completed in 1285), and that of his wife Unum al-Salih or Fatima Khatun (built in 1283–84).

By the time Khalil demolished his father’s hall in 1293, the sources were already calling it the Iwan al-Mansuri instead of the Qubba al-Mansuriyya. Afterward, the structure’s name changed in the sources from the Iwan al-Mansuri to the Iwan al-Ashrafi, although it seems that no major structural or spatial changes were introduced to the building, which essentially remained as Qalawun had built it. Khalil’s iwan also did not survive long after his death. Al-Nasir Muhammad’s first work in the citadel, after his return to the throne for the third and last time in 1310, was the demolition of his brother’s iwan and the building of a new one in 1311. Three reasons could be advanced to explain this rebuilding. The first is that al-Nasir disliked the gloom (ghila) of the old iwan and the additional, awkward supports (akhir) erected after the earthquake of 1303. The second is that he hated the iwan of his brother because it carried the memory of previous sultans and the two earlier humiliating periods of his reign, when he held the title of sultan but had no real power. The third reason stems from the political and ceremonial changes introduced by al-Nasir Muhammad. Shortly after his return to the throne, he started to hold the regular sessions for the dispensation of justice, dār al-ṣadl, in the iwan where he sat twice weekly surrounded by all the important amirs of the realm who either sat or stood in a strict hierarchical order. The old iwan may have become inadequate for this novel ceremony, as al-Nasir had designed it, and thus may have prompted him to order its demolition and to build a new, more accommodating hall.

Conditions seem to have changed again in the later part of al-Nasir’s reign, for he rebuilt the iwan a second time in 1333. The reports are not very clear about how much he actually had razed; some say the structure was leveled; others that only the dome in the middle of the structure was demolished. The new iwan remained the official throne hall at the citadel where coronations, iqṭa distributions, reviews of troops, receptions of envoys, and the biweekly dār al-ṣadl sessions were held throughout the rest of the Qalawunid period until 1382. In the Burji period, it lost its function as the setting for dār al-ṣadl, but was still used to receive foreign embassies, undoubtedly because of its size and spatial arrangement which made it the most impressive structure at the citadel and most expressive of the sultan’s might. Otherwise, it was neglected throughout most of the Burji and Ottoman periods, and its site was finally cleared by Muhammad ʿAli, along with those of all the other palaces and halls that the Mamluks and the Ottomans had built, so he could construct his new structures there.

The Description of the Great Iwan

Fortunately, the Great Iwan was documented at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the Description de l’Égypte, although it was already in a ruined state and lacking its dome. The invaluable plan and views the Description provides permit an architectural analysis of the structure that is not
possible for the majority of the other Mamluk monuments that existed in the citadel (fig. 2).

The French plan shows the Great Iwan to have been a rectangle (measuring 36 x 31 meters without the corridor behind it), open on three sides: the northeast, which constituted its main façade, the southeast, and the northwest. The fourth side, which faced back toward the rest of the sultan’s palaces across from the passageway (called dīhīz al-sūbūr, or the corridor of crossing, in Mamluk sources), was built up with a thick wall. This wall was pierced with doors in five places; the central door, according to the eighteenth-century traveler Pococke, “was adorned with that grotesque sort of work, which is common in the Eastern buildings.” He, of course, was not acquainted with the muqarnas conch, which was the element he observed above the central door (fig. 3). The shape of this arched door was confused by Jomard, the author of the entry on the citadel in the Description de l’Égypte, with that of a mihrab, which led him to conclude that the iwan must have been used as a mosque. The door opened onto the sultan’s private domain behind the iwan through the passageway seen in the plan, which led to the Ablaq Palace and beyond it to the private quarters (al-dīr al-sūlānīyya).

The iwan’s layout consisted of three parallel aisles formed by four rows of reused red-granite columns. The central aisle was almost three times as wide as the lateral ones. The frontal one-third of its length was subdivided into three parts formed by two pairs of columns. The columns in the iwan numbered thirty-two in all and were taken from pre-Islamic Egyptian temples. The back section of the central aisle, covering two-thirds of its length, was surmounted by a dome. That dome—which had already collapsed when the drawing was made—had once been the most striking feature of the iwan. It was constructed of wood, like most Bahri Mamluk domes, and covered on the outside with greenish tiles. It was supported by twelve columns which, together with the back wall, formed a square plan, almost 20 meters to the side. The transition from square to circle was achieved by four wooden muqarnas pendentives, whose units, to judge from the perspective of the Description de l’Égypte, were huge (fig. 4). A broad inscription band, whose characters were made of large carved and gilded wood units, ran around the full perimeter of the inner square under the dome and even followed the curve of the central aisle’s arch. Its text seems to have consisted of the full titulature of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad and probably the construction date.

The Interpretation of the Great Iwan’s Architecture

The iwan of al-Nasir Muhammad was certainly the most public and most ceremonial of the sultan’s palaces, and therefore made to impress and to inspire awe. Its royal and monumental character was visually and spatially articulated through its massiveness, height, the lavishness of its surface articulation, and a number of other architectural features (fig. 5). Two of these features—the layout and the green dome—were particularly effective as historically recognizable signs of royalty: the first as a spatial and functional frame of action, the second as a visual referent.

The plan of the iwan was different from the common hall type of Islamic Egypt, generally known as a qal’a. This difference has been noted by many scholars, and a number of architectural precedents have been proposed. Doris Behrens-Abouseif suggests that the plan for the main hall in several Fatimid shrines (mashhads) in Cairo may have provided the model for the plan of the Great Iwan. She specifically mentions the shrines of al-Juyushi (1085) and Sayyida Ruqayya (1133), whose halls she compares to the Great Iwan in form and arrangement (fig. 6). However, the plans of these shrines are only variations on the majlis plan, the most widespread hall type in Egypt until the thirteenth century. A majlis has a T-shape plan with a large space in the center and two smaller, and sometimes shallower, ones flanking it. It has a frontal gallery (riwāq) with a set of doors that separate it from the central space, whether it is an open court or a roofed dārqa (the name of the central square in a hall, usually covered with a lantern). The type first appeared in the houses of Abbasid Samarra and seems to have been imported to Egypt during the Tulunid period (868–905). The majority of houses excavated at Fustat, dating from the ninth through the twelfth century, had at least one majlis around their open courtyard, which probably functioned as the place of honor in the structure (fig. 7). The halls of both Fatimid shrines clearly derive from the majlis plan, but have in addition a dome above the central back space, probably either to acclaim the sacrosanct persons to whom they were dedicated, or to emphasize the qibla side, an
which proper place sides roofentions, sides, columns designed from presented to al outside type. Alexandre Lézine proposes as a prototype for the iwan and other royal Mamluk structures the hall of al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayub at the Roda Citadel\(^9\) (fig. 8). This may have been the hall that Ibn Sa’id al-Maghribi, who visited the Roda Citadel shortly after its completion in the 1240s, identified as the iwan that al-Salih used for his audiences.\(^3\) The plan of this hall, which was still standing in the early nineteenth century, comprised two iwans facing one another across a huge duqrāa. Four sets of columns, each composed of three columns arranged as a triangle, formed a smaller rectangle inside the duqrā. They framed the side iwans and the two alcoves (suffās) on the longitudinal sides and may have supported a dome, or perhaps a wooden lantern in the center of a flat roof, similar to those found in later Cairene houses and called shukhshākha. Lézine considered this plan to have formed a transitional stage between the hall plan in Fustat houses, which we now know was another architectural type called majlis, and that of the later qārās of the Bahri Mamluk period.

Though al-Salih Najm al-Din’s hall may have presented the model for other Mamluk halls, the Great Iwan’s plan is radically different from any of the stages of this simple linear development from majlis to qārā. It was a unique structure designed for a specific set of functions and with other architectural paradigms in mind. Reduced to its essence, al-Nasir Muhammad’s iwan was a roof supported on pointed arches carried by columns with open façades on three of its four sides, while both majlis and qārā plans are by definition enclosed spaces. The openness of the Great Iwan was one of its essential characteristics, since it functioned both as stage and reviewing stand for the sultan. He could be seen from all sides when he sat to hear the grievances of his subjects on dār al-ṣadq days or for embassy receptions,\(^3^9\) and he could view the parades taking place in the court in front of the iwan on audience (khidma) days.\(^4^0\) Only the back wall, which functioned as the screen that separated the iwan proper from the royal palaces, was solid. The Great Iwan was in fact considered by contemporaries to be a public structure standing alone “outside” (zāhir) the royal palaces.\(^4^1\) Besides, the form and function of the central door on the iwan’s backside, complete with its recessed arched opening, topped with the muqarnas conch and flanked by the two customary stone benches called mastabās or makh ālas, give it the appearance of a typical Mamluk portal leading to the private royal palaces behind.

Analysis of drawings and descriptions from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century suggests that the plan of the Great Iwan may be related to another established type, the basilica,\(^3\) though basilicas were uncommon in Cairo at the time. The basilical plan was used in only one other contemporary Cairene structure: the qibla iwan of the madrasa of Sultan Qalawun in the complex he had established in 1284 on the site of the western Fatimid palace in Bayn al-Qasrayn\(^9\) (fig. 9). There, the three aisles with four arches each that form the tripartite arrangement appear to have been added to the qibla iwan as an afterthought to what was otherwise a madrasa with the usual ubiquitous two-iwan plan. It may have been that the madrasa was already started with its two iwans when an order was given to insert the three aisles in the qibla iwan. They may have been applied to provide the prayer space with a different treatment or an impressive façade, or to suggest a royal association.\(^4^4\) They may also have been meant as an imitation of other structures admired by the patron or suggested by his architects.

The context was evidently different for the Great Iwan at the citadel. Its plan seems to have been a well-thought-out variation of a basilica without the anachronistic envelope of an iwan or a qārā. The basic tripartite division leading to a focal point in the center of the back wall is kept in it, though the hall is modified by shortening its sides to become almost a square, thereby transforming the traditional longitudinal arrangement of basilicas. The apse is replaced with a monumental portal, and the sides are opened up to provide an unobstructed view to the outside, implying the accessibility of the sultan sitting within. These alterations, important as they may be, do not conceal the fundamental affinity of the Great Iwan’s plan with the domed basilica type, examples of which abound in eastern Roman, Byzantine, and Umayyad urban and provincial architecture.\(^4^5\)

But where did this basilical plan come from? It may have been inspired by its four direct predecessors at the citadel in Cairo, but this is impossible to ascertain for we know little about their layouts besides each having had a dome and
possibly iwans or surrounding porticoes. However, even if these halls did provide the models for the Great Iwan, this still does not explain the resurgence of a basilical plan in medieval Cairo, which had no such palatial precedents from the Islamic era. This leaves us with two alternatives. The first is that the basilica type survived in Egypt through some unknown series of structures, to which the forerunners of the Great Iwan at the citadel may have belonged. The second is that the type was reintroduced to Mamluk Cairo after it had disappeared from the secular architectural vocabulary of the country following the abandonment of the classical tradition with the fall of the Umayyads in 750.

Both alternatives are plausible and both are difficult to verify on archaeological or architectural grounds. Ultimately, the Great Iwan plan has to be traced back to the Roman basilical model, which may have provided not only the original architectural paradigm, but also the ceremonial functions and the symbolism attached to it and developed for it. The historical circumstances of the Great Iwan’s building and the elaborate descriptions of the ceremonies that took place in it point in this direction, but the complete image is still too sketchy and the sources too inadequate to allow for any firm conclusion. However, the meaningful connection for the Great Iwan is not its ultimate origin in antiquity, which was probably obscure to Mamluk builders and patrons alike. Rather, its intentional formal and symbolic associations should be sought in the intermediate Islamic types that had already adapted the basilica form to new functions. This proposition would allow us to postulate a number of political and social reasons for the adaptation of such a plan for the Great Iwan.

Basilicas must have existed in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, though no hard evidence remains of them. The great majority of churches built in Egypt from the fourth century to the seventh, much as elsewhere in the Byzantine realm, followed a basilical plan. This certainly argues for a local tradition that might have survived in the country after the Islamic conquest. But the absence of any trace of an Islamic palace based on a basilical plan before the thirteenth century makes this possibility unlikely. Furthermore, the ubiquitous majlis plan in all the known large houses of Fustat, with its proven ties to Samarran models, weakens such a possibility. It is very difficult indeed to identify any intermediate model in Islamic Egypt that may have provided the inspiration for the Great Iwan at the citadel. The only pre-Mamluk halls whose arrangement we know something about besides that of al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub are the two Fatimid halls, the Great Iwan of the Eastern Palace and the Qa‘at al-Dhahab (Hall of Gold), but Maqrizi’s descriptions of them clearly indicate that both belonged to the majlis type.

The situation is different in Syria, where the existence of a long tradition of basilical audience halls well into the early Islamic period has been demonstrated. The tradition was apparently localized before the coming of Islam, as evidenced by the basilical audience hall built between 569 and 581 for the Ghassanid chief, al-Mundhir ibn al-Harith (fig. 10). This hall, which stood outside the north wall of the city of Rusafa (Sergiopolis), was for a long time considered to have been a church until Jean Sauvaget conclusively proved its palatine function. It had a dome or a lantern over the center of the nave, and its apse, which is much smaller than apses in contemporary basilical churches, was absorbed in the thickness of the back wall with flanking rectangular rooms.

Despite being the only known example of a basilica/audience hall of the period, al-Mundhir’s structure has been used to postulate a possible “Arabic” precedent for a later Umayyad hall, Khirbat al-Mafjar, attributed to al-Walid ibn Yazid (743–44). Al-Mundhir’s hall, it has been claimed, provided not only the model for the architectural arrangement of the Umayyad hall, but also its functional and ceremonial references. Several other early Umayyad palaces, such as the Dar al-Imara at Kufa and the palace at ‘Anjar, took up basilical themes for their audience halls. In one celebrated case, Mshatta, the three naves led to an elaborate triple apse or a triortum. The audience hall of Mshatta, similar to and yet distinguished from the examples of the local Syrian developments of triclinia, was considered to have been either a later imitation of a little-understood classical type, or a syncretic creation of a new Umayyad type that synthesized Sasanian models of audience halls with the local, classically inspired basilica.

Palatial architecture in Islamic Syria after the Umayyads and until the twelfth century is very badly known. Few vestiges remain, and only the names, locations, and extravagant decorations of palaces are mentioned in the medieval sources. This obviously renders the task of proving the
persistence of Umayyad models in medieval Syrian architecture, and their subsequent transfer to fourteenth-century Cairo, very difficult. There are, however, a few suggestions that indeed this was the case. These clues range from circumstantial to interpretive ones, and, put together, they make the association between the early Islamic halls and the Great Iwan plausible not only on the formal but also on the ideological level.

The first level of argument is tangential to the specific question of the basilica, but it provides the impetus and the plausible conduit for the transfer of Syrian building traditions to Cairo. The motivation is suggested by the reports on the enthusiastic reaction of many of the early Mamluk sultans to a number of buildings in Damascus and their desire to replicate these structures in Cairo. Two examples are especially relevant, for they refer to two sultans, Qalawun and al-Nasir Muhammad, who were responsible for two of the audience halls at the citadel of Cairo. Qalawun visited Damascus several times, before and after he became sultan, and was once successfully treated for dysentery at the bimaristan of Nur al-Din (built 1154). He consequently renovated that bimaristan in 1281, and is said to have wanted to follow Nur al-Din’s example when he constructed his own bimaristan in Cairo three years later in Bayn al-Qasrayn as part of a complex which comprised also his madrasa with its basilia/iwan, and his funerary gubha (mausoleum). Al-Nasir Muhammad also visited Damascus many times in the early period of his sultanate. During many of these visits, he stayed at the Ablaq Palace in Damascus, which was constructed by al-Zahir Baybars in 1264. In 1312-13, al-Nasir went to Damascus, after rumors of an imminent new Mongol invasion had reached him, and stayed at the Ablaq Palace for a month. When the invasion failed to materialize, he went to the Hijaz for the hajj and returned to Cairo via Damascus. Upon his return to Cairo, he at once ordered the building of an Ablaq Palace at the citadel, which was, as we are told, modeled on that of Baybars in Damascus.

Both Qalawun and al-Nasir Muhammad recreated an admired Damascene structure in Cairo, the first because he was inspired by the social and charitable role fulfilled by Nur al-Din’s bimaristan, the second because he was impressed by the striking appearance and opulence of Baybars’s palace. Both were also, in their sponsorship of these structures, trying to emulate the example of the two princes, Nur al-Din and Baybars, who had been remembered after their death, the former as a just, pious, and brave ruler and the latter as an energetic and valiant one.

Qalawun and al-Nasir Muhammad also appear to have summoned workers from Damascus to help build their structures in Cairo. In Qalawun’s case, Michael Meinecke has argued a Damascene source for many decorative and structural techniques found for the first time in Cairo in his complex. He suggests a direct link between the decoration of a number of Zangid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk structures in Damascus and Qalawun’s complex in Cairo, and maintains that Syrian craftsmen were brought to Cairo to execute the decoration of the latter. This hypothesis is critical for Meinecke’s contention that the decoration of Qalawun’s complex functioned as the main vehicle for Damascene decorative influences in Mamluk Cairo. But here we can extend the proposition that Syrian influence accounted also for both the basilical plan of Qalawun’s madrasa and the octagonal plan of his mausoleum, which has been compared to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the first Umayyad monument (built in 692) and rarely copied in Islamic architecture.

In the case of al-Nasir Muhammad’s Ablaq Palace, we possess a more direct reference. Mu’addal ibn-Abi al-Fad’il says that Christian marble cutters from Damascus were brought to build the Ablaq Palace at the citadel in 1311. He goes on to tell us that the citadel palace was built like (naṣīr) the Ablaq Palace of al-Zahir Baybars in Damascus and followed the same arrangement (tartib), implying that the marble cutters brought with them not only their craftsmanship, but also their architectural traditions.

The second level of argument concerning the provenance of the Great Iwan’s plan reveals its symbolic association with early Islamic precedents through its use of a green dome. Textual references to at least three Umayyad halls, in Damascus, Rusafa, and Wasit, and an Abbasid one in Baghdad call them by the generic name gubbat al-khadir, which is generally understood to have meant “green dome.” The medieval historians, who are our only source of information on the four palaces, had never seen the domes themselves. Thus, it comes as no surprise that objections have been raised as to just how “green” the domes of these palaces were. But even if it were valid to pose the question in relation to the origin and meaning of the word khadir, the fact
remains that for medieval authors the dome of any qubbat al-khaḍīrā'ī was invariably assumed to have been green in color.68

The first example, the palace of Mu'tawiyah in Damascus which he had built when he was still governor of Syria between 640–61, was called the dār al-imāra (the palace of government), or the khaḍīrā'ī (the green), or the qubbat al-khaḍīrā'ī. The palace was surrounded by a great green dome, and was used as the official seat of the Umayyad caliphs in Damascus until the Abbasid revolution of 749–50. The concept and name of Mu'tawiyah's palace were taken up by al-Hajjaj, the mighty governor of Iraq and the East under `Abd al-Malik (685–705), when he established the new capital Wasit in Iraq in 695 and built the governor's palace in it with a monumental dome also called the qubbat al-khaḍīrā'ī. The same was done a while later by Hishām ibn `Abd al-Malik (724–43) when he moved the caliphal seat to Rusafa during his reign and constructed his qubbat al-khaḍīrā'ī there. Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, the second Abbasid caliph, built himself a qubbat al-khaḍīrā'ī as well when he planned his Round City of Baghdad. His structure was so monumental it could be seen from outside the city. It also had on top of it a figure of a mounted horseman with a long spear in his hand.64 Al-Mansur's qubbat al-khaḍīrā'ī was probably an appropriation of an already established architectural sign of dominion and authority and an assertion of the recently won transfer of that authority from the Umayyads to the Abbasids.

The known qubbat al-khaḍīrā'ī halls belonged to palace/mosque complexes that formed the administrative nucleus of the early Islamic centers and symbolized the visual and spatial expression of the rulers' power. Modern scholars have traced the green dome’s symbolism to the wide range of meaning given to domes in two precursors of Islamic architecture—the Byzantine and Sassanian traditions.65 Arabic sources are silent on the iconography of the Umayyad halls, but the green dome of al-Mansur in Baghdad, which collapsed in 941 long before the sources at our disposal were composed, is recognized as "the emblem of Baghdad and its crown, and the triumph of the Abbasids."66 Similar praise for the Abbasid qubba appears in many medieval sources, which indicate that the memory of the green dome has survived through the literary and artistic tradition well into the Mamluk period although its actual examples were long gone.67

The green dome of the Great Iwan, whose prominent position is emphasized by all contemporary sources, appears to have been a deliberate reference to the image of the qubbat al-khaḍīrā'ī, for otherwise green domes were unknown in medieval Egyptian architecture. The only mention we have of a pre-Mamluk audience hall with a dome is that of the Fatimid Great Iwan in the Eastern Palace of al-Qahira, which had a gilded, not a green, dome under which the caliph sat on audience days.68 The revival of the green dome as a recognizable royal sign may have been one way of forging the link with the early Islamic caliphate and dissociating the Mamluk ceremonial and official image from that of the Fatimids.

If al-Nasir Muhammad's hall was ultimately a descendant of early caliphal models, why then did a shift occur in terminology from qubba (the Umayyad and Abbasid term for the known audience halls) to iwān? The sources do not offer any explanation, but the prevalence of the latter term over the former in late-thirteenth-century Cairo may have been related to a local, contemporary development.69 The meaning of the word qubba had evolved in such a way that it was abandoned in the secular architectural vocabulary of Egypt around that period and migrated to the domain of funerary architecture. The use of domes in both secular and commemorative architecture in the Islamic lands, as elsewhere, obviously served the same purpose as a symbol of preeminence and sovereignty. But in medieval Cairo, with the diffusion of domed mausolea for religious and public figures, the funerary connotation of the word qubba had become so dominant that it eventually obscured its secular association.70

The word iwān replaced it in naming the throne hall at the citadel primarily because it was never applied to commemorative or funerary structures, and because its connotations, which were appropriate for a royal structure, remained fairly consistent throughout the medieval period. From early Islamic times, iwān, as a term for an entire structure, designated a commemoratively highly charged palace, the Iwan Kisra. The word's meaning developed over time to encompass all types of audience or reception halls, but it maintained the ceremonial and royal connotations. This is most probably why the structures of al-Ashraf Khalil and al-Nasir Muhammad were referred to as iwān in the sources. They conveyed an image of royal grandeur appropriate for the ceremonies they were built for.

If some of the palaces built in Syria between the
eighth and thirteenth centuries can be shown to have perpetuated the basilical model of the Umayyad palaces, then the Great Iwan of al-Nasir Muhammad would only be the last of a line of development. But if the palaces of post-Umayyad Syria did not continue the basilical tradition and were instead analogous to the development in palatial architecture in the neighboring regions, Iraq, Jazira, and Egypt, then al-

Nasir Muhammad's Great Iwan can be interpreted as a revival of the early caliphal tradition. Given the uniqueness of its layout among the known medieval Islamic palaces, we can conclude that it was a consciously historicizing structure through which al-Nasir Muhammad wanted to reintroduce not only an early form but also its well-established associations with a caliphal golden age.
Notes


4. It is not clear whether the name Yusuf refers to the patriarch Joseph, whose hagiography is connected to Egypt in many ways, or to Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, whose given name was Yusuf. Both attributions are of course erroneous, and both reflect the popularization of the citadel’s toponyms in the late Ottoman period with the complete deterioration of its architecture and its role as the center of power in the country.

5. For the different types of qubba as mausolea, see Ernest Diez, “Kubba,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2d ed. (EL), 5:280–96.

6. References are collected in Oleg Grabar, “Al-Mushatta, Baghdad and Wasit,” in The World of Islam: Studies in Honour of Philip K. Hitti, ed. J. Kritzeck and R. B. Winder (London, 1959), 105–6; Jacob Lassner, The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Studies (Detroit, 1970), 239–40 n. 22. There might have been another early Abbasid palace named also al-Khâdra in al-Manṣur’s early capital of al-Hashimiyya. Muḥammad ibn Ḫārṣ al-Tabarî, Taʾrikh al-Rusul waʾl-Mulûk, ed. M. Abû al-Fadhîl İbrâhîm (Cairo, 1963), 8:83, says that the Rawandiyya (a rebellious religious group) ascended the caliph’s Khâdra during their revolt in 758 and jumped off it as if to fly. Lassner, Topography, 136, doubts the existence of such a palace in this unofficial Abbasid capital and raises the possibility that Tabarî may have confused the palaces of Baghdad and Hashimiyya in describing the event. This is very plausible, especially since no other reference exists to this early Abbadî Khâdra.


9. In every Arabic lexicon until the present day, the word iwân is mentioned in connection with Iwan Ksra; see A. A. al-Bustânî, al-Bustân (Beirut, 1927), 1:85; E. W. Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon (Edinburgh, 1863), bk. 1, pt. 1, 129. These persistent references suggest that this particular monument might have represented the archetype for iwans in the medieval collective memory; see Nasser Rabbat, “The Iwans of the Madrasa of Sultan Hasan,” American Research Center in Egypt Newsletter 143/144 (Fall/Winter 1988/89): 5–9.


15. Ibn al-Dawâdârî, al-Durra al-Dhakiyya, 73, for the reference to the iwân and qubba, 63, 94, 303, where he mentions only the iwân.


18. Perhaps except for Maqrizi, Khitaat, 2:112, who states that Qalawun demolished the qulla (keep) of Baybars and built his qubba in its place in 1285, which is the same date given by Ibn al-Furat for the demolition of the qubba of Baybars. The concurrence of dates in these reports permits the correction of the spelling of al-qulla in Maqrizi's sentence (most probably a typographical error in this generally inaccurate printed text) which should read al-qubba instead when reporting Qalawun's replacement of Baybars's structure. This should be differentiated from the qulla, also built by Baybars inside the wall separating the two enclosures of the citadel, which was not rebuilt until the time of al-Nasir Muhammad.


20. Ibn al-Dawadari is the one who offers the most direct reference for he reports in the events of 1293 that "al-Iwan al-Ashrafi was completed by Amir 'Alam al-Din al-Shuja'i," Ibn al-Dawadari, al-Durra al-Dhahabiya, 345; Maqrizi, Khitaat, 2:206; Ibn Iyad, Badari 'al-Zühur fi-Waqat 'al-Duhâr, ed. M. Mustafa (Cairo, 1982) vol. 1, pt. 1, 378, states specifically that Khalil is the builder of al-Iwan al-Ashrafi and al-Qa'a al-Ashrafiya, thus preventing any confusion between the two structures.


23. Many chroniclers have noted the zeal with which al-Nasir built his autocratic rule after the two first reigns in which he had only nominal authority. See P. M. Holt, The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517 (London, 1986), 107-20; Robert Irwin, The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250-1382 (Carcow, Ill., 1986), 85-124.

24. Baybars al-Mansuri, al-Tuhfa, 231, 233-34, gives an elaborate description of the ceremony, listing the names of the amirs who were required to sit around the sultan; Nuwayri, Nihayat, vol. 30, fol. 66; the anonymous author edited in Zetterstéen, Beitrage, 158, reports another activity, the review of the troops, that was instituted in the iwan.

25. Ibn Taghrit-Bardi, Nujum, 9:180, noted the complex rituals introduced by al-Nasir in the iwan, and detected the important function of these rituals as inspiring awe among envoys of foreign rulers, who were more common in al-Nasir's court than any Mamluk sultan before him.

26. Ibn al-Dawâdârî, al-Durr al-Fâkhir, 372, only says that the iwan of al-Ashraf was demolished on the third of Sha'ban 733 (1333), along with other structures; the anonymous author edited in Zetterstéen, Beitrage, 186, gives the same date of completion, but a different one for the beginning of construction, and specifies that the dome was the only part of the old iwan that al-Nasir destroyed; al-Shuja'i, Ta'rikh al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad, ed. Barbara Schäfer (Wiesbaden, 1977), 113, only says that al-Nasir demolished the iwan of al-Ashraf twice, presumably in the same dates given by Ibn al-Dawadari, but unfortunately the part of al-Shuja'i's chronicle covering the years between 1310 and 1358 is missing. The vague report is repeated by Maqrizi, Suluk, vol. 2, pt. 2, 538, and Ibn Taghrit-Bardi, Nujum, 9:180.


32. Evliya Celebi, Seyahatnamesi, 9-10:389, says that the divân of Sultan al-Ghuri had thirty-five columns. Paul Casanova, Histoire et Description de la citadelle du Caire, published in Arabic as Ta'rikh wa-Wasaf Qâlat al-Qâhirah, trans. Ahmad Darraj (Cairo, 1974), 124, reports that Mailet counted thirty-four columns, probably including two of the square pillars as columns. Pococke's plan has forty-four columns, but it is doubtlessly wrong as he extends the middle two rows all the way to the end wall.
thus adding six columns, even though he himself says in his text that the middle rows were designed to support a dome.


34. Casanova, Tārīkh, 127, was the first correctly to read the remainder of the inscription, which confirms that the drawing represented al-Nasir’s iwan. A similar inscription band runs around the drum of the Nasiri Mosque’s dome. Both inscriptions were possibly done at the same time.


39. The Florentine traveler Brancacci, who reported on the audience he attended there during the reign of Barsbay, says that the sultan was seated on a raised platform inside the iwan and was perfectly visible from all sides; see Behrens-Abouseif, “Citadel of Cairo,” 42–43.


41. Ibn Shāhīn, Zubdat, 26, says exactly that about the iwan. He was writing in the mid fifteenth century, however, when the iwan was only used for important ceremonies.

42. Though basilicas are mostly connected with early Christian churches, the original Greco-Roman functions and symbolism of this widespread type were never lost or forgotten; see Irving Lavin, “The House of the Lord,” Art Bulletin 44 (1962): 16–17; William L. MacDonald, The Architecture of the Roman Empire: An Introductory Study (New Haven, 1982), 53 and n. 21. It is in its royal and congregational connotations that the word basilica is used in this paper.

43. Behrens-Abouseif, “Citadel of Cairo,” 76, notes this precedent.

44. In fact, the entire complex of Qalawun may have alluded to palatial symbolism in the original functions of its site, its architectural references, and the lavishness of its decoration. The conversion of an exclusive, old Fatimid palace to a public socio-religious complex may have been an intentional gesture aimed at advertising the generosity and charity of the ruler. See the description of the buildings, the waqf, and the social functions of the bi‘rārisītān and the mausoleum in Nuwayrī, Nihāyat, vol. 29, fols. 28 ff., reproduced in Maqrīzī, Sūlīk, vol. 1, pt. 3, 997–1001, and translated in Creswell, MAE, 2:191.

45. A variety of domed basilicas, modified in different ways to accommodate the dome, span the entire historical and functional ranges of late Roman and Byzantine architecture: see Cyril Mango, Byzantine Architecture (New York, 1985), 52–88, where the domed basilicas of the age of Justinian are discussed, including the most famous of them all, the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople.

46. Jean Sauvaget was the first persuasively to argue the persistence of royal connotations in the adaptation of the basilica to early Islamic architecture; see La Mosquée omeyyade de Médina: Étude sur les origines architecturales de la mosquée et de la basilique (Paris, 1947), 158–84; also Elias J. Bickerman’s review of the book in Classical Philology 44, 1 (Jan. 1949): 142. Many of Sauvaget’s ideas on the adaptations and transformations of the basilical plan are still unchallenged and warrant further research despite recent scholarship that modified, and sometimes disproved, his conclusions concerning the Prophet’s mosque at Medina and the chronological development of the mosque in general.


51. The basilical hall with a domed room behind it at the dār al-imārā at Kufa is dated to the early Umayyad period and believed to have been the work of Ziyad ibn Abīti during the caliphate of Mu‘awiya; see K. A. C. Creswell, A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture, ed. James W. Allan (Cairo, 1989), 10-15 and fig. 2. For the basilical hall in the palace at ‘Anjar, dated to the end of the reign of al-Walid I (705-15), see Maurice Chéhab, “The Umayyad Palace at ‘Anjar,” Ars Orientalis 5 (1963): 17-25 and fig. 2.


53. Henri Stern, “Notes sur l’architecture des châteaux omeyyades,” Ars Islamica 11-12 (1946): 89-92. Ettinghausen was further to elaborate the interpretation and to make the influence tripartite—local, classical, and Sasanian—in his discussion of Khirbat al-Mafjar in Ettinghausen, From Byzantium, 62-64. The same remarks apply to the organization of the hall in dār al-imārā at Kufa.

54. There exist, however, some intriguing palatial examples, scattered in Syria and datable to the medieval period, which may prove the survival of Umayyad models; see the plan of Qasr al-Banat in Raqqah, ca. 1168, reproduced in Yasser Tabbaa’s article in this volume. It is a basic majlis plan whose riwaq was extended to form a basilical layout.


59. Creswell, MAE, 2:203, accepts the opinion of Saladin (Manuel d’art musulman, I, l’architecture [Paris, 1907], 117-18) and Herzfeld (“Die Baugruppe des Sultans Qalaun,” Abhandlungen des Hamburgischen Kolonialinstituts 42 [1919]: 19) before him concerning the affinity between the qubbat of Qalawun and the Dome of the Rock, although he notes the differences in the arrangement of supports under the dome in the later structure. He also establishes a possible context for the transfer of the Dome’s plan to Cairo by remarking that Qalawun visited Jerusalem many times during his reign and had ordered the building of a ribāt there in 1282 that still stands today.


61. For a discussion of the possibilities of colors and meanings attached to the qubbat al-khadrā, see Charles Wendell, “Baghdad: Imago Mundi and Other Foundation Lore,” International Journal for Middle East Studies 2 (1971): 117-20. Wendell seems to have overlooked the fact that his sources, all post-eleventh century, refer to green-colored domes and differently colored domes. One contemporary example is the dome called the qubbat al-zarqā (Blue Dome) because it was covered with blue tiles, which was finished in 1292 at the citadel of Damascus; see Ibn Ḥabīb, Ṭaddhirat al-Nabī fi-Ayyām al-Mansūr wa-Banīh, ed. M. M. Amin (Cairo, 1976), 1:140; also, Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya, 13:323, 327. For a new interpretation of the qubbat al-khadrā that follows Wendell’s in questioning the real appearance of the original domes, see the article by Jonathan Bloom in this volume.

62. Although Ibn-‘Asākir, Tārīkh Madinat Dimashq, ed. S. al-Munajjīd (Damascus, 1951-54), 2:134, speaks only of al-Khadrā of Damascus, Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya, 9:143, explains that the palace was called the Qubbat al-Khadra after the green dome built in it. For the other palaces, the references always mention green domes.


64. Lassner, Topography, 52-53, 134-35; Creswell, Short Account, 239.


66. This is a verbatim translation of the attributes of this dome as reported by al-Khaṭib al-Baghḍādí, Tārīkh Baghdad, 14 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), 1:73, repeated by Zakariyya al-Qazwīnī, Kitāb Athār al-Bilād wa-Akhbār al-Thāb, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1848), 310. See Lassner, Topography, 53, for his translation of this passage.

67. The memory of the Baghdad dome with its horseman on top may have been preserved in the design of an arbiter for a drinking session illustrated in...
Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Jazarī, Kitāb fī Ma‘rifat al-Hiyal al-Handasiyya, trans. Donald Hill, The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices (Dordrecht, Holland, 1974), 99, fig. 82, and 219, pl. 13. Al-Jazari composed his work and illustrated it for Nasir al-Din Mahmud, the Artuqid ruler of Amid (Diyarbakır) (1200–22), around 1204. Hill’s figure 82 belongs to a manuscript dated to 1486. His plate 13 belongs to a manuscript dated to 1354.

68. Maqrizi, Khita‘f, 1:388.

69. With the completion of Qalawun’s funerary qubba in Bayn al-Qasrayn, also known as the Qubba al-Mansuriyya, in 1284 the use of the same name for his throne hall at the citadel would have caused some confusion.

70. Two additional designations of the word qubba in Mamluk Cairo, though in the Burji period, which would strengthen the argument that the term has definitely migrated to the funerary domain, were noted by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “The Qubba, an Aristocratic Type of Zāwiya,” Annales Islamologiques 19 (1983): 1–7.
Fig. 1. Plan of the Citadel. After the *Description de l'Egypte.*
Fig. 2a. Plan of the Great Iwan.
After the Description de l'Egypte.

Fig. 2b. Plan of the Great Iwan. After L. Cassas.

Fig. 3. Façade of the Great Iwan. After the Description de l'Egypte.
Fig. 4. Perspective of the Great Iwan. After the Description d’Egypte.

Fig. 5. View of the Great Iwan. From Robert Hay, Illustrations of Cairo (London, 1840).

Fig. 6. Plan of the Mashhad al-Juyushi. After Creswell.
Fig. 7. Plan of a Fustat house. After Mihriz.

Fig. 8. Plan of the hall of al-Salih. After Creswell.

Fig. 9. Plan of Qalawun’s madrasa. After Creswell.

Fig. 10. Plan of al-Mundhir Basilica. After Sauvaget.
THIRTEENTH-CENTURY RUM SELJUQ PALACES AND PALACE IMAGERY

By SCOTT REDFORD

At the center of any discussion of Rum Seljuq palace architecture lie the Persianate aspirations of the dynasty. The suburban Persian palace, an open park studded with garden enclosures and populated by tents and multistory pavilions, is well known from the later Timurid and Safavid examples in Iran. It also remained an influence on Mughal and Ottoman palace architecture. From the medieval Iranian world, however, a different kind of palace, the large, courtyard-centered complex such as those at Lashkari Bazar and Ghazni, has been recovered.

Evidence for pavilions in medieval Iran reaches us indirectly through architectural elements: carved marble or limestone slabs. The short front ends of these slabs depict two-story kiosk-like structures accessed by a set of stairs from the rear (fig. 1). In medieval Anatolia, the Seljuqs of Rum were the Muslim standard bearers of the suburban palace park, with the pavilion or kiosk as its major architectural expression. Here I would like to address this palace type, the imagery associated with it, and its transformation in thirteenth-century Anatolia.

In the northern Jazira, which lies between Iran and Anatolia, still another palace type is known from Diyarbakir and Mosul and from an incised representation on a thirteenth-century sgraffiato bowl. This courtyard-centered building, used only for walled citadels, is seemingly less mimical to urban settings than the free-standing pavilion. Again, lack of evidence from Iran proper makes it difficult to prove a Persian origin for this palace type, which is also found in other citadel palaces in the Levant. The decor on the palace of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' in Mosul and the fragment of a twelfth- or thirteenth-century luster tile from Iran with similar decoration point to an Iranian Seljuq source, however. Despite its compact massing and traditional courtyard plan, this palace did not have an urban presence, huddling as it did behind citadel walls. It is only by conjoining the pavilion with another urban architectural form—the defensive wall with towers—that a royal presence was expressed architecturally.

The early prestige of the Persian pavilion type can be gauged, not from surviving Iranian examples, but by its imitation in Byzantium. In the mid-twelfth century, Emperor John Comnenus had built a palace called Mouchroutas (from the Arabic makhrij, conical) next to the imperial audience hall in Constantinople. From a textual description, we learn that it was a pavilion surmounted by a muqarnas dome and decorated with figural cruciform tiles. Among the figures depicted was the emperor himself, seated on the floor in the manner of a Seljuq monarch. The Byzantines also built suburban walled hunting preserves, in which they erected tents and large, impressive structures that served as a residence for the emperor. If any of the buildings found in these parks was of the pavilion type, it is not evident from contemporary descriptions of one such imperial paradisos, the Philopation, located outside the land walls of Constantinople. The Philopation’s setting, function, and proximity to the citadel of the Blachernai Palace compound, however, are strikingly similar to features of Rum Seljuq palace parks from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The presence of suburban royal walled gardens outside the Rum Seljuq capital is attested by Ansbertus, chronicler of the Third Crusade. He relates that, while attacking Konya in 1190, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and his armies camped in the “hortum et viridarium region” of the Rum Seljuqs, a phrase that differentiates the open parkland beloved of mounted Seljuq hunters from the more verdant garden enclosure. Again, this distinction is better known from later, especially Timurid, sources. These opposite ends of the Persianate world would be conjoined when Tamerlane planted his ofaq in a garden outside Konya in 1402.

Two of these Seljuq royal domains were located outside Konya, one at Meram, the other at Filobad. Suburban palaces were not built solely as retreats from the city. Rather, their military function, mentioned in connection with the siege of Konya, was integral to their placement. The Seljuq army, the main source of support for the sultan, would use the plains outside Konya near
these palaces as a campground and point of assembly. Under Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad (r. 1219–37), whose reign marked the height of Rum Seljuq power, similar royal preserves were also built near Kayseri and Alanya, and at a new site called Kubadabad, located on the shores of Lake Beyşehir, southwest of Konya.

Some four miles outside of Kayseri, the principal city of the eastern part of his realm, Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad constructed the complex he named Kubadiye in 1224–26 (fig. 2). Here, conforming to the siting criteria favored by the Rum Seljuq dynasty, namely abundant water, verdure, and a view across to the mountains, three pavilions were situated along the edge of a small lake. Remains of a pier on a promontory extending into the lake testify to its use for boating excursions. Pavilion remains consisted of barrel- and groin-vaulted substructures constructed of roughly coursed or rubble stone masonry. Excavations revealed tile fragments that once clad them. Here, as elsewhere, tents supplemented the limited shelter afforded by these modest structures.

Kubadiye also conforms to the military aspect of these settings. Here, the sultan would encamp in the spring, while his armies assembled for campaigns to the south and east. Like Konya, the palace of Kubadiye was located near a plain, Meshhedie, where the Seljuq armies encamped. It is also here that Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad died, perhaps of poison, while preparing to set out on a campaign against the Ayyubids.

On the coastal plain outside Alanya, pavilions, several of them in garden enclosures, were also built following Alaeddin Keykubad’s acquisition of that town in 1221. They share the same siting criteria as Kubadiye. The two-story Güleşen kiosk at Çapaklı is the best preserved (figs. 3–4). It is located next to a stream and still has the pipes that once brought water to a pool in a second-story room. This upper room looks down on the stream and across the green of the plain toward the sea, but it is separated from its surroundings by an enclosure wall. The Güleşen kiosk was built of rubble masonry, with both lower and upper stories barrel-vaulted. This masonry was covered with painted plaster on the outside, and painted plaster and tiles on the inside.

As in Konya and Kayseri, there was also a royal residence in the citadel at Alanya that corresponded to these suburban pleasure palaces. The citadel palace at Alanya consisted of a series of courts covered with frescoed patterns leading to towers in the southeastern corner of the citadel (fig. 5). These towers, themselves decorated on the interior with tiles and frescoes, seem occasionally to have been used as a residence and/or audience hall by the sultan.

Other structures grouped around the periphery of the citadel also bear painted fresco designs similar to those seen in the courts. One tower, the so-called Adam Atacagı, is located on the northwest of the citadel, and provides the most spectacular sea view of the entire citadel. The surviving story of this tower is built of brick, like other non-defensive parts of the Seljuq citadel (parts of the “palace,” the cisterns, and the bathhouse just outside), and unlike the remaining towers, which are all constructed of rubble masonry. This, together with the presence of water piping leading to the tower, suggests it was actually a pavilion. Perched on the edge of a sheer drop to the sea eight hundred feet below, it possessed the requisite spectacular view of the mountain and water beloved of the Seljuqs (fig. 6).

Late in his reign, Alaeddin Keykubad built a new summer palace, which he named Kubadabad, on the shores of Lake Beyşehir. He assigned the responsibility for its construction to the amir Sadeddin Köpek, his overseer of the hunt and of building (anâr u-shihâr va mi’nâr), but the sultan sited and drew the buildings of the palace himself (fig. 7). This palace, too, had buildings set near the water’s edge with views across the water toward the mountains and an island that served as a destination for boating excursions. The importance of views to the conceptualization of this type of palace is underscored by the passage cited above, which refers to palace buildings (qâṣā), but also to manzarâhâ, places of viewing or belvederes.

Kubadabad is unique in being the only Rum Seljuk palace remote from a fortified town, seemingly devoid of the military component identified with the suburban palaces of Konya and Kayseri. However, Professor Rüçhan Ank’s excavations have uncovered remains of extensive fortifications on the nearby Kız Kalesi island in Lake Beyşehir, restoring a defensive military component to the site.

Finally, the last and perhaps best known of the Rum Seljuq palaces was the one at the Konya citadel, known today as the Alaeddin Köşkü (fig. 8). Here, one story of a large pavilion still remains. Originally two stories high, with balconies facing out in three directions over the town, the
pavilion stands halfway down the citadel mound, built atop the citadel wall that predates Alaeddin’s walls of 1220–21. First built by Sultan Kılıç Arslan in the late twelfth century and decorated with minai tiles, painted fresco patterns, marble lions, and a tile inscription around the balcony windows, it was refurbished by Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad with fresco, tile, and stucco ornament reflecting the style of his other palaces. 16

Thus composed, these palaces constituted a cycle of royal dwelling places: Alanya was the Rum Seljuq winter residence, Konya the site of the official palace, Kubadabad a palace used during the summer months, and Kubadiye a camp site to prepare for spring campaigning. In addition to these, other royal resting palaces abounded: caravansarays provided with luxurious quarters and possibly a palace at Aqsaray, where tall-tale tiles have been found reused in a later building. 17

Kubadabad represents a change in the history of Rum Seljuq palaces, an indication of the palace edging toward the mainstream of Rum Seljuq public architecture. The sharp delineation between a private, architecturally ephemeral environment with an abundance of figural decoration, and the mainly aniconic, massive stone public architecture of Alaeddin Keykubad’s mosques and caravansarays began to dissolve with the abandonment of the pavilion as the central architectural expression of palace architecture. At Kubadabad, the two-unit caravansary furnishes the model for the large palace. 18 The tile decoration of this palace and Kubadabad in general, despite a plethora of images and Persian poetry relating to traditional Persianate themes of hunting, drinking, and music-playing, also points to an integration with a more public expression of monarchy. Two images in particular, the stucco relief of the mounted hunter-king (fig. 9) and a tile representing a double-headed eagle inscribed “al-sultan” on its body (fig. 10) link Kubadabad, the latest of Alaeddin’s palaces, to other monuments he had built more than a decade earlier. 19

If the form of the larger palace at Kubadabad recalls a caravansaray, then the image of the hunter, the double-headed eagle, and the al-sultan inscription all lead us to the city walls built by Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad in Konya in 1220–21. As with the building of Kubadabad, Ibn Bibi informs us that the sultan was directly involved in the planning and construction of these walls. 20 The angel, or winged victory, hovering above the hunting monarch in the stucco relief from Kubadabad recalls the winged figures found on the sides of the Larende Gate in Konya (fig. 11). It reminds us that the gates into the city marked not only the procession into Konya and its citadel, site of the main official palace and dynastic tombs, but that gates were also the locus of the practice of welcoming a visitor before the city walls and conducting him with ceremony into town. The Rum Seljuqs also staged elaborate royal ceremonies recalling the Roman ceremonies of adventus and largētia. 21

Royal imagery was not lacking on the city walls of Konya, and included the double-headed eagle (fig. 12) and inscriptions of al-sultan or al-sultānī (figs. 13–14), a signaling of sultanic domain. The building of certain towers on the walls of Konya and other cities was delegated to the leading amirs of the state, and they were allowed to insert into them inscriptions recording their sponsorship of stretches of certain walls or towers. But the emblematic use of al-sultan or al-sultānī, also known from the city walls of Alanya (fig. 15), stamps the general enterprise as a royal one. We can plausibly extend the use of this monogram to all other expressions of sultanic authority. Chancellery documents of the Rum Seljuqs began with the same heading (fig. 16), as did inscriptions on certain caravansarays. 22 It is impossible grammatically to link the use of al-sultan or al-sultānī with the text following: the word was meant to be self-contained—a tughrā-like expression of royal dominion. In accounts of victorious Seljuq sieges, the beginning of the end is often signaled by the planting of the sultan’s sancak or banner on the city wall. Unfortunately no Seljuq banners have survived, but it is difficult to imagine that they did not at least begin with this word. 23

On the city walls of Konya, original Seljuq reliefs like the winged figures were combined with mainly Roman spolia, including figural sculpture, and building inscriptions. Conceptually unifying these elements were quotations from the Shāhnāma and other sources cut in stone and placed on the walls. 24 From this evidence, Ibn Bibi’s flights of poetry and the very names of these sultans, we are led to believe that the Shāhnāma and medieval Persian mirror-for-princes literature provided these Anatolian monarchs with their self-image. No other city walls match those of Konya for their literary and iconographic complexity. Others, however, provide us with more evidence for a radically functional interpretation of the Rum Seljuq royal demesne.
The reign of Alaeddin Keykubad marks the beginning of the dissolution of distinctions between private palatial and public domains. Images on the walls of Kubadabad echo those used on the walls of Konya, providing a recognizable iconography associated with the monarch, whether in his palace or on horseback entering the capital. Different but also significant evidence for palatial imagery spreading into the public realm is found in two bathhouses. The one in Kayseri built by Alaeddin’s wife Huand Hatun as part of her building complex there has figural tiles of the Kubadabad type adorning its walls.\(^25\) Alara castle, conquered by Sultan Alaeddin soon after neighboring Alanya, also had built in its citadel a bathhouse with tiled walls and painted astrological imagery in the dome.\(^26\) It is impossible to imagine either bathhouse doubling as an audience hall in the manner of Khirbat al-Mafjar. Still, this decoration can be seen as an extension of the private figurative imagery of the Persian palace pavilion into other architectural settings where the sultan presented himself on a regular basis. Nevertheless, this extension seems to be confined to interior settings during Alaeddin’s reign.

Following the Seljuq defeat by the Mongols in 1243, the diminished territory and resources of the Rum Seljuq state were reflected in palace architecture. The Seljuq sultans, now little more than Mongol vassals, confined themselves largely to the southern littoral. It is impossible to date Seljuq decoration found on the south coast to either the 1230s or 1240s, but its preponderance must in some measure reflect the increased time the Seljuq sultans spent there.

Under Sultan Alaeddin, a series of way stations had been established along the south coast linking Alanya, Antalya, and the two major routes north across the Taurus mountains.\(^27\) Some of these were caravansaries like Alara Han, built in 1231 near the base of Alara castle and next to a bridge across the Alara Çayı; others were adaptations of existing ruins.\(^28\) The best known of these was a second-century Roman theater at Aspendos. Here the interior of the staircase building on the south of the scene building was decorated with figural tiles of the same type as those found at Kubadabad, suggesting that it was Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad who undertook the remodeling.\(^29\) In addition to the decoration of the staircase building, an entrance portal and a large buttress-like structure were added to the outside of the scene building. A window in the scene building gave access to the top of the buttress next to the staircase building; in essence the buttress functioned as a belvedere looking out over the surrounding countryside, with a view of trees, mountains, and water.

In 1332 the celebrated Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta visited Alanya and found the lord there resident outside the city.\(^30\) Around the villages of Oba, Çıplaklı, and Gıkilli remains of several fourteenth-century buildings including pavilions and other structures can still be found.\(^31\) These remains are difficult to differentiate from Seljuq ones. It is only by comparing dated instances of decoration that we can tell these later from earlier examples.

Outside Alanya’s Kale Kapısı (figs. 17–18), the main gate to the upper castle, inside its gatehouse, and on the exterior of both staircase buildings of the theater of Aspendos (figs. 19–20), Seljuq artisans applied large fields of red-and-white checkerboard or zigzag patterns. The checkerboard pattern is found on the Konya citadel walls, the Gülefeşen pavilion outside Alanya (fig. 21), and on the walls of the Alanya citadel. The zigzags appear on the walls of the Alanya citadel palace, at the back of Alara Han, at Gülefeşen, the nearby Haci Baba kiosk at Gıkilli, a kiosk at Gazipaşa east of Alanya, and in tiles from both Kubadabad and Alanya citadel (fig. 22). This expansion of palace decoration to city gates and the outside of caravansaray and palace, where entrance and welcoming ceremonies took place, continues the previous trend of replicated royal settings, but here the palace imagery is simplified and applied on a grander scale to exterior settings.\(^32\)

Pertinent, perhaps, to the ceremonies of the Seljuqs of Rum are the miniatures of the romance of *Varqa and Gulshah*.\(^33\) In its miniatures, checkerboard patterns are frequently seen, zigzag patterns less often. Zigzags are found on clothing, and checkerboard patterning is always found on shields. As a consequence, these two patterns are used only in scenes of war and combat, and are associated exclusively with mounted figures (fig. 23a–b).\(^34\) The association of these simple, bold patterns with mounted cavalrymen and scenes of combat in this manuscript and the same patterns in prominent positions on the walls of citadels, kiosks, and city gates argue for a heraldic meaning to the checkerboard and the zigzag.\(^35\)

In the late 1230s and 1240s, then, a single
palace type with very specific topographic and scenographic conventions developed into a whole range of buildings that can be called palatial using two criteria: first, decoration consistent with known palace kiosks, and, second, the recorded presence of the sultan in, or his passage through, them. A limited repertory of unsophisticated geometric ornament in painted plaster was used to decorate them outside or for large interior wall expanses; smaller quarters were decorated with tile.

Overlaps between media occur in the zigzag tiles from Alanya citadel and a painted plaster imitation of an ablaq interlace knot above the entrance to the stage tower at Aspendos (fig. 24). In addition, a weathered painted figure by the entrance to Alara castle can be interpreted as a stand-in for the spolia statues or other reliefs that stood at city gates in towns like Konya. The pavilion of Güleşen can be dated to the reign of Alaeddin Keykubad because of the similarity of its ornament to that of the Alanya castle and citadel. If the zigzags on the theater at Aspendos also date to the same reign, the several repainting visible mean that the structure continued to be inhabited in the following decade. Likewise, the rubble crenellations at Alara Han, the only part of the building with zigzag fresco decoration, seem to be of later date than the ashlar construction of the walls of the building.

The explosion and simplification of decorative imagery in this period can, in my opinion, be associated with Rum Seljuq decline. Even if the zigzag and checkerboard imagery had been found earlier, it had supplemented more technically and thematically complex imagery using tiles, stucco, and other media. The image remains that of a Seljuq monarch on the fringes both of his realm and of a high cultural and architectural tradition, now inhabiting a ruined theater, now a castle, now the pavilions of his glorious predecessors. The heterogeneous architectural settings were integrated through the use of these patterns.

To the east of Alanya and Güleşen along the coast are two other pavilions, one at Sedre, the other at Gazipaşa. Both are located near rivers, at distances and locations similar to the stations along the way from Alanya to Antalya. The similarity of its red zigzag fresco decoration to that of Alanya and elsewhere dates the pavilion at Gazipaşa (fig. 25) to the 1230s or 1240s. If we are to take these as way stations along the coastal road, then they should be roughly contemporary; they are an expansion of the Seljuq royal domain to the east, where no trade routes and consequently no caravansarays lay.

The tendency for rulers to build palaces only for themselves can be traced back to the very beginning of Islamic civilization. The personal onomastic identification of Alaeddin Keykubad with his three palace foundations at Alanya ('Ala'īya), Kubadabab, and Kubadiye emphasizes the ephemerality and expendability of the form as well as the materials of the palace. Names of later Anatolian palaces such as Felekabad at Eğirdir reinforce this commonplace.

It is this sense of the replicability and replaceability of power so central to the medieval conceptualization of temporal authority that, together with the duties and exigencies of rule, encouraged the replication of royal palace complexes around the Rum Seljuq state. From the replication of palaces it is a short step to the abstraction of a simplified set of decorative elements for each and every royal setting. This trend began under Sultan Alaeddin, as Rum Seljuq architecture began to seek a style of its own, and accelerated in the years following 1243.

This period of radical reductionism and functionalism seems to have had only an indirect effect on later Anatolian palace architecture. Karamanoglu and other Beylik-era rulers continued to build individual suburban or citadel palaces and named them after themselves. The major architectural development is a squat, free-standing one-story structure with access to the roof—a hybrid building using the building materials, massing, and location of a caravansaray, and with some of the plan and siting criteria of a pavilion set in a royal preserve. The pavilion at Gazipaşa is one example, but the best known is the Hızır İlyas Kiosk at Erkilet near Kayseri, which dates to the reign of Alaeddin's successor, Sultan Keykhusraw II. It is a byproduct of this period of experimentation, but carries with it little of the poetry of the Persianate pavilion, so tied to literary and scenographic topoi.
Notes

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1. Examples of the stone slabs, usually referred to as balustrades, mentioned above are found in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.73.5.5); the Metropolitan Museum of Art (32.15.1 and 32.15.2) (Joseph Upton, Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art [Sept. 1932], 210); the Art Institute of Chicago (1947.521); the Cleveland Museum of Art (38.15) (see Handbook of the Cleveland Museum of Art [Cleveland, 1991], 47); the Louvre (G. Salles and M. J. Ballet, Les Collections de l’Orient musulman [Paris, 1928], pl. 3); and the David Collection in Copenhagen (Kjeld von Forsach, Islamic Art: The David Collection [Copenhagen, 1990], 166). All save the relief in Copenhagen have been ascribed to Hamadan, Iran, and dated to the early fourteenth century based on similarities to the Metropolitan Museum slabs, which are dated 1304 and are said to have been found in Hamadan. The relief in Copenhagen is ascribed to the late twelfth century. A date earlier than the early fourteenth century is surely reasonable for others of this group, whose side panel reliefs bear striking similarities to thirteenth-century Anatolian Seljuk reliefs. The architectural derivation of the "newel post" of the balustrade is evident from the stairs, the attached colonnettes, and the brick pattern.

Emel Esin finds a Turkish filiation for the pavilion form starting in Central Asia; see, for example, her "An Eighteenth-Century 'Yali' Viewed in the Line of Development of Related Forms in Turkish Architecture," Atti del Secondo Congresso internazionale di arte turca, 2 vols. (Naples, 1965), 2:90-96. As is obvious in this article, given the general cultural milieu of the Rum Seljuk dynasty, I find a Persian filiation more convincing.


3. An unpublished tile fragment in the Art Institute of Chicago (1939.368) preserves the same schema that Sarre and Herzfeld found preserved in Mosul, and suggests a setting for the plaster Seljuk sculptures. One paradigm of the Islamic palace in the twelfth century posits three points concurrent with the proliferation of petty states at that time: reduced means, increased emphasis on military concerns, and a harking back to the splendor of the Abbasids: "les petits souverains locaux de l'époque post-saljoukide s'étaient contentés d'occuper des résidences de superficie plus restreinte, amenagées certes en tenant compte de leur prestige princier, mais dans les limites assignées à ce déploiement par des imperatifs de sécurité devenus de plus en plus contraignants. Ce fut alors le temps du palais-forteresse" (Dominique Sourdel and Janine Sourdel-Thomine, La civilisation de l'Islam classique [Paris, 1976], 362). If the palace form itself was not Iranian, perhaps its placement in the citadels built at that time and occasionally its decoration were of Persian origin.


6. Ansberts, Historia de Expeditione Friderici Imperatoris (Prague, 1827), 95-96.

7. Mes'ud Koman, Siikari' nin Karamanoğlulan Tarihi (Konya, 1946), 184.

8. Herbert Duda, ed. and trans., Die Selischukengeschichte des Ibn Bibi (Copenhagen, 1959), 325, for
Filobad and its use. The verdant area of Meram is rumored locally to have produced tiles indicative of the presence of a Seljuk palace there; I have not been able to locate published confirmation of this. A site, although the site fits all of the topographic desiderata for Seljuk palace enclosures.


10. Duda, Die Sellschuckengeschichte, 198.


12. The first mention of the palace at Konya comes with its sack by the armies of the Third Crusade. All that is known of it was that it contained gold, silver, jewels, and purple cloth (see Kenneth Setton, A History of the Crusades [London, 1962], 2:113), the last from the dowry of Saladin’s niece. At Kayseri, a palace is mentioned early in the reign of Alaeddin Keykubad. From the account of a misfired palace copped several features can be extracted: the palace had a defensible tower, was surrounded by a garden, and had many rooms; see Duda, Sellschuckengeschichte, 118-119. This rhymes reasonably well with a reconstruction of the Kayseri citadel published by a Turkish architect (Mahmut Akok, “Kayseri Sur Duvarı,” Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi [1976]: 27), despite the fact that this reconstruction is of the Byzantine citadel. It is not clear what information was relied on for this reconstruction. For the palace in the Alanya citadel, currently under excavation by a team under the direction of Professor Öluğ Arık of Ankara University, see M. Öluğ Arık, “Alanya Kalesi 1985 Yılı Kazi Çalışmaları,” VIII Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı (Ankara, 1986); “Alanya Kalesi 1986 Yılı Kazi Çalışmaları,” IX Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı (Ankara, 1987); “Alanya Kalesi, 1987 Yılı Kazi Çalışmaları,” X Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı (Ankara, 1988); and “Alanya İçkalesi’nde 1988 Yılında Yapılan Kazi Çalışmaları,” Höyük I (1988).


15. A Byzantine source reports that the islands in this lake had been fortified since ancient times, so it is possible that the presence of a fortified redoubt in the lake was—along with the scenery, plentiful water, good hunting, and a location close to a major Seljuk highway—one of the original attractions of the site to the sultan; see Jean Kinnamos, Chronique, trans. J. Rosenblum (Paris, 1972), 23.

16. The surviving lion visible in the 1907 photograph reproduced here (fig. 8) was no doubt paired with another in the other niche at the front of the kiosk, recalling the balustrade fronts from Iran discussed (above, n. 1), with their paired lions. See Friedrich Sarre, Reise in Kleinasien (Berlin, 1896), 46, for the tile inscription dating the building to the reign of Sultan Khş Arslan, grandson of Alaeddin Keykubad. Sarre’s monograph on the kiosk at Konya (ed. and trans. Şahabeddin Uzlu, Konya Kşkh (Ankara, 1967)) is the single best source of information on this building. For later Turkish excavations around the base of the pavilion, see Mahmut Akok, “Konya’dan Alaydin Kşkş Selçuk Saray ve Kşkleri,” Türk Etnografla Dergisi (1968), which reconstructs a grand palace out of minimal archaeological evidence. For more, but still inadequate, information concerning Seljuk occupation levels on the citadel at Konya, see Mahmut Akok, “Konya Şehr-i İzindeki Alaeddin Tepesinde Türk Tarih Kurumu Adına Yapılan Arkeoloji Kazlarını Mimar Büroltu,” Belteten 39 (1975). It is unclear if other pavilion towers actually existed. A representation of Konya from the mid sixteenth century shows two towers at the citadel, and an early-fourteent-century account mentions twelve pavilions atop the twelve gates of the citadel; see H. G. Yurdanyin, ed. and trans., Maqâṣid-i Sefere-i İrâkêyn (Ankara, 1976), pl. 17a. For Qazvini’s reference to the twelve pavilions in Konya in
Nuzhat al-Qulūb, see Ibrahim Hakki Konyalı, Abide-leri ve Kitabeleri ile Karaman Tarhı (Istanbul, 1967), 23. It is my opinion that the galleried structure depicted as the main building of the citadel and the one described as a palace by Charles Texier in the nineteenth century (Description de l’Asie Mineure [Paris, 1862], 664) are both none other than the Alaeddin mosque.


18. Erdmann, "Seraybauten," 94, argues for a unity of all Rum Seljuk palace structures, maintaining that the architectural unit of the palace is a free-standing structure which sometimes may have a courtyard added to it. The larger palace at Kubadabad, with a similar functional split between the first and second unit and open and closed areas like a caravansaray, to my mind marks a natural incorporation into palace architecture of features that the sultan would have been familiar with from staying at many caravansarays.


22. Osman Turan, Selçuklular Hakkında Resmi Vesikalara (Ankara, 1958), 144, for a letter from Sultan Izzeddin Keykavus to King Hugh of Cyprus from September 1216. The letter is in Greek except for the word "sūfān" written in Arabic script twice at the top of the page. See also Osman Turan, "Geladeddin Karatay, Vakıfları ve Vakfıyeleri," Belleten 47 (1948), pl. XI.1, XXII.23, and XXXII.38, for the waqfiyyas of the Karatay caravansaray, its continuation (zayl), and the mosque and zawiya, all commencing with "sūfān." For caravansaray building inscriptions beginning with "al-sultān," see e.g., Kurt Erdmann, Das anatolische Karavansayray des 13. Jahrhunderts, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1961), I:53, 71, and 106.

23. E.g., Duda, Seltschukengeschichte, 45, for the planting of the sancak on the walls of Antalya.


28. Planhol, De la plaine pamphylienne, 89, is of the opinion that the theater or other parts of the ruined city of Perge were also used as a way station. His argument is based not on surviving Seljuk remains, as at Aspendos, but on topographic grounds. He argues that the distance between Aspendos and Antalya demands another secure halting place and that other stations like Aspendos, Manavgat, and Alara were all near rivers and bridges. These siting criteria will be taken up below. For Alara Han, see Ayşıl Tükel, "Documentation and Comparative Study of Alara Han," Belleten 33 (1969).

197–99. Turquoise tile fragments are still visible in one of the statue niches of the scene building itself.


31. For these structures, see Lloyd and Rice, *Alanya*, 41–43, and Karamağaralı, "Güleşen Kasrî," 143.

32. Öluğ Arık, "Alanya Kalesi" (1988), 422–23, found remains of zigzag frescoed patterns on the walls of tower XIII in the Alanya citadel palace. In addition to the usual red and white here, his team uncovered other painted fresco fragments in yellow and bluish green, giving a clue to erstwhile richer color combinations in exterior fresco decoration as well.


34. Ateş, "Un vieux poème," fig. 5, for a zigzag and figs. 6, 12, 13, 22, and 39; the corresponding figure numbers in Melkian are 9, 11, 23, 25, 36, and 58. Melkian’s figures 2 and 10 also have checkerboard shield backgrounds.

35. Whether coincidentally or not, both the zigzag and the checkerboard are common heraldic devices in western Europe. For the checkerboard as device in Manluk times, see L. A. Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry* (Oxford, 1933), no. 28, pl. X, no. 12; see also William Leaf and Sally Purcell, *Heraldic Symbols, Islamic Insignia, and Western Heraldry* (London, 1986), 61. Evidence for the popularity of these two patterns in thirteenth-century Syria (both Crusader and Muslim) comes from glass and ceramic finds. Arthur Lane, "The Early Sgraffito Ware of the Near East," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society* 15 (1937–38), pl. 17a, reproduces a photograph of an underglaze painted bowl (still?) in Berlin showing a mounted warrior with Turkic features carrying a triangular shield (more typical of Crusader shields) covered with zigzags. The interior of a long-stemmed gilded and enameled glass chalice found in Prague and ascribed to late thirteenth-century Murano represents three triangular shields with full-field checkerboard patterns. Despite its Venetian origin, this piece is clearly an imitation of Syrian prototypes in shape, decorative technique, and subject matter; see Thilo Ulbert, *Resafa III. Der kruzafahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiopolis* (Mainz, 1990), 59, pl. 60. Finally, thirteenth-century Syrian ceramics in general, alongside a wealth of other, more sophisticated vegetal and geometric decoration, give prominence to simple zigzag and checkerboard patterns; see Vagn Poulsen, "Les poteries," in P. J. Riis and V. Poulsen, *Hama. fouilles et recherches 1931–1938* (Copenhagen, 1957), vol. 4, pt. 2, nos. 573–77, pp. 178–79, no. 691, p. 205, and no. 716, p. 211, for zigzags and nos. 605–6, p. 185, no. 615, p. 188, and no. 725, p. 213, for checkerboard patterns.


37. Tükel, "Alara Han," 478, notes the change in construction material and plastering, but does not note the zigzag ornament, nor propose a date for the crenellations different from the rest of the building. Interestingly, it is also the crenellations on the inside of the Alanya citadel (on the east near the present entrance) that have frescoed zigzag decoration.


39. For the borders of the Seljuq state in this region, see C. Şehabeddin Tekindag, "Alaüeddin Keykubad ve Halefeleri Zamanında Selçuklu-Küçük Ermenistan Hududları," *Tarih Dergisi* 1 (1949): 30. It should be noted that both of the kiosks mentioned above were near castles.

Fig. 1. Limestone balustrade. Iran, 12th (?) century.
Photo: courtesy Cleveland Museum of Art.

Fig. 2. Kubadiye. Pavilion foundation in the foreground.
Fig. 3. Gülefsen pavilion, near Alanya. General view.

Fig. 4. Gülefsen. North and south elevations of the pavilion. From Karamgaralı in Höyük 1 (1988).
Fig. 5. Alanya. Plan of the citadel. From O. Arik, *VIII Kazi Sonuçları Toplantısı* (1986).

Fig. 6. Alanya. View of the citadel walls from the sea. The base of the tower pavilion called Adam Atacagi is at top left.

Fig. 7. Kubadabad. Plan of the main area showing the large and small palaces.
Fig. 8. Alaeddin Kiosk, Konya. View taken in the early 20th century. From J. Löytved, *Inschriften der seldschukischen Bauten*.

Fig. 9. Kubadabad. Stucco relief of mounted hunter from the large palace.

Fig. 10. Kubadabad. Tile of double-headed eagle with *al-sulbân* inscription from the large palace.

Fig. 11. Larende Gate, Konya. Engraving from Charles Texier, *Description de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris, 1862).
Fig. 13. Konya. Alaüd-din inscription from the walls. Now in the İnce Minareli Medrese Museum, Konya.

Fig. 14. Konya. Double-headed eagle from the walls. Now in the İnce Minareli Medrese Museum, Konya.

Fig. 15. Alanya. Alaüd-din inscription from the walls. Now in the Alanya Museum.
Fig. 16. First page from the continuation (ṣiy) of the waqfīya of the caravansaray of Oclal al-Din Karatay.

Fig. 17. Kale Kapisi, Alanya. General view showing checkerboard decoration to the right and left of the gate.

Fig. 18. Kale Kapisi, Alanya. General view showing fresco decoration to the right of the gate.
Fig. 19. Theater of Aspendos. Elevations of the south staircase building with reconstruction of the zigzag decoration. Illustration by J. A. Perlmutter.
Fig. 21. Gatejeh: Detail of the west façade.

Fig. 20. Theater of Aq Qasim: View of the north face of the south staircase building.

Fig. 22. Zigzag tiles from Kuhadabad.
Fig. 23a-b. Varqa and Gulshah, fols. 12/156 and 10/122, showing zigzag and checkerboard. Photos: courtesy Walter Denny.

Fig. 24. Theater of Aspendos. North face of south staircase building. Black-and-white fresco ornament imitating a marble interlace ablaq design.

Fig. 25. Gazipaşa. Pavilion.
PART 4

PALACES OF THE MONGOLS
AND THEIR SUCCESSORS
(THIRTEENTH–EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES)
THE ILKHANID PALACE

By SHEILA S. BLAIR

No Ilkhanid palace stands, but part of one has been uncovered at Takht-i Sulayman, southeast of Lake Urmia in northwestern Iran. German excavations there in the early 1960s uncovered the ruins of a large and elaborately decorated hunting lodge built by the Ilkhanid Abaqa (r. 1265-82) directly on the foundations of the Sasanian sanctuary of Shiz, the site where Sasanian emperors were crowned. The palace at Takht-i Sulayman is remarkable for the quality and abundance of the architectural decor, including carved marble, luster and lajvardina tiles, and carved and molded stucco. Iranian excavations at Sultaniyah, Uljaytu's new capital 120 kilometers northwest of Qazvin on the road to Tabriz, were begun in the 1970s, but only preliminary reports have been published.

Juxtaposed to the rather paltry remains is a plethora of contemporary documentation in texts, both written and pictorial. One source is contemporary history. The Ilkhanid period is generally regarded as the best for Persian historical writing, and although one may quibble about quality, there is no such argument about quantity. Undoubtedly the senior historian of the times, and one of the most remarkable historians of all time, was Rashid al-Din (d. 1318). Born ca. 1247 at Hamadan, he was trained as a physician and converted from Judaism to Islam at the age of thirty. From 1298 until the end of Uljaytu's reign in 1316, he was the principal statesman of Mongol Persia, but was executed soon thereafter. Rashid al-Din wrote on a wide range of topics, from theology to history, but his magnum opus was the Jāmīʿ al-Tawārīḵh (Collection of Histories), the first known history of the world. It is unmistakably "official history," for Rashid al-Din began it at the request of Ghazan and wrote it "to preserve the memory of the extraordinary events."

Rashid al-Din collected an assortment of historians around him in the court bureaucracy. They included the scribe Abu'l-Qasim Kashani, who wrote the official biography of Uljaytu and who is the closest source for the city of Sultaniyah. Abu'l-Qasim belonged to the renowned family of luster potters from Kashan: one of his brothers

The palaces erected in Iran under the Ilkhanids, the Mongol dynasty that ruled from 1258 to 1353, continued using well-established prototypes for their form and decoration. What is new and interesting about them is the wide variety of documentation for them. The range of sources, from archaeological evidence to texts and contemporary illustrations, is useful for methodological reasons, as the various sources can be measured against one another to check the accuracy of textual variants and to verify and understand the limits of two-dimensional representation within the conventional system of Persian painting. The range of sources also enables one to move beyond the description of a single extant example, which may be an accident of survival and may or may not be typical, to the delineation of an ideal type. Following a brief review of the sources, then, I will sketch a typical Ilkhanid palace, first in terms of plan, then the materials and techniques of decoration, and finally the subjects and themes depicted, in order to show what spatial and visual means Ilkhanid rulers used to project the standard message of dynastic legitimation and imperial power.

Like many Iranian dynasties, the Ilkhanids were transhumant nomads who migrated annually between winter and summer quarters. They usually wintered in warmer climes, such as Baghdad, and summered on the grassy plains of Azerbaijan. The royal entourage formed a giant tent-city, and the tents for the royal family were particularly large and splendid. On his victorious campaign across Iran, Hulagu, for example, is said to have ascended the throne near Balkh in a tent attached by a thousand gold nails and made of gold-on-gold material. It included an elevated pavilion and a magnificent audience hall decorated with gold and silver gem-studded vases. Ghazan's summer palace at Ujan in Azerbaijan was a tent of golden tissue which took two years to make. It comprised an audience hall with several appendages and took a month to erect. Beyond mention in contemporary texts, nothing remains of these tents, and hence I concentrate here on more durable constructions of brick, stone, and wood.
followed their father as the leading potter of his generation; another brother was a Sufi shaykh at the Suhrwardiyya khanaqah at Natanz. Abu'l-Qasim's upbringing and family connections gave him an interest in artistry, but his long internally rhyming phrases are often metaphorical aside rather than factual observations. His florid style is matched by that of 'Abdallah b. Fadlallah al-Shirazi, commonly known as Wassaf ("the panegyrist") or Wassaf-i Hadrat ("the court panegyrist"). In addition to these two scribes, several other historians and geographers were active in the period. Many of these sources give occasional details about palaces, but since all the authors were employed in the state bureaucracy, they were predisposed to describe their patrons' accomplishments in glowing terms.

Contemporary Mamluk historians in Cairo also reported what their rivals in Iran were building. Many of the artistic innovations of the day, including such decorative techniques as carved stucco and glazed tile revetment, were imported from Iran to Egypt during the early fourteenth century, and these Arabic authors sometimes provide useful details about architecture, as in the descriptions of the founding of Sultaniyā given by al-Nuwayri and al-Yusufi. In contrast to the official Persian historians, Mamluk historians were more willing to credit pejorative reports and offer a balanced view. Unlike their Iranian contemporaries, however, they had not usually visited the cities they described, so what they report is hearsay.

A third type of written source about Ilkhanid life in general is the travel account, for this was a period of remarkable cultural efflorescence and artistic achievement in which cultures from Europe to the Orient were bound together in a world economy which preceded European hegemony. Such merchants as Marco Polo recorded what people made, what they traded, and what had commercial value. Religious envoys were sent by Christian leaders in Europe to secure an alliance with the Mongols against the rising threat of the Mamluks in the Mediterranean. Pope John XXII established an archbishopric at Sultaniyā in 1318, and archbishops were appointed there until 1425. The mendicant Friar Odoric of Pordenone passed through Iran en route to India and China. While these travel accounts can help reconstruct the life that went on in such cities as Tabriz, called by Marco Polo the finest emporium in the Middle East, they give few details about palaces per se, for most of the travelers did not receive official audiences.

As well as written sources, there are pictorial ones, for palaces and palatial rooms are depicted in illustrated manuscripts from the period. One must be careful, however, to distinguish categories of illustration. The paintings in manuscripts produced for the market usually show a schematized view of a generic palace rather than an accurate depiction of a specific building. More useful are the large luxury manuscripts associated with court patronage and thought to have been made for a specific patron and purpose. These are mainly illustrated copies of the Shāhnāma, the Persian national epic. As the illustrations are thought to depict historical events in contemporary guise, they can be used as documentation for the artistic practices of the Ilkhans. Although some illustrations in these large luxury manuscripts show generic palaces, others show specific details of decoration which confirm the evidence from excavations and the descriptions in texts.

The variety of sources allows us to reconstruct the typical plan of an Ilkhanid palace as a court with iwans on sides. The palace at Takht-i Sulayman, for example, is centered on a large court (125 x 150 meters), which is oriented on a north-south axis and encompasses an artificial pond. The court was surrounded by porticoes and had iwans on the four sides. Behind the north iwan was a domed room, which was built on the site of the Sasanian fire temple and probably served as the Ilkhanid audience hall. It was two-storied; a monumental stone stair led to a balcony supported on wooden columns, affording a fine view of the lake. Behind the west iwan was a transverse hall flanked by two octagonal kiosks; this section of the palace had served as the Sasanian throne room, and its lavish decoration suggests that it became the official quarters of the Ilkhanid sovereign.

Written sources confirm the use of a similar plan for other Ilkhanid palaces. Uljaytu's palace at Sultaniyā has been destroyed, but the description by the Timurid historian Hafiz-i Abru (d. 1430) says that the palace (Pers. sarzy) had a square court (sakh) paved with marble and measuring 100 x 100 [gaz]. Assuming his standard gaz of 42 cms, then the court measured 42 meters square. The court was surrounded by a huge iwan like the one at Ctesiphon and twelve smaller sarāyeha, each with a window overlooking
the court. The palace also had an audience hall (dīwān-khāna) large enough to hold two thousand people and called kīrās.\(^{17}\) Kashani's description, written a century earlier, confirms many of the details mentioned in the later text, such as the iwan rousing that at Ctesiphon and the marble paving, but is less concerned with measurements than with a metaphorical comparison to heaven.\(^{18}\)

The palaces of other important figures at the Ilkhanid court similarly comprised courts with iwans. The residence of the Juwayni family, for example, is described by Husayn b. Muhammad b. Abīl-Rida al-Salawi, the author who translated Mufaddal b. Saʿd b. al-Husayn al-Mafarrukhi’s Maḥāsin-i ʿIsfahān (The Splendors of Isfahan) from Arabic into Persian in 1329, as a lofty palace comprising four iwans (he uses the word suffā), each one like half the arch of heaven, around an arcaded court.\(^{19}\)

The Ilkhanid palace plan of a court with iwans continues a long tradition in Iran. The best-known prototypes from medieval Iran are the palaces built by the Ghaznavids in their winter and summer capitals at Lashkar Gah and Ghazna in Afghanistan. The ruins at Lashkar Gah extend more than six kilometers along the east bank of the Helmand River. The site, which had been developed in the tenth century as a garden suburb of Bust, was expanded by the Ghaznavid ruler Mahmud (r. 998–1030), who with his son Masʿūd I (r. 1031–41) built the South Palace. Two other palaces were added later. The site stands in an area of low rainfall, and although constructed of mud brick, the buildings are exceptionally well preserved and were excavated by the French in the late 1940s and early 1950s.\(^{20}\) Three main palaces were uncovered: the North Palace, a large rectangular enclosure containing three self-contained buildings, each with a central court; the compact two-story Central Palace (35 x 52 meters); and the South Palace, the largest of the three (65 x 115 meters). It has a court (38 x 43 meters) with iwans on the four sides. Beyond the north iwan lies another iwan, which overlooks the river at its bend. The palace constructed at Ghazna by Masʿūd III and dated by inscription to 506 (1112) is also a large rectangle (50 x 32 meters). A central court (40 x 24 meters) paved in marble is surrounded by 32 niches and iwans on the four sides, with an additional throne room beyond the south iwan.\(^{21}\) In plan, these Ghaznavid palaces are modeled on earlier Abbasid ones at Samarra, and it is no surprise that the Ilkhanids continued the tradition, for they were much enamored of their Ghaznavid predecessors.

Such a plan does not allow for significant progression through space, for in Iranian tradition the ruler or an emissary often went out to meet the visiting dignitary (Pers. bi istiqbāl-i ʾishān birūn āmadan). Apparently there was little elaborate ceremonial in Ilkhanid palaces, and the major events in them were feasts and enthronements, in which the ruler was surrounded by serried rows of family and courtiers. The plan suggests that the visitor entered the palace through one iwan and moved to the court; the ruler sat in audience in the throne room behind the opposite iwan. From there or a nearby space, he was accorded views of the site.

The finest and most expensive materials available were used to decorate Ilkhanid palaces. Floors were paved with marble. Plastered walls on the interior were painted or revetted with tile dadoes. Windows were fitted with metal grilles and wooden shutters. Porches were supported on carved capitals of wood or sandstone. Walls were articulated with elaborate cornices of molded and cut plaster, and ceilings were often covered with muqarnas domes. In addition, there were splendid portable furnishings, such as rugs and textiles. As with plans, these materials and techniques of decoration can be documented in a variety of contemporary sources.

Elaborate wall revetments were found during the excavations at Takht-i Sulaçman, particularly in and around the west iwan.\(^{22}\) The kiosk on the north, for example, had a 44-cm balustrade covered with star-and-cross tiles, a narrow frieze of green-glazed relief tiles measuring 24 x 44 cm, a high 1.3-meter dado of star-and-cross tiles, and another narrow frieze of 35-x-35 cm luster tiles decorated with dragons and simurghs. The wall above was covered with painted plaster. Many tiles and fragments were found in a heap near the west iwan between the south octagon and a nearby stair. They were made in such expensive techniques as luster and lajvardina, a type of enamelled and gilded ware whose name, from the Persian lājvard (lapis lazuli), refers to the deep blue glaze that characterizes many of the pieces.

Many details of this elaborate wall decoration are confirmed in texts, which mention luxury materials like gold and silver and many colors. Kashani, for example, says that the roofs at Sultanija were silvered; the doors and walls were
studded with gold, pearls, and gems; and the surfaces of the court shone with rubies, jewels, and turquoises. He uses the word mīnā, often translated as enameled, but perhaps meaning tiled.23 Many of these descriptions are hyperbolic generalizations, and better confirmation of the archaeological findings comes from contemporaneous illustrations, particularly in paintings from the great dispersed copy of the Shāhnāma. The illustration “Sindukht becomes aware of Rudaba’s actions”24 (fig. 1), for example, shows an arrangement similar to the one found at Takht-i Sulayman: a large dado of star-and-cross tiles sandwiched between narrower friezes. The upper frieze even resembles the tiles excavated at Takht-i Sulayman with the name of ʿAli.25 The painting shows a projecting cornice which can be interpreted as a frieze of cut stucco with palmettes in cartouches, and a similar cornice once surmounted the mihrab added to the congregational mosque at Isfahan in 1310 under Uljaytu.26 Several of the illustrations in the dispersed Shāhnāma manuscript show painted wall surfaces. Most of the murals, such as that shown in “The bier of Alexander,”27 have geometric designs, but one illustration, “Isfandiyar approaching Gushtasp,”28 shows a landscape scene above a narrow frieze and a high dado apparently composed of tiles.

Other paintings from the dispersed Shāhnāma, such as “Faridun mourning,”29 confirm the use of elaborately carved or sculpted capitals and window grilles. Three ball joints (diameter 13 cm) for window grilles, made of bronze inlaid with gold, silver, and a bituminous material, are inscribed with Uljaytu’s name and may have come from his buildings at Sultanīyya; they are decorated with cartouches, arabesque scrolls, and T-fret designs.30 A related but smaller piece (diameter 9 cm) bears a representation of a mounted falconer set against arabesque scrolls in the central medallion and peony scrolls outside it.31 These paintings apparently give accurate depictions, then, of contemporary settings and can be used to confirm and date other objects. The painting of “Zahhak enthroned,”32 for example, contains a rare representation of an animal carpet and is important evidence for dating the introduction of this type of object.33

Muqarnas vaults were apparently common in Ilkhanid palaces. Kashani says that the roofs of the arches and arcades at Sultanīyya were covered with muqarnas, and the lyrical poet Hafiz uses the word to describe the dome of heaven.34 Both kiosks flanking the west iwan at Takht-i Sulayman were covered with muqarnas vaults. Using the muqarnas vault in the south kiosk (fig. 2), which was composed of four tiers of 45-degree and 90-degree elements, and the fragments from the fallen vault in the north kiosk, Harb reconstructed how these muqarnas vaults were built in the period.35 Units were prefabricated in fragile plaster molds and fitted in tiers with chiseled filler elements. These tiers were then corbeled from the corners of the room. Harb was also able to reconstruct how the technology was disseminated, thanks to a 50-cm stucco plate which had been built into the wall of a local farmhouse (fig. 3). The pattern of squares, rhomboids, and triangles incised on the underside was a ground projection of one-quarter of a muqarnas vault. Harb hypothesized that with such a two-dimensional representation in hand, builders on the site could have assembled muqarnas vaults using the practical skills they already possessed.

Most of the materials and techniques used to decorate Ilkhanid palaces are found in other contemporary buildings. The tomb of the Sufi shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad (1307) at Natanz, for example, has a muqarnas vault (fig. 4) and traces of an elaborate wall revetment in luster tiles, including a high dado of cross-and-star tiles and friezes of tiles with birds, whose heads have been defaced.36 The combination of muqarnas vault and luster tiles may have been a practical one, for the skilled craftsmen who made the luster tiles may also have molded the stucco pieces for muqarnas vaults. A luster panel in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 5), for example, is inscribed in the spandrels “the work of Hasan b. ʿAli b. Ahmad Babawayh the builder (al-banāʾī).37” His name is also inscribed on the colonnettes in the tomb at Natanz. Hasan b. ʿAli the builder belonged to one of the major families of Kashan luster potters. His father, for example, made several important pieces of lusterware, including a medium-sized mihrab dated 1505, which was removed from the Imamzada Yahya at Varamin to the Hermitage in St. Petersburg.

Like the plan, many of these materials and techniques used to decorate Ilkhanid palaces were part of the palatine tradition in Iran and the surrounding area for several hundred years. Interior walls elaborately decorated with paintings and carved stucco are found in Ghaznavid palaces. The throne room in the south palace at
Lashkar Gah, for example, had a dado painted in fresco showing a procession of guards and panels; inscriptions in baked brick and geometric decoration in carved stucco surmounted the dadoes. A distinct type of small tile with molded decoration of animals, plants, and inscriptions and a monochrome lead oxide glaze was found at Ghazna. The palace of the Seljuqs of Rum at Qubadabad, built ca. 1236, was decorated with a variety of figural tiles in various techniques.

The main subjects of decoration on Ilkhanid palaces were figural representations and poetic inscriptions. The luster and layardina tiles at Takht-i Sulayman, dated between 1272 and 1276, included depictions of such animals as dragons and simurghs and such scenes from the Shāhnāma as “Bahram Gur hunting with his slave girl Azada.” From a small fragment found in a heap at the site, Melikian-Chirvani has reconstructed a frieze of large molded luster tiles with verses from the Shāhnāma in arched niches. He has identified some twenty tiles with verses from the Shāhnāma. In two cases the text was changed from the third- to the second-person singular so that the resident of the Ilkhanid palace is metaphorically compared to the kings of ancient Iran: he is the one endowed with Faridun’s glory, the second Alexander. The verses on the tiles are taken from various parts of the epic and do not present a continuous narrative. Rather, they suggest general themes so that the text would have served as an aide-memoire to evoke the glorious past and metaphorically relate the current ruler to the heroes of the past. On stylistic grounds, notably the highlighting with turquoise and cobalt blue, Melikian-Chirvani has dated the frieze to the 1280s and suggested that it was made in honor of the accession of Aqa’s successor, Ahmad (r. 1282–84). Melikian-Chirvani also identified a similar series of wall tiles in a detached painting now mounted in an album in Istanbul. The painting shows an enthroned sovereign, probably Kaykhusrāw receiving the arms of the divs he had defeated, and has been removed from a large copy of Shāhnāma. On analogy with the painting, Melikian-Chirvani suggested that the frieze from Takht-i Sulayman framed a window embrasure behind the sovereign’s throne in the audience hall.

Using epic verses as palatine wall decoration had a long tradition in Iran and related areas. The Seljuq sultan of Rum, ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I, for example, had maxims from the Shāhnāma affixed to the walls of Konya and Sivas in 1221, according to a report by Ibn Bibi. Once again the precedent can be traced directly to the Ghaznavids, for the palace of Masʿud III at Ghazna had an extraordinary inscription in floriated Kufic which ran 250 meters around the court. One part of the inscription was in mutaqārīb meter in mathnawī form; another was in mughfīṣ meter and in mathnawī or another form of composition, perhaps a qasida. The first part, in the same meter as the Shāhnāma, reviews the line of Ghaznavid rulers from Sebutegin, the founder of the dynasty, to Masʿud III, the builder of the palace. The section on the west speaks of Mahmud and Masʿud I; the patron, Masʿud III, was probably mentioned on the south side near the entrance to the throne room. The content of the text is somewhat unclear but may be a hyperbolic reference to the erection of the palace: the longest sentence extant, saying that “with clay and water, he laid a thousand priceless treasures on the summit of heaven,” may refer to the materials kneaded to form the mud bricks used in construction. The intent of the poem was to exalt the reigning dynasty by expounding its merits before the eyes of whoever halted in the court, replete with marble and sumptuous decoration. The author of the poem is unknown, but he was probably a contemporary court poet, for a myriad of verses in the encomiastic vein was composed at the Ghaznavid court.

The tradition of using poetry to decorate palaces was known throughout the Islamic world in the medieval period. The twelfth-century palaces at Messina and Palermo had verses composed in praise of buildings erected by Roger II (r. 1105–54), William I (r. 1154–66), and William II (r. 1166–89), and the fourteenth-century palace of the Alhambra in Granada has verses composed by Ibn Zamrak. In the Iranian world, the tradition can be traced back to the eleventh-century Qaraanid residence of Ribat-i Malik in the Central Asia steppe 20 kilometers from Kermine along the old route connecting Bukhara and Samarqand. A large (80 x 110 meter) rectangular enclosure, it has residential units grouped around a court in the south half and ceremonial and guest rooms in the north. When the building was remodeled in 1078–79 by the Qaraanid sovereign Shams al-Mulk Nasr b. Tamghach Khan Ibrahim, the portal was decorated with an elaborate brick inscription in floriated Kufic. The text, a verse of unknown meter ending in ay, speaks of “the sultan of the world who made this place,
Most of these texts indulge in eulogistic description (Arab. wasf) of the buildings on which the verses appear. Others are narrative in character, odes to commemorate feats of the reigning sovereign.

The purpose in decorating Ilkhanid palaces with depictions and inscriptions from the Shāhnāma was to legitimize the present through identification with the past. The verses used at Takht-i Sulayman show that the Mongol ruler was successively compared to the kings of ancient Iran, the Sasanian emperors, and Mahmud of Ghazna. Dynastic legitimacy was sought through incorporation into Iranian history, both legendary and real. Such epic texts were the written equivalent of the murals decorating pre-Islamic Soghdian palaces which show scenes from epic narratives, such as the cycle of the legendary hero Rustam at Panjikent, and actual royal events, such as the Chaghanian mission to the royal court at Samarqand.

In the Islamic model, the image was complemented by the word. The Ghaznavids and their contemporaries apparently commissioned new poems specifically to fit their buildings, for this was the great age of epic poetry in Iran. Gradually, however, the Shāhnāma emerged as the preeminent example of the Persian epic, and from the mid-twelfth century to the late thirteenth, a small group of luxury metalwares and ceramics were decorated with scenes and verses from the Shāhnāma. The luster tiles used to decorate the palace at Takht-i Sulayman in the last decades of the thirteenth century are the latest objects with Shāhnāma decoration, for by the fourteenth century, the shift in Persian literature from epic to romance, a change in taste that had begun soon after the Shāhnāma was composed ca. 1000, was complete. During the fourteenth century, romances were added to the repertory of books deemed suitable for illustration; the first copy of Nizami’s Khamsa (five poems) with space for illustrations, for example, is dated 718 (1318). Hence, for the decoration of later palaces in Iran, such as those built by the Safavids at Qazvin and Isfahan, scenes from such famous romances as Nizami’s Khamsa were used to evoke the glorious past, legitimize the dynasty’s claims to sovereignty, and exalt its merits.
Notes


7. Only parts of this work have been published. In addition to Quatremère’s edition and translation (see n. 2), the most important is the section dealing with the reign of Ghazan, *Tārīkh-i muḥārak-i ghāznānī*, ed. K. Jahn (London: Luzac, 1940).


14. For the great dispersed copy of the *Shāhānāma*, often known after its former owner Demotte, see Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980); other related pages are in albums in Istanbul and Berlin.

15. See Blair, "Mongol Capital at Sulṭāniyya," 146 and n. 87.


17. The word comes to mean court or levée of a prince.


26. See, for example, Pope’s photograph in André Godard, "Historique du Masjid-é Djum‘a d’Isfahan," *Amthār-ī Ṣā‘lān* 1 (1936), fig. 155.


34. See the forthcoming article "Muqarnas" by Yasser Tabbaa in *The Dictionary of Art*.


41. Melikian-Chirvani has identified verses from the stories of Zahhak, Manuchehr, Kaykahusus and the seven adventures of Rustam, Kaykhusr, Gush-tasp and the seven adventures of Isfandiyar, Alexander, Bahram Gur, and perhaps Piruz; the book of Khusrav Parviz provided most of the sources of narrative hemistiches molded in blue.


44. Bombaci, *Kūfic Inscription in Persian Verses*.

45. All of these are discussed with references in Bombaci, *Kūfic Inscription in Persian Verses*, 36–42.


Fig. 1. "Sindukht becomes aware of Rudaba’s actions" from the Demotte Shahname Iran, ca. 1335–40. Photo: courtesy Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., S86.0102.

Fig. 2. Muqarnas vault from the south kiosk in the summer palace at Takht-i Sulayman. After Harb, Ilkhanidische Stalaktitengewölbé, pl. I.2.
Fig. 3. Stucco plaque discovered at Takht-i Sulayman. After Harb, *Ilkhanidische Stalaktitengewölbe*, pl. 1.1.

Fig. 4. Muqarnas vault in the tomb at Natanz.

Fig. 5. Luster panel signed by Hasan b. 'Ali b. Ahmad Babawayh the builder. Photo: courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1909 (09.87).
FROM TENTS TO PAVILIONS: ROYAL MOBILITY AND PERSIAN PALACE DESIGN

BY BERNARD O’KANE

Fazl Allah Khunji, the late-fifteenth-century biographer of the Aqqoyunlu sultan Ya'qub, gives a list of the qualities which demonstrated the ruler’s distinguished origin. One of them reads as follows: “He was not a town dweller affected by dirty habits, as was the case with many rulers of Khurasan, Fars and Kerman, but followed the seasons wandering in open spaces going from summer quarters to winter quarters.”

The rhythms of pastoral nomadism dominated court life in Iran until the twentieth century. Seasonal migrations were not only a way to provide the grazing lands essential to the nomads’ flocks; they also served as a means to escape the extremes of heat and cold which characterize most of the Iranian plateau. The basic necessity of fodder for the tens of thousands of horses, mules, and camels which accompanied the royal armies on campaigns was reflected in peacetime by the choice of routes and in war by the frequent cessation of hostilities in winter, when snow covered much of the ground and the armies were obliged to retire to winter quarters for pasturage. As an example of the military importance of fodder, one can cite the repeated Mongol withdrawals from Mamluk territory, which have been ascribed to the inadequacy of the pasturelands, especially in southern Syria.

Apart from these movements which were dictated by necessity, another motive was also important, that which was commended by Fazl Allah Khunji, the preference for life in tents in the open countryside to that of towns. This also permitted the ruler to indulge in the most favored of nomadic recreations, hunting. Already in the 1230s the movements of Ögedei, Chingiz Khan’s son, were conditioned by pleasurable pursuits, including hunting, rather than by purely pastoral considerations. Charles Melville has recently examined in depth the geochronology (movements over time) of Sultan Uljaytu. The very low number of military expeditions in his reign makes it particularly valuable in determining how much of his movements were due to nomadism. He unfailingly moved each year between summer and winter quarters, spending about one hundred days a year on the migrations.

Despite having built a new town at Sultaniyya, he spent only around forty percent of his time there, which puts it into perspective as his chief seasonal residence, rather than a permanently occupied capital. Unlike Tabriz, the plain around Sultaniyya was sufficiently large to accommodate the encampments of the Mongol hordes, which has led to the suggestion that, far from becoming city dwellers, Uljaytu deliberately picked Sultaniyya to support their nomadic economy.

One might hope that a compilation of geochronologies for other sultans up to the Safavid period would help in determining, firstly, the inclination to nomadism or sedentarism of later rulers, and secondly, whether this had any measurable effect on their policies regarding the building of or residence in palaces. However, the movements of later rulers were more often dictated by military operations, whether combating outside forces or dealing with internal revolts. The influence of individual whim in royal patronage also makes it difficult to assess the importance of this factor versus sedentarism, although we shall see in the case of Shah ʿAbbas that, as with Sultan Uljaytu, a semi-nomadic lifestyle could coexist with the erection of palaces in new capitals.

Various accounts exist of the ʿordu (imperial encampment) from the Mongol period onwards, and it was clearly in many respects a mobile city. An elaborate ceremony accompanied the camp every time it moved; a strict formation based on military rank was observed, with the drummers, trumpeters, and pipers of each unit occupying prominent positions. Mosques and bazaars were to be found in each encampment, although prices were high because of the difficulties of transport. The ruler and his household formed one camp and each of his wives had a camp of her own, as did the amirs and viziers. The latter, together with their secretaries and officials of the finance department, are described by Ibn Battuta as presenting themselves for duty each afternoon. On some of the album leaves in the Topkapi Palace Museum, the signatures of Aqqoyunlu calligraphers suggest that they were in the camp, indicating that at least part of the
royal ateliers accompanied the sultan on his travels.\textsuperscript{10}

The ruler’s precinct, defined originally by rows of tents and carts, gradually gained importance as the number of the guard was increased for prestige. The surrounding military camp was well regulated. An enclosure, probably with two or three entrances, had gatekeepers controlling access. This in turn was surrounded by a forbidden zone, an arrangement which reflected earlier practice in Qaraqorum, the Mongol capital.\textsuperscript{11} The camp permitted the ruler to have the best of both worlds: the freedom of movement and open spaces of the countryside, together with the facilities of urban civilization. A mobile seat of government has obvious advantages in maintaining authority in conquered territories, although Sultan Uljaytu’s reasons for movement were usually the less ambitious ones of going hunting or simply setting out for winter or summer quarters.

Just as the camps were mobile cities, the tents which the rulers occupied could be considered mobile palaces. Rashid al-Din mentions a tent of state with a thousand gold pegs and a trellis tent with royal appurtenances which Arghun had ordered and which were made especially light for travel.\textsuperscript{12} One of Ögedei’s trellis tents\textsuperscript{13} was large enough to accommodate a thousand people and was decorated with gold brocade on the inside and gold studs outside;\textsuperscript{14} however, this was so large that it was a permanent fixture at one of his camping grounds in the mountains.\textsuperscript{15} An early indication of the association of the tent with palatial structures is given by Rashid al-Din in an account of a garden erected in 1302 by Ghazan Khan at Ujan near Tabriz. A partitioned garden (\textit{chahār bāgh}) was provided with pavilions, towers, and a bath, while its center was occupied by a golden trellis tent (\textit{khargāh}) adjoining a tent of state (\textit{bargāh}) with awnings (\textit{sāyābān}). The tent, together with a golden throne inlaid with rubies and other jewels, was three years in the making and took one month to erect.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Timur’s Quriltay}

The best evidence that we have of the importance, the variety, and the magnificence of princely tentage comes from the descriptions of the \textit{quriltay}, the assembly of Chaghatai tribes convened by Timur in Samarqand in 1404, to celebrate the marriages of six of his grandsons. Clavijo, the ambassador of the king of Castille, was present, and his extremely detailed accounts can be verified and supplemented by those of Yazdi and Ibn ʿArabshah.\textsuperscript{17}

Clavijo first notes that all of the private tents belonging to the royal family were placed within enclosures (\textit{sarāparda}); only the great reception pavilions and awnings were left outside. The enclosures had crenellations on top, were decorated as if made of tilework, had windows and gateways with towers, and were made of silk.\textsuperscript{18} Yazdi mentions that four of these enclosures were for Timur’s wives, each containing a tent of state (\textit{bargāh}), a guyed tent (\textit{khayma}), a circular trellis tent (\textit{khargāh}), and awnings (\textit{sāyābān}).\textsuperscript{19}

Clavijo describes in detail the trellis tent of Saray Mulk Khanum, Timur’s principal wife, mentioning costly materials such as colored applique work and a lining of sable. Its height was equivalent to three war lances which, thanks to Peter Andrews’s research, can be shown to be equivalent to 10 m.\textsuperscript{20} Yazdi mentions that one of these tents had two hundred heads, that is, struts, and in comparison with modern examples this enabled Andrews to estimate the diameter of these largest trellis tents as ca. 11 to 13 m, a princely size indeed.\textsuperscript{21} The inner doors had images of saints in enamel on gold and were booty from the treasury of the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I. The custom of displaying trophies as symbolic affirmation of conquest has a long history;\textsuperscript{22} Ibn ʿArabshah reports that a figural textile from Bayezid’s treasury was also on display.\textsuperscript{23}

The furniture inside the tent included a gold cabinet set with jewels and pearls, containing six gold jewel-encrusted flasks and cups. In front of it was a golden table displaying a large emerald, while to one side was a golden tree with bejeweled fruit and golden birds on its branches.\textsuperscript{24} The furnishings were thus appurtenances of royalty which are unlikely to have been surpassed in any urban palaces of the period. That Clavijo and his retinue—and presumably other ambassadorial parties—were taken on a tour of these quarters shows a blurring of their ostensibly private nature, and indicates how they were calculated to impress.

The trellis tents are representative of the nomadic heritage of the Timurids. Court tentage at the festival was represented outside the enclosures by two great tents with guy ropes of silk, in the form of pavilions in which Timur presided over banquets. The largest was square, one hundred feet\textsuperscript{25} per side, and again about three lances or 10 m high. Twelve poles supported
the interior, and arcades on the exterior were supported by a further twenty-four poles. Crimson and gold appliqué work decorated much of the interior and exterior, and four eagles were depicted at the four corners. Yazdi writes that a great concourse of tent pitchers took a week to erect it. In addition there were smaller, but matching sets of guyed tents. These were linked to one another by a series of corridors, showing that the whole ensemble was conceived as a palace complex.

These royal tents were surrounded by those of Timur’s followers, and while they must have been of lesser splendor, Ibn ʿArabshah informs us that their owners engaged in a “rivalry to the utmost limit” to display their wealth, including “unfolding the contents of . . . the volumes of their crimes,” i.e., their booty.

Ibn ʿArabshah was an unwilling guest of Timur, but the considerable space he devotes to this celebration shows that he was well aware that its tents were an expression of political power. Yazdi also gives an unusually long account of the celebrations and descriptions of the tents. In the context of his history, which was an encomium to Timur, this can only mean that the quriltay and its artifacts were as important a sign of royalty as the exploits of conquest to which most of his text is devoted. Clavijo’s exceptionally detailed descriptions also reflect how such a magnificent display was clearly the most appropriate way for a ruler to underline his majesty.

The descriptions of great tents in the Persian sources from the Mongol period onwards are usually couched in literary terms designed to show how they corresponded to a concept of royalty, using similes describing them in paradisal terms, or as being like the zenith of the celestial sphere. A particularly revealing passage in this respect is one by the Mongol historian Vassaf, who compares the trellis tent to the sphere of the heavens, made in the image of paradise, and the sultan seated on his throne within it to the sun of the empire.

The value of tents can also be gauged from the way in which they were considered to be parts of treasuries. They were included in the dowry of one of Timur’s wives, and on campaign Timur occasionally gave presents of tents to captured royalty or to generals who had distinguished themselves. A relatively insignificant event, reported by Khwandamir in 1491, may be taken as indicative of the continuing importance of this tradition in the late Timurid period. A rebel, Davish ‘Ali, was persuaded to submit to Husayn Bayqara, and cemented his new alliance with presents of multicolored trellis tents, guyed tents, tents of state, and assembly tents, in addition to silk carpets, china, and gold and silver vessels. The carpets and vessels were not so much separate presents as the expected appurtenances of a princely tent. There are numerous other instances in the late Timurid and Safavid period of tents being given as presents to superiors and of their forming parts of treasuries.

Just before Clavijo departed from Samarqand he visited Timur in what he called the “palace” opposite the mosque, describing how Timur emerged from a tent which was pitched in the courtyard and then presided over a feast there. This “palace” must in fact have been the madrasa of Saray Mulk Khanum. One does not usually conceive of a madrasa as being the equivalent of a palace, but such seems to have been its transformation by Timur’s tents. Other evidence from this practice comes from Babur, the Mughal emperor, who on his visit to Herat in 1506 was invited to a meal in a madrasa where the tents of Khadija Begum, Sultan Husayn’s widow, had been set up. Again, in 1581, amirs of the Safavid Sultan Muhammad’s army camped in the madrasa of Sultan Husayn Bayqara in Herat.

Evidently, any building, even an ostensibly religious one, could be transformed into a palace by the addition of tents. More importantly, greater luxury and a more obvious sign of royalty were to be had from accommodation in tents than from living in the buildings—hence, presumably, the frequent juxtaposition in miniatures of tents and garden pavilions. Before discussing this combination further, it may be as well to review briefly, since it is a better known subject, extant Timurid palaces and pavilions.

Timurid Palaces and Pavilions in Miniatures and in Reality

The most impressive remains of a Timurid palace are those of the Aqsaray at Shahr-i Sabz (1379–96). The quality of its tilework, consisting of both cuerda seca and tile mosaic, is unsurpassed (fig. 1). Clavijo’s lengthy description of the interior is difficult to interpret, although it is clear that it had a central courtyard 300 feet wide and that the whole was surrounded by an orchard. Although we cannot be sure of the exact internal arrangements of this building, it is most
likely that it was a palace on older models, a massive, self-contained building designed to impress from the exterior.\textsuperscript{41}

Two Timurid garden pavilions have survived, at Afushta and Gazzurgh. That at Afushta is unfortunately less well known, having been published as a khanaqah.\textsuperscript{42} Its small size, its exquisite decoration, and its plan, identical on two stories, of a square room leading to axial iwans with octagonal rooms in the corners\textsuperscript{43} is much more consonant with a garden pavilion than a khanaqah\textsuperscript{44} (figs. 2–3). The Namakdan at Gazzurgh is unlikely to be typical in its twelve-sided plan, although its general layout corresponds closely to the description of an octagonal pavilion in Herat by Babur.\textsuperscript{45}

The Çinili or Tiled Kiosk in Istanbul is often cited as an example of a Timurid palace.\textsuperscript{46} Its foreignness to the traditions of Ottoman architecture is not in dispute, but although tileworkers from Khurasan are known to have completed a pavilion in the Topkapi Palace,\textsuperscript{47} the decoration of the Tiled Kiosk is closer to Tabriz than to Herat, indicating Aqquyunlu as much as Timurid links. The palette of the \textit{suba} inscription in tile mosaic on the entrance portal (fig. 4) is largely blue and white, with some brown, but has none of the green and black which would be expected in contemporary Herat tilework. The same color scheme is found on the inscription at the entrance to the Blue Mosque in Tabriz (fig. 5), which also shares with the Tiled Kiosk a feature unknown in Timurid inscriptions from Khurasan: an upper smaller inscription in \textit{suba} instead of the usual Kufic. The small underglaze-painted blue and white squares in the \textit{banam}\textsuperscript{48} tilework of the Tiled Pavilion (fig. 6) are also closest to those of the Blue Mosque (fig. 7).\textsuperscript{49} The gold stenciling of the interior dado is on dark blue monochrome tiles (fig. 8), like the qibla dome chamber of the Blue Mosque (fig. 9), rather than the dark green of Timurid examples.\textsuperscript{50}

The plan, too, can be related to central and northwest Iranian examples: it is an enlarged version of the Afushta pavilion, while the villa at Nardaran\textsuperscript{51} is of the same family. The vanished Hashi Bûshish palace of Sultan Ya'qub at Tabriz, although later (begun 1483–84, finished 1486), may have provided the closest parallel.\textsuperscript{52} However, although on the above evidence an Aqquyunlu tile workshop is the most likely to have contributed to the Tiled Kiosk, to insist on Aqquyunlu rather than Timurid parallels is in some ways to make a distinction without a difference. Both were heirs to the traditions of Ilkhanid, Jalayirid, and Muzaffarid architecture. The differences between them are based more on regional than on dynastic characteristics, as the seamless transition from Timurid to Aqaquyunlu architecture in such cities as Isfahan and Yazd shows. The corollary of this, however, is that on the grounds of geographical proximity Turkmen rather than Timurid antecedents are more likely to have provided the immediate models.

Both miniatures and literary sources can provide a useful guide to much that has been destroyed, although the miniatures in particular must be used with caution. It would be impossible to reconstruct the plan or elevation of Timur's congregational mosque in Samarqand (the mosque of Bibi Khanum) from Bihzad's illustration of it,\textsuperscript{53} even though the details of the craftsmen and their work shown in it are likely to be accurate. On a smaller scale, however, for example from Shiraz-school illustrations of the \textit{bayt al-mushaf} in the courtyard of the Shiraz Masjid-i 'Atiq, façades could be drawn accurately (figs. 10–11). Since most garden pavilions are small structures, one can expect a high degree of verisimilitude from the painter. The frontispiece of the Cairo Bûstân, showing Sultan Husayn Bayqara presiding over a celebration, may be taken as representative (fig. 12).\textsuperscript{54} A tiled entrance portal leads into a paved court. At one side is a two-story octagonal pavilion, the lower walls decorated with tiles and an exquisite inlaid door, the upper with wooden grilles and a projecting balcony through which a variety of jugs in arched recesses are visible. A grilled skylight sits in the center of the roof, around whose edges is a tile mosaic inscription topped by crenellations. Sultan Husayn is seated on a carpet spread in front of a tall trellis tent with a magnificently embroidered dome and awning. The depiction of luxurious interiors varied little from those of the Jalayirid \textit{mathnâ'îs} of Khvaju Kirmani,\textsuperscript{55} which give an idea of the varieties of textiles mentioned by Clavijo, and also display elaborate tiled dadoes and windows of colored glass set in stucco frames of geometric, vegetal, or figural patterns.

Although they are not shown in miniatures, the sources mention murals which can be divided into two kinds, both with many Islamic and pre-Islamic antecedents. The first showed rulers triumphing over their enemies, a parallel to the display of captured booty at Timur's \textit{quriltay} at Samarqand. The second was the princely cycle, including erotic scenes.\textsuperscript{56}
**Timur’s Gardens**

After building the Aqsaray, all the subsequent residences which Timur erected—and there was an exceptionally large number—were gardens studded with one or more pavilions. Having competed successfully on traditional terms, he may have felt free to command subsequent examples to be built to nomadic taste, being more suitable for the erection of tents and more flexible in their accommodation. They emphasize the garden at the expense of built architecture, bringing the delights of the meadows of the summer and winter quarters closer to the city. From descriptions of Timur’s gardens in Samarqand by Clavijo and Yazdi it has been possible to attempt reconstructions. However, less attention has been focused on the way in which Timur used gardens, or rather, how he used the city of Samarqand and the surrounding countryside to transform an urban agglomeration into a country estate.

This can be seen from his itineraries on his return in 1404 from campaigning. He entered Samarqand in early August and stayed in the Bagh-i Chinar, making a visit to the madrasa of Muhammad Sultan to order a mausoleum to be built. His principal wife Saray Mulk Khanum joined him there. Meanwhile his wife Tuman Agha had been making her way back to Samarqand and had camped in the Bagh-i Bihisht, where he now joined her. Next, several days were spent in the Bagh-i Shumal, followed by supervision of the building of the tomb of Muhammad Sultan, i.e., the Gur-i Mir, including the construction of a small garden around it. From there he moved to the madrasa of Saray Mulk Khanum, where, as we have seen, he resided in tents in its courtyard to oversee the building of the Friday mosque. He then went in turn to the Bagh-i Chinar, the Bagh-i Dilgusha, and the Bagh-i Shumal. Timur decided to add a pavilion to the south end of the latter, bigger and more magnificent than those of his other gardens in Samarqand, and when this was finished a feast was held there.

The guriltay at kan-i Gil followed. Timur then moved back to the madrasa of Saray Mulk Khanum, and finally, to the Gök Saray, a four-storied pavilion which he had built in the citadel, where trophies, including a throne, captured from the defeated Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I, were also displayed. This was his last stop before setting out on campaign once again on 27 November. In the space of four months he had changed his place of residence over a dozen times. He resided mostly in different gardens, and in one long case in an encampment, an extraordinary testament to his ability to re-create a nomadic environment in the microcosm of a city and its surroundings.

Another motive for these frequent changes of residence should be kept in mind. They are likely to have been accompanied by an elaborate ceremonial, such as the orchestral heralds and processions of troops and imperial guard which was described by Ibn Battuta at the camp of Abu Sa'id. Timur had planted an avenue of poplars leading from the Bagh-i Dilgusha to the city walls of Samarqand, perhaps to emphasize one of the grand ceremonial axes of the city. The Fatimids and the Ottomans, to name just two dynasties, recognized the value of the imperial prestige conferred by the pomp of regular public appearances of the ruler.

**Craft-Guild Displays**

Another way of enhancing the ruler’s prestige was by having his subjects perform for him at festivals. The best known of these events, thanks to its voluminous illustrations, is that commemorated in the Sūrānāma, the book of the festival given by the Ottoman sultan Murad III for his son’s circumcision in 1582, when the gilds held a procession of moving floats with models of their craft (fig. 18). It has not been realized how close this was to Timurid practice. All three major sources, Ibn ‘Arabshah, Yazdi, and Clavijo, give substantial descriptions of the gilds’ extravagant constructions which were paraded around the area where Timur’s guriltay was celebrated.

The earliest mention of the practice among his successors is in 815 (1412–13), when Shahrukh ordered that the bazaar and town be decorated and that each craft be visible in its utmost artifice in its appropriate shop. In 852 (1448–49), ‘Ala‘ al-Dawla ordered celebrations in the Bagh-i Zaghan in Herat for the circumcision of his son Ibrahim, which were adorned with “every craft and art of the craftsmen of the seven climes in every fashion that you might wish.” While these accounts may seem somewhat circumstantial, a subsequent description of a joint birth and circumcision festival ordered by Abu Sa'id in 870 (1465–66) is more specific:

The masters of various crafts caused wonders of marvelous power and discerning elegance to appear, with the utmost ingenuity and skill, in a suitable place to be
viewed; artists from around the world were present and all showed strange things and wonders to their utmost effort; amongst them was Khvaja ʿAli Ardagar Isfahani who showed in a rosewater bottle thirty-two types of trades of the workshops of the world with each trade engaged in its own speciality. Thirty-two shops and workshops were opened [to view], and every craftsman was engaged in his own special trade, and those which necessitated movement in the plying of their trades, such as tailors, cotton pressers, carpenters, and iron-workers, were seen to be moving.67

This contraption, to which the more familiar ships in bottles must be pale shadows, suitably awed Sultan Abu Saʿid and his retinue.

Khvandamir’s accounts of three of Sultan Husayn’s feasts indicate similar guild participation. The first, in early 892 (1487), was for the circumcision of Muzaffar Husayn Mirza: “Engineers of every trade and clever craftsmen caused various kinds of strange and wonderful artefacts to appear; every group produced rare images and awe-inspiring models of their trade.”68 Having given this explicit description, his next two mentions are progressively shorter. In 895 (1490) the “leaders of the craftsmen caused various kinds of wonders to appear” for a wedding procession,69 and in 901 (1495–96), to welcome Sultan Husayn back to Herat, “temporary booths were erected and various arrangements were on display.”70

It is likely that this tradition was continued by the Safavids. The description by Natanzi of the decoration of Kahan for the passage of Shah ʿAbbas in 1595 recalls those of the Timurid celebrations:

In accordance with the way things had been done in past years, they decorated the alleys, streets, gates, and citadel of that paradise-like city as was customary and fitting, so that the minds of the devisers of artful productions (muhandiš-i ṣanāʾī ʿi pāsha) and the comprehension of the inventors of innovative thought, in reviewing and perceiving those miracle-marked sights, were confounded and stupefied.71

Immediately after this, a festival of lights was ordered in the Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahan in Isfahan in which leaders of the crafts (arbāb-i hīfā) and artisan masters (aššāb-i sanʿat) participated. While they may have been principally involved in making the fireworks, light displays, and mock fortresses which formed the main entertainment, it should not be ruled out that they also displayed samples of their various specialities.72

The Timurids in Herat

Shahrulkh, Timur’s successor, was much less ambitious in his building programs.73 While he built a chahār bāgh and palace (sarāy) in Mashhad for his use on pilgrimages there,74 in Herat he is only known to have restored the Bagh-i Safid, erecting new pavilions within it. The Bagh-i Zagan, another pre-Timurid garden in Herat, also figures largely within Timurid history. A kiosk in it is described as a chihāl sutūn75 (a many-columned pavilion), one of the earliest mentions of this type of structure, although Babur mentions one in Samarqand of stone columns which was built by Ulugh Beg and would therefore have been contemporary.76

Shahrulkh made three campaigns against the Qaraqouylu in western Iran, and several others against, and on behalf of, his various sons, which makes his proclivities towards nomadism much more difficult to gauge than that of Uljaytu. His favorite summer quarters were Badghis, north of Herat, but he is also known to have wintered in Hilmand. Abu Saʿid spent several winters in Marv, although one of these followed on from a summer quarters in Badghis, where he had gone for the very practical reason of escaping the plague which was then raging in Herat.77

Husayn Bayqara’s reign was also punctuated by numerous campaigns against his rebellious sons, which lessens the value of a geochronology in determining his nomadic bent. He wintered twice in Marv and once in Balkh.78 On the latter occasion he was encamped on the outskirts of the city in the chahār bāgh of Amir Mazid Arghun. Further confirmation that it was the normal practice by this time to make his winter quarters in a garden can be found in the reports of the year 910 (1504–5), when Sultan Husayn moved his winter quarters from the Bagh-i Jahan Ara (on the northern edge of the city) to the Bagh-i Safid (beside the citadel), as he had received reports that the Uzbek were advancing into his territory, and obviously feared a lightning attack.79 There seem to be no reports of his spending his summers away from Herat, other than on campaign. This evidence of a more sedentary disposition could be taken as the reason for his construction of the Bagh-i Jahan Ara in Herat, although his infirmities, which necessitated his being carried on a litter for the last twenty years of his life, must obviously have curtailed his desire to move around.

The extent to which tents would regularly have
been erected in the major gardens when the ruler was present is difficult to gauge. They are most frequently mentioned in connection with the festivities which took place for weddings and circumcisions. These mention all the kinds of tents which were used to describe Timur's quriltay at Kan-i Gil—trellis tents, guyed tents, enclosures, tents of state, and finally chahār fāqs, booths or small pavilions—and couch them in terms of the same epithets of height and celestial imagery that were used to describe earlier royal tents. The importance of these ceremonies in the tradition of kingly behavior is shown by a letter of Husayn Bayqara to Sultan Yaqubs describing a feast which he held for the circumcision of his son in the Bagh-i Zaghan, and by the fact that Faiz Allah Khunj thought it worthwhile to reproduce it in his history. The opportunity which these celebrations offered for processions should not be overlooked. The importance of such ceremonial occasions for advertising the wealth of the state was discussed above in relation to Timur, and the lesson was not lost on his descendants. The ceremony of istiqbāl (going out to meet an incoming dignitary) was regularly observed on the arrival of members of the royal family and important visitors at the capital. The descriptions of the festivities on the marriage of Muhammad Ma'sum to a daughter of Ulugh Beg b. Abu Sa'id in 895 (1490) may be indicative of the expense lavished on comparable occasions. Sultan Husayn ordered the town and the streets to be decorated appropriately, and the amirs and government ministers set about their tasks accordingly. The Bagh-i Jahan Ara was duly made ready, and the leaders of the craftsmen caused various kinds of wonders to appear; from the Pul-i Malan to the Bagh-i Jahan Ara (a distance of about nine kilometers) all the streets and bazaars were decorated. Booths were set up and all the walls and shops were adorned with multicolored Chinese brocade, Frankish velvet, and Chinese silk, and with various images which beggar description. When the party was met at the Pul-i Malan, such an amount of largesse of gold and jewels was distributed as to open the doors of riches on the poor. All along the route, on both sides, the sound of sweet voices in song and lutes and cymbals was to be heard. The festivities can be better imagined with the help of two contemporary miniatures, one of which shows Timur being entertained in front of a trellis tent by dancers (fig. 14), the other, Sultan Husayn in an enclosed garden with musicians and attendants (fig. 15).

Shah 'Abbas I and Isfahan

Shah 'Abbas I was born and brought up in Herat, and one can imagine what an impression the multitude of gardens in the city which were available for his leisure would have made on him. His development of the Naqshi-Jahan maydan and palace complex in Isfahan, together with the chahār bagh avenue leading to the Bagh-i Abbaspur south of the river, at first sight looks to be of a very different nature to the Timurid examples (see Necipoğlu, figs. 10a–b, 11). Before looking at it in greater detail, however, Shah 'Abbas's geochronology should be considered. Like Isasmīl I and Tahmasp before him, he regularly moved, allowing for campaigns, from summer to winter quarters. It is difficult to determine the exact beginning of the palatial complex in the Bagh-i Naqshi-Jahan, but it is likely that it was begun shortly before 1596–97, when Shah 'Abbas spent the winter there. He wintered there in most subsequent years until September 1603, leaving on campaigns in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia from which he did not return until November 1607.

In the winter of 1612–13 he commenced the building of the palaces at Ashraf and Farahabad in Mazandaran to facilitate his greatest love, hunting. They are described as capitals by contemporary historians, and their eclipse of Isfahan in this respect is underlined by the amount of time which he spent there. He was totally absent from Isfahan for three years, up to June 1619. Between the time he left Isfahan for winter quarters in Mazandaran in autumn 1624 and his death in early 1629, despite the peace which reigned in his kingdom, he did not return to the city, never traveling far from Mazandaran where his obsession with hunting could be indulged. His average time in the capital has been calculated as 58, 77, and 46 days each year for the three parts of his reign when Qazvin, Isfahan, and Farahabad respectively were the capitals. Even considering the much greater time which Shah 'Abbas spent campaigning than Uljaytu, it still reveals him as a monarch very much in the same nomadic tradition.

Shah 'Abbas's first major development in Isfahan was the Maydan-i Naqshi-Jahan, which was
laid out in 1590 as a space for polo and horse racing. In 1594 he had ordered a celebration in the Maydan-i Sa'adatabad in Qazvin, where the shops had been provided with arcades on which lamps were hung, and where he watched and engaged in polo and shooting contests. The greater space which the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan afforded for these entertainments was exploited to the full in a major festival there in 1595 and, given Shah 'Abbas's love of riding, may even have been a minor factor in the move of the court to Isfahan. The Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan alongside the maydan was large enough to create the variety which in Herat and Samarqand was provided by separate gardens. With its different pavilions situated in various gardens in the precincts, one may be reminded of the Timurid garden ensembles, brought together within a tighter framework than the more formal aspects of the Mughal Red Forts and Fatehpur Sikri. The participation of the sultan in receptions within the pavilions again recalls Timurid models rather than the static role which the Ottoman sultan played in the more clearly defined boundaries of the Topkapi Palace. Just as the pavilions in these gardens have been celebrated for their merging of garden and architectural space, so one should keep in mind the degree to which Timurid and Safavid palaces represent an interpenetration of the princely traditions of urban and nomadic ideals.

The main difference in the Naqsh-i Jahan palace and Timurid models would seem to be in the provision of permanent and substantial quarters for the harem. This reflects the differing status of women under the Safavids. At Timur's quriltay his wives were unveiled, and women were permitted to host feasts themselves. Gawhar Shad was a major political figure, as well as the most important architectural patron of her time. Even if later women never quite attained her power, they aspired to it: Sultan Husayn's wife Khadija Begum and Sultan Yaqub's mother were notorious for their influence. Even at the twilight of the Timurid dynasty Babur was still entertained at a feast hosted by Khadija Begum. While women wielded considerable political power at the Safavid court, they operated from inside the harem and were never patrons of architecture or other arts on anything approaching the scale of the Timurids. Although members of Shah 'Abbas's harem were to be seen on his hunting trips, they seem to have been completely secluded while in residence at any one of his capitals. Despite the evidence cited above for Shah 'Abbas's nomadism, the position of women at his court shows the increasing influence of the sedentary Irano-Islamic tradition on the Safavids, which in turn is reflected in the appearance of the harem as a separate building in Safavid palaces.

In conclusion, we should emphasize one feature of the residential architecture of the dynasties we have considered which highlights their nomadic legacy and sets them apart from their Mamluk, Ottoman, and Mughal contemporaries. This is its autonomy from citadels. The Mamluk sultan's residence was the citadel of Cairo, and his dependencies in Damascus and Aleppo lived in the citadels of those towns (see Rabbat, fig. 1; Tabbaa, fig. 6). The walls of the Red Forts of Delhi and Agra encompassed the principal palaces of the Mughal emperors (see Necipoğlu, figs. 21–22). The Topkapi Palace was set within the well-fortified Byzantine walls of Istanbul, and its defenses were further assured by the walls of its concentric courts, the outermost being known as the imperial fortress (see Necipoğlu, fig. 1). Pre-Mongol citadels already existed in the towns we have considered: Tabriz, Samarqand, Herat, and Isfahan, but it is not difficult to understand how life in them would be anathema to those of nomadic heritage. Even the palace complex of Isfahan, which, with its sprawling permanent constructions, is closest to the Topkapi, did not have strongly fortified boundaries. It might be objected that Isfahan's central location precluded the necessity of strong defensive constructions, but even in Qazvin, closer to the Ottoman front, the palace constructed by Shah Tahmasp was in a garden outside the citadel.

The garden complexes with pavilions, verdure, numerous canals, and open spaces with the flexibility to accommodate a multitude and variety of tents represented the ideal compromise between nomadic and urban life. Even though the gardens were vulnerable to attack, a nomadic dynasty retained its ability to move the court and its entourage quickly out of danger. Faced with the alternative of the claustrophobic quarters of a citadel, for an even semi-nomadic ruler this was a sacrifice worth making.
Notes


13. The Persian sources consistently use ḥangāh for a trellis tent; see Andrews, “Felt Tent,” 472 ff. I am indebted to Peter Andrews’s magisterial work for most of my information on tents; according to the author (“The Generous Heart or the Mass of Clouds: The Court Tents of Shah Jahan,” Muqarnas 4 (1987): n. 1) it was to have been published in 1987, but to my knowledge it has not yet appeared.


16. Rashīd al-Dīn, Jāmī’ al-tavārīkh, ed. K. Jahn as Geschicchte Ğāzān-ǰān’s (London, 1940), 137–38, discussed in Andrews, “Felt Tent,” 485–86, and in Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan (Princeton, 1988), 181–82, where awnings, sāyābān, are misread as parasols, sāya. When this garden was restored and extended by Sultan Yaqūb in spring 895 h., tents, pavilions (kandalān), and awnings (sāyābān) figured amongst the accommodation for its inauguration; Khunji, Persia, 100.


35. In 902 (1496–97) Khusrav Shah, the ruler of Qanduz, gave presents of tents (khayma), trellis tents (khargāh), enclosures (sarāparda), and tents of state (bārgāh) to Sultan Husayn’s son Badi’ al-Zaman; Khvāndamīr, Ḥabīb al-siyyar, 4:211; eight years later, his presents again included tents and trellis tents, together with vessels of gold and silver which, as we have seen (n. 32), frequently accompanied such gifts; Khvāndamīr, Ḥabīb al-siyyar, 4:307. Sultan Husayn’s disgraced vizier Majdal-Din’s treasure included tents (khayma); Khvāndamīr, Ḥabīb al-siyyar, 4:197. His successor Nizam al-Mulk’s treasure consisted, in addition to gold, jewels, and books, of tents (khayma), trellis tents (khargāh), enclosures (sarāparda), and tents of state (bārgāh), together with their furnishings: silk zīlīs and Egyptian, Anatolian, European, and Chinese carpets; Khvāndamīr, Ḥabīb al-siyyar, 4:219. After Sultan Muhammad Khudabanda’s accession to the Safavid throne in 1577 he set out for Isfahan where he was presented with khayma, khargāh, sarāparda, and bārgāh by Husayn Quli Sultan Shamlu; Hasan Rūmī, Aḥsan āhtavārīkh, ed. and trans. C. N. Seddon (Baroda, 1931–34), text 500, trans. 212.

36. Clavijo, trans. Le Strange, 281. Elsewhere (p. 234) he mistakenly ascribes the same building to Saray Mulk Khanum’s mother.


40. The underglaze tiles on the frames of the panels of the socles mentioned by Golombeck and Wilber, Timurid Architecture, 1:272, are rather cuerda seca.

41. Golombeck and Wilber, Timurid Architecture, 1:274, argue for a series of detached or semi-detached...
structures, but this would hardly have been in harmony with the massive portal which, as its rear shows, was attached to rooms at the third-story level. Clavijo’s account, trans. Terry Allen, is given in Golombek and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture*, 1:273–74. They may have been misled by the mis-translation of *paso* as pace instead of foot (see n. 25 above).


43. One of them, now destroyed, must have contained a staircase. Just enough tiling remains on the floor of the upper story to show that it was similar to the lower.

44. Its identification as the khanaqah of a local saint is based solely on hearsay.

45. Bernard O’Kane, *Timurid Architecture in Khurasan* (Costa Mesa, Calif., 1987), cat. no. 42, also containing Babur’s description.


48. For those on the Blue Mosque, see Bernard O’Kane, “Tâybâd, Turbat-i Jâm and Timurid Vaulting,” *Iran* 17 (1979): pl. IIIc.

49. For the Timurid examples, see O’Kane, *Timurid Architecture*, 67.

50. Golombek and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture*, fig. 133.

51. The comparison is also made in Necipoğlu, *Topkapı*, 213. The most complete description is in *A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia*, trans. and ed. C. Grey (London, 1873), 173–78. The anonymous Italian traveler attributes the palace to Uzbek Hasan, but the Persian sources unanimously say it was the work of Ya’qub; see, for instance, Khunjî, *Persia*, 53; and the references in J. E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Minneapolis and Chicago, 1976), 281 n. 47. There is no evidence that I know of for equating the palace described in Tabriz by Barbaro in 1474 (Josafa Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini, *Travels to Tanâ and Persia*, trans. William Thomas and S. A. Roy, ed. Lord Stanley of Alderley [London, 1873], 52–55) with the Hashi Bihsît.


55. Ibn ʿArabshâh, trans. Sanders, 309–19; Babur, *Bâbûrnâma*, trans. A. S. Beveridge (London, 1922), 78, 302. The earlier references are to Timur; the last is to a pavilion of Abu Sa’id in Herat which depicted his wars and battles. Ya’qub’s Hasht Bihsît in Tabriz had murals of battles, embassies, and hunting; *Narrative*, trans. Grey, 175. Erotic murals were added to a palace in Herat by the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud; C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran* 994–1040 (Beirut, 1973), 140; the Safavid examples of the Chihil Sutun are the best known.


57. See n. 36 above.


60. See n. 8 above.


71. *Nuqâwa al-dîhâr*, trans. R. D. McChesney, *Four Sources on Shah ‘Abbas’s Building of Ifshâhan*, Muqarnas 5 (1988): 107. Admittedly this is not a very explicit reference to guilds’ displays, but it uses imagery similar to Khvândamîr’s descriptions (see n. 70).


80. The fact that one section of the petition of Baysunghur’s library staff is devoted to a khârgâh (see n. 31 above) is good reason to believe that they were fairly permanent fixtures.

81. At the same feast as that referred to in n. 65, Sultan Husayn is described as being seated on the auspicious throne in the heavenly trellis tent of the feast (dar khârgâhî-sîpîr ishikhâhî-fûkhâhâna har takhtî bakhî); Khvândamîr, *Hâbîb al-siyâr*, 4:185. On the occasion of the marriage of Muhammad Jahangir b. Mirza Muhammad Sultan in 816 (1413–14) a kitchen (mahtbah) and cistern (âkkhâna) are mentioned among the other tented structures; ‘Âbd al-Razzâq, *Matla‘ al-sa‘dayn*, 244.

82. While these were usually modest structures in which, for instance, craftsmen were accommodated, occasionally they were more luxurious, as were those erected in the Bagh-i Zaghan in 892 (1486–
87) for the circumcision of Muzaffar Husayn Mirza. That of Sultan Husayn (chahār fāq-i khāyṣa-yi humayyûn) was decorated with gold and lapis lazuli, and each of the amirs and princes were also assigned chahār fāq; Khvāndamīr, Ḩabīb al-siyār, 4:178.

83. See the references in Allen, Toponyms, under the respective gardens.

84. Khunjī, Persia, 59.

85. The festivities recall the occasion when the city of Bukhara was bedecked with textiles for the visit of the sovereign of Ferghana; for this and other occasions when a display of textiles was used to impress visitors, see Lisa Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," in Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World, ed. Priscilla P. Soucek (University Park, Penn., and London, 1988), 31.

86. Khvāndamīr, Ḩabīb al-siyār, 4:185.

87. The most complete information is to be found in Charles Melville, "From Qars to Qandahar: The Itineraries of Shah ʿAbbas I (995-1038/1587-1629)" (in press). I am most grateful to the author for sending me a copy of his manuscript.

88. The garden itself already existed, having been used by Seljuq, Timurid, and early Safavid rulers; M. Haneda, "Maydān et bāḡ: reflexion à propos de l'urbanisme du Šāh ʿAbbās," in Documents et archives provenant de l'Asie Centrale, ed. A. Haneda (Kyoto, 1990), 93 (I am grateful to Charles Melville for sending me a copy).

89. Melville, "Itineraries of Shah ʿAbbas," n. 65

90. Melville, "Itineraries of Shah ʿAbbas," table 5; Haneda, "Maydān et bāḡ," also draws attention to Isfahan's status as merely a winter capital.


93. See n. 71 above.

94. The major factor was the Uzbek incursion into central Iran; Melville, "Itineraries of Shah ʿAbbas," n. 20.

95. Necipoğlu, Topkapı, 15-22; see also the paper by Necipoğlu in this volume.


97. Clavijo, trans. Le Strange, 244 ff., describing a feast hosted by Khanzada, Timur's niece.

98. O'Kane, Timurid Architecture, 83-84.


100. Bāburnāma, trans. Beveridge, 301.

101. On Shah Ismaʿīl II's death in 1577 the main power struggle was between Sultan Tahmasp's daughter Pari Khan Khanum and Sultan Muhammad Khudabanda's wife Mahd-i ʿUlya Fakhri al-Nisa Begum; Munshī, trans. Savory, 327-37; both were murdered for their interference.

102. For female Timurid patrons, see O'Kane, Timurid Architecture, 82-84.

103. M. Membré, Relazione di Persia, ed. G. Scarcia (Naples, 1968), ch. 3, mentions the "maidens" who were visible when Shah Tahmasp's ordum moved (in 1539): "They ride like men and dress like men, except that on their heads they do not wear caps, but white clothes." Pietro della Valle writes that the women of the harem traveled by night with the eunuchs, but went unveiled on horseback when with the shah; Lettere della Persia, vol. 1, ed. F. Gaeta and L. Lockhart, Il Nuovo Ramusio 6 (Rome, 1972), 280. I am most grateful to Charles Melville for both of these references; see also his "Itineraries of Shah ʿAbbas," n. 102. The scene described by Rashid al-Din where Ghazan Khan and his wife watched a hunt together from a temporary wooden pavilion (Geschichte Gāzān-Hān's, ed. Jahn, 137) must still have been far from Safavid sensibilities.

104. The extent to which this was true in the late Timurid period is difficult to gauge from the sources; it is a question which was usually commented on only by visiting Europeans, and there
were none for Herat at this time. However, the evidence from fig. 14, which shows Sultan Husayn's harem screened off from all the male retinue apart from a black eunuch, suggests that the trend may have been well established by then.


106. The royal palace at Qazvin also had a separate harem; Munshī, trans. Savory, 1:288–89.

107. The strength of the Tabriz citadel can be gauged by the difficulties of Sultan Muhammad Khudabanda's troop in retaking it from the Ottoman forces in 1585–86; Munshī, trans. Savory, 1:451–54, 480–81. The Samarqand citadel was rebuilt by Timur, even though he rarely occupied the pavilion which he built inside it; *Bābūrnāma*, trans. Beveridge, 77. The Herat citadel was still of such military importance in 1885 as to be the cause of the destruction of the Gawhar Shad Mosque; O. Caroe, "The Gawhar Shad Musalla (Mosque) in Herat," *Asian Affairs* 60 (1973): 295–98. Heinz Gaube, *Iranian Cities* (New York, 1979), 79, suggests that even in the early medieval period the citadel of Isfahan was not of great importance; for its location, see Gaube, *Iranian Cities*, fig. 50. Like the Herat citadel, it was used as a place of imprisonment; Shah 'Abbas's brothers were incarcerated there before they were blinded (see McChesney, "Isfahan," 106 and n. 20).


109. When attack was threatened, Sultan Husayn still preferred to move to a garden near the citadel rather than into the citadel itself; see n. 79 above.
Fig. 1. Shahr-i Sabz. Aq Saray. Detail of tilework.


Fig. 3. Afushta. Pavilion. Central dome chamber.
Fig. 4. Istanbul. Tiled Kiosk. Inscription on entrance portal.

Fig. 5. Tabriz. Blue Mosque. Inscription on entrance portal.
Fig. 6. Istanbul. Tiled Kiosk. Rear façade, showing underglaze-painted tiles.

Fig. 7. Tabriz. Blue Mosque. Exterior wall, showing underglaze-painted tiles.
Fig. 8. Istanbul. Tiled Kiosk. Interior.

Fig. 9. Tabriz. Blue Mosque. Interior.

Fig. 11. Shiraz. Masjîd-i 'Atiq. Muşafkâna.


SAFAVID PALACES

By WOLFRAM KLEISS

Most of the palaces, pavilions, and villas built in the Safavid period have not survived. Many were destroyed, especially during the Afghan conquest of Isfahan in 1722. Others were neglected and left to decay, or fell victim to earthquakes. Of those that remain many have been altered in their outward appearance by structural changes. Fortunately, European travelers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have left sketches and drawings of several of them, so if we can no longer discern function and ground plan, at least we can gain an impression of general appearance.

Knowledge about the details of plan, form, and function of both large and small Safavid palaces can be gathered from the number of palaces and ruins that remain in Isfahan, Qazvin, in small towns, and in the countryside. Safavid palace architecture—as can be verified from the still extant buildings in Isfahan—marks the climax in the development of Iranian palace construction.

In Iran, the art of building showed great concern for tradition throughout all periods of Persian culture. Thus, Achaemenid motifs were still in use in Parthian architecture, and details of Achaemenid columns, like the double-protome capital, can still be seen in Tehran on twentieth-century buildings. In view of this, it is not astonishing that similar organizational principles remained in use from late Sasanian to early Islamic times. Usually it took the form of a tripartite arrangement composed of three parallel axes sometimes constituting a cross-axial plan. This system can be observed in its early form in the so-called Sasanian palaces near Sarvistan (fig. 1; the date of Sarvistan is still uncertain) and near Damghan (about whose hypothetical reconstructions Lionel Bier has raised some doubts elsewhere in this volume). Its later, more common, form of ground plan and distribution of rooms can be seen in the Safavid palaces of the seventeenth century, like that of ‘Aliabad near Firk (fig. 2) in southern Iran. It was later handed down to the Qajar architecture of the nineteenth century.

It is important to stress the similarity of the tripartite organizational system in the building of Sarvistan and in seventeenth-century palaces, and the fact that only Islamic pottery can be found in the area around the domed building of Sarvistan. No matter when it was constructed it continued to be used without any significant change in its architecture into the Islamic period.

In the ground plans of many Safavid pavilions the Achaemenid apadana can be recognized, with its four iwans opening onto the outside and its four corner buildings or groups of rooms, like those in the pavilion (fig. 5) east of the Hasht Bihisht in Isfahan, the remaining parts of which were recorded before its complete disappearance several years ago. The form is also seen in the late Safavid—early Qajar pavilion at the citadel of Bam (fig. 4).

Variations in this cross-axial ground plan developed in the Iranian building tradition to serve diverse functions. First was the palace for the royal court. Royal pavilions in cities were linked to spacious gardens, to the surrounding countryside, or to a small garden at least, as in Isfahan at the Chihil Sutun and the Hasht Bihisht (see Necipoğlu, figs. 10a, 11 [81]). The plans and functions of these are well known and will not be discussed here in detail.

There were also villas belonging to rich landowners and seats of the royal court in the countryside. We do not know to whom they belonged or what the position of a particular owner was. An example is ‘Abbasabad, north of Natanz (fig. 5) on the old road from Natanz to Kashan, a mudbrick building on a foundation of rubble which also uses the tripartite system of organization in its layout. It is a typical domed hall with one story, part of which was divided into two stories by inserting a floor in between to provide living and storage units. The building opens toward a water basin and a rectangular terraced garden. A cypress on a mound dominates the garden on its main axis.

Tajabad, on the caravan route from Isfahan to Natanz, also belongs to this group (fig. 6). It is situated in a large garden with fountains and water basins and was connected with a farm. The complex also includes a bathhouse of Safavid origin. The tripartite structure of the main building is cross-axial. The rooms are richly decorated with painted stucco; some of them have domes.
Another domed building in the park of the complex at Tajabad (fig. 7), the conception of which had originally been a very regular cross-shape, was obviously never finished; its architecture has changed considerably over the years.

In Isfahan palaces and pavilions of diverse sizes and functions did exist, but they were pulled down in the course of time. One of them was the Talar-i Ashraf which had a cross-axial tripartite arrangement similar to that of the building in ‘Aliabad near Furk (fig. 2) or the viewing pavilion at the north end of the Chahar Bagh avenue, which fell victim to modern development. The pavilion’s façade is known only through old photographs (see Necipoğlu, fig. 10a [8]).

A special type of ground plan is the eight- or sixteen-sided pavilion, like that in the Rose Garden at Isfahan (fig. 8; see also Necipoğlu, fig. 10a [1]), which is known only through some drawings by Engelbert Kaempfer who accompanied a European embassy to the Safavid court in 1684–85. Another pavilion of this type (which still exists) is the octagonal tower-shaped building visible from afar on its steep conical mountain (fig. 9) above Natanz. It was a royal hunting pavilion which the monarch used when he was in residence near Natanz to hunt the numerous deer there. Yet it may equally well be called a mil, a landmark for caravans, because of its exposed position and its tower-shaped high outer dome.

The projecting pier in the middle of the Khaju Bridge in Isfahan, which is laid out in the shape of a pavilion on both sides of the roadway, also functioned as a recreation lodge, as did the no longer extant Mirror Pavilion (Ayn-i-khana) on the river bank of the Zayanda Rud in Isfahan. Like the bridge, the pavilion is counted among the best works of Safavid art and architecture.

From the so-called summer residences of the Safavid kings near the Caspian Sea, Farahabad, situated on the coast and now in ruins, may be reconstructed in its outward form with the help of nineteenth-century drawings, like those of the Jahan-numa palace (fig. 10). Its cubically massed shape is rectangular, with a symmetrical division of the façade into five sections. The two outermost ones are narrower than those in the center. The central section is even broader than the others, lending it additional importance. Thanks to old photographs, both the palace in Safiabad (fig. 11a-b) and the palace of Saahib-i Zaman in Ashraf/Behshahr (fig. 12) can be reconstructed in spite of recent changes in the building. Photographs show a cubic structure with a basically tripartite façade.

Along the so-called Royal Road from Isfahan to these countryside palaces on the Caspian Sea six desert palaces acting as way stations have come down to us (fig. 13). Unlike the palaces at Isfahan with their two or more stories and the two-story palaces on the Caspian coast, these have only one story and are often built around a central court just like the caravansarays that are often located near them. Those at Dombi, Seifid Ab, and Germab (fig. 14) have two courtyards each, recalling the layout of Seljuq-period royal caravansarays in Iran and Anatolia. The courtyards are surrounded by halls and single rooms that open into them through arcades. Architecturally, these halls are designed as two-story buildings as they are seen from outside, with entrances on the ground floor and above them a line of windows, but inside there is only one story with walls designed in two stories. The room is covered by vaulting, with small domes in between. The center of each façade is accentuated architectonically by an iwan, as in Safavid caravansarays. Some have bent entrances as at Seifid Ab, to prevent people from looking into one court from the other, thus allowing one to function as a selamlık (men’s quarters) and the other as a haremlık (women’s quarters). Large caravansarays along important trade routes may have had double courts, with several rooms in one or two corners, for the separate accommodation of the royal entourage and embassies from abroad. This arrangement can be found in both Safavid and Qajar caravansarays.

Along other highways small pavilions were built to serve as royal way stations as well as hunting lodges. One such example is the ‘Aliabad pavilion, with one story (fig. 2)10 and nine rooms of unequal size on a stone platform of 17.5 x 16.7 m (outside measurements) which would be too small to house the whole entourage of a prince. It can be assumed that they lived in tents in an enclosed area around the stone pavilion to which only the prince and his closest companions had access. Unfortunately all possible traces of such an enclosure have been erased from the terrain by farming. The domed rooms at the center of the ‘Aliabad pavilion are richly ornamented by stellate vaults with intersecting ribs, but their state of preservation is too poor to show painting or other vault decoration.

Safavid palaces in Isfahan, Qazvin, and Kashan
were enclosed by walls which had their own impressive gatehouses. Several types of buildings were used for this function. At the 'Ali Qapu in Isfahan\textsuperscript{11} the open loggia (tālār) is supported by wooden columns standing above the gateway's monumental ground floor. In Kashan\textsuperscript{12} the gatehouses of the palace and of the Bagh-i Fin garden bore a strong resemblance to each other, as the sketches of Engelbert Kaempfer reveal (fig. 15). The façades of both buildings had a tripartite elevation. The heavily modified gatehouse of the palace quarters in Qazvin, also called the 'Ali Qapu,\textsuperscript{13} can be reconstructed (fig. 16) using a drawing by Kaempfer. It had a façade of arcades or blind arcades similar to those in mosque courtyards and caravansarays.

Building materials used for these structures ranged from mud brick and baked brick (used on the foundations of quarried stone) to quarried stone mixed with lime mortar, to square stone, to wood. Vaulted ceilings of stone or mud brick were often richly decorated with painting, carved stucco, and tiled muqarnas. Carved wooden columns and wooden capitals, painted flat wooden ceilings, fresco paintings on the walls and ceilings, and painted muqarnas were often used for the interior design of important buildings. They can be found in the 'Ali Qapu and other surviving pavilions at Isfahan, as well as smaller palaces such as the one in Tajabad and others in the city of Na'īn.\textsuperscript{14}

In contrast to the richly decorated interiors, the outer walls were sparingly decorated in palaces, caravansarays, and sacred buildings during the Safavid period, but their segmented façades were well proportioned. In them, structural elements functioned at the same time as decoration. The layout of Safavid palatial buildings is usually more harmonious than that of their more recent Qajar counterparts which show a tendency toward exaggeration in design, although they still firmly adhere to the building tradition of ancient Persia.

Like religious buildings, palaces influenced the architecture of those regions that were conquered and at times governed by the Safavids. Before the Safavid era, Iranian Islamic architecture had already influenced neighboring countries. The Çinili Köşk (Tiled Kiosk) of Mehmet II in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul completed in 1472 is a well-known example.\textsuperscript{15} The Safavid art of building also influenced palace architecture in Georgia after its conquest, as can be seen in the palace of the Palavandishvili in Sagina near Tiflis, built in the seventeenth century. It can be compared with the Safavid pavilions along the Royal Road from Isfahan to the Caspian Sea. As early as the sixteenth century the residence of the shah of Nardaran in northern Azerbaijan shows the characteristic features seen in later Safavid pavilions, both in its ground plan and its façades.\textsuperscript{16}

Influences from abroad are hardly discernible on Safavid buildings with the possible exception of the interior design of palace architecture, where European-influenced painted decorations were widely used. On the mural paintings of the Chihil Sutun in Isfahan, for example, courtiers of both sexes are represented in typical European dress of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{17} It was not until the Qajar period that the influence of European architecture was increasingly felt in such interior-design elements as local interpretations of classical columns, capitals, or mirrors (already encountered in late Safavid architecture).\textsuperscript{18} Despite their rapid incorporation of foreign elements, however, these buildings perpetuated a long-established local tradition of palace architecture.
Notes

1. For Qazvin, see Wolfram Kleiss, “Der safavidsche Pavillon in Qazvin,” Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran (hereafter AMI) 9 (1976): 290-98. Bibliography on the Isfahan palace is provided in Necipoğlu’s paper in this volume.


6. I have measured Tajabad, but have not yet published the results.


13. Kleiss, Die Entwicklung von Palästen, fig. 45.

14. For Nayin, see S. K. Yetkin, Islam Mimarii (Ankara, 1959), 421; for further bibliography, see O’Kane’s article in this volume.


17. For the mural paintings in Isfahan and further bibliography, see Necipoğlu’s article in this volume.

Fig. 1. Ground plans of (A) the Sasanian building at Damghan, (B) the “Sasanian” palace of Sarvistan, (C) the Safavid palace of Talar-e Ashraf in Isfahan, and (D) the palace near Natanz with the tripartite arrangement of parallel axes.

Fig. 2. ‘Aliabad near Furk. Plan of the palace building.
Fig. 4. Pavilion at the citadel of Bam.

Fig. 8. Isfahan. The Safavid pavilion east of the Hasht Bihisht.
Fig. 5. ‘Abbasabad, north of Natanz. (A) view from the west, (B) view from the north with the remains of the farm buildings, (C) view from the east, (D) view from the south (garden side), (E) section of hall and iwan, (F) section of the main axis, (G) cross-section of the domed space.
Fig. 6. Tajabad. Domed building. Floor plan and section.
Fig. 7. Tajabad. Palace. (top) Plan of ground and upper floor; (bottom) longitudinal section of the front of the south side.
Fig. 8. Isfahan. Pavilion in the Rose Garden. After E. Kaempfer.

Fig. 9. Natanz. Gonbad Baz. (left) Ground plan; (right above) east-west section; (below) view from the south.
SAFAVID PALACES

Fig. 11a. Palace of Safiabad. Entrance. After Rabino.
Les provinces cauveroises de la Perse, pl. 86.

Fig. 11b. Palace of Safiabad. Building with terrace substructure.
After Rabino, Les provinces cauveroises de la Perse, pl. 94.

Fig. 12. Palace of Shaikh-i Zaman in Ashraf/Behshahr.
After Rabino, Les provinces cauveroises de la Perse, pl. 95.
Fig. 13. Six desert palaces along the Royal Road. From Wolfram Kleiss, *Die Entwicklung von Palästen und palastartigen Wohnbauten in Iran* (Vienna, 1989), fig. 64.

Fig. 14. Palace at Germab. (top to bottom) Longitudinal section of the main building; courtyard façade; longitudinal section of the whole structure; and view of the exterior façade. From Kleiss, *Die Entwicklung von Palästen*, fig. 65.

Fig. 15. Kashan. Reconstruction of the gatehouses of the Safavid palace. After E. Kaempfer, pl. 24.

Fig. 16. Qazvin. Gatehouse of the palace ('Ali Qapu) as reconstructed by E. Kaempfer. From Engelbert Kaempfer zum 330. Geburtstag (1982), fig. 13.
The Mughal empire (1526–1858) at its height was one of the largest centralized states that ever existed before modern times, considerably surpassing in wealth its Ottoman and Safavid rivals. Yet only a quarter of its subjects were Muslim, and therefore the Mughal rulers realized that, although they were the highest authority, any successful relationship with their largely Hindu subjects rested on carefully balanced yet constantly fluctuating relationships between the ruler and the nobles responsible for maintaining imperial authority throughout the hinterlands. Vital to the flow of Mughal power as well as the execution of justice were its palaces, both imperial and sub-imperial.1

Under no other Islamic dynasty do we see such widespread construction of imperial palaces. They were built most extensively under the first five Mughal emperors, that is from 1526 to 1658, the apex of Mughal culture, economy, and stability. But palace construction continued, though not so extensively, to the time of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II (1837–58), a Sufi and poet. Known by his łaqāb, Zafar, he built his palace, the Zafar Mahal, just south of the walled city of Delhi, called Shahjahanabad since the mid-seventeenth century. It is not on the edge of water, the normal location for a Mughal palace, but at the dargāh (shrine) of the Chishti saint Bakhtiyar Kaki.3

For Bahadur Shah, the palace setting was critical, as it had been for his predecessors. Its proximity to Bakhtiyar Kaki’s Chishti shrine reflects earlier Mughal tradition. The establishment of Fatehpur Sikri, commenced in 1571 by Akbar (1556–1605) at the khanqah of another Chishti saint, Shaykh Salim, is well known. Similarly the lakeside palace of Jahangir (1605–27) and Shah Jahan (1628–58) on the Ana Sagar in Ajmer serves as a royal link with India’s premier Chishti dargah, that of Mu’in al-Din, in the town. In Delhi the Din-Panah of Humayun (1530–40; 1555–56) was adjacent to the Chishti shrine of Nizam al-Din Auliya; it was furthermore on the site of Indraprashtra, associated with the epic Mahabharata, thus linking the Mughals with both religious authority and an ancient pre-Islamic Indian past.

The settings of other Mughal palaces were intended as metaphors of control. The gardens of the first Mughal ruler Babur (1526–30) served as his palaces; they symbolized his ability to hold and mold unruly Hindustan.6 It is no surprise, then, that one was located at the site of his victory over the last independent sultan of Delhi.8 The fort of the third Mughal, Akbar, in Agra was identified in official chronicles with the “center of Hindustan,”9 recalling the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur’s conception of Baghdad. The fifth Mughal ruler, Shah Jahan, claiming that the streets of Agra were too narrow for imperial processions, moved the Mughal capital to Delhi,10 returning it to the seat of Islamic conquest. The Allahabad fort, established by Akbar to protect his eastern hinterlands in 1583,11 was positioned to overlook India’s most sacred site, the Tribeni, where the Jumna, Ganges, and the invisible Saraswati rivers meet. Abu al-Fazl, Akbar’s confidant and chronicler, calls it the king of shrines12 for India’s Hindu population, the majority of Akbar’s subjects. The fort is clearly a statement of Mughal authority over earlier traditions and thus at the same time a link with the past.

Site significance aside, where within these general sites were the major Mughal palaces constructed? Following Timurid precedent, we might expect palaces to be on the outskirts of the cities. For example, Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo’s description of Timur’s palaces in Samarkand clearly indicates that they were away from populated areas.13 Yet most Mughal palaces are on the edge of a river or lake and at the same time in the heart of the city.

While in pre-Mughal India palaces were always within fortified citadels, Timurid palaces rarely were.14 The Mughals adapted this earlier Indian tradition for their administrative palaces, rejecting that of their Timurid ancestors, in part because the palaces’ central location demanded a solution to privacy. Fortifications assured this privacy and, in addition, provided protection needed particularly during Akbar’s reign, when Mughal territory was undergoing rapid consolidation. Yet imperial palaces continued to be fortified during subsequent reigns, when the
Mughal empire was considerably more stable, aside from occasional internecine struggles for the throne. Shah Jahan’s residence in Shahjahanabad, known popularly as the Delhi Red Fort, is but one among many examples of subsequent fortified imperial palaces.\(^\text{15}\) Abu al-Fazl, who during Akbar’s reign had formulated much of the theoretical basis of Mughal kingship, had noted that the construction of mighty fortresses is for worldly power.\(^\text{16}\) Shah Jahan and other Mughal emperors obviously recognized this. Mughal fortified palaces are designed as a series of walled quadrangular units often with gardens.\(^\text{17}\) This follows Timurid precedents where palaces were set in garden compounds.\(^\text{18}\) As might be expected in the mature Mughal palace—for example, those of Shah Jahan in the Agra, Delhi, and Lahore forts—movement is from public to increasingly private areas. The palace’s compounds and pavilions on the side overlooking water are reserved for the emperor and his family, as for example in the imperial quarters of Shah Jahan, known today as the Khass Mahal, and that of his daughter, Jahanara, both at the Agra fort.\(^\text{19}\) Such an arrangement seems to have been established with Akbar’s initial structures in the Agra fort.\(^\text{20}\) The sole exception appears to be at Fatehpur Sikri, where the terrain possibly forced a new and never again repeated configuration.\(^\text{21}\) The placement of imperial structures overlooking water, generally a river, is an arrangement influential in the design of sub-imperial palaces as well.

To what extent does royal ceremony affect the layout of the Mughal palace, the design of its buildings, and even the materials used? Akbar’s sense of ceremony was innovative and fluid, suggesting that many rooms had a variety of functions.\(^\text{22}\) This is in keeping with our understanding of chambers in many Islamic palaces, and in part explains why the magnificently carved so-called Turkish Sultana’s palace or even the so-called Diwan-i-Khass, both of them at Fatehpur Sikri, are so difficult to place in categories.\(^\text{23}\) By Shah Jahan’s time, court ceremony had become formal and rigid with certain events transacted in fixed locales and at fixed times.\(^\text{24}\) Concomitant with this is the generally similar organization of Shah Jahan’s palace-forts at Agra, Delhi, and Lahore where there is a high degree of uniformity in the layout and appearance of similar building types. For example, the Chihil Sutun (public audience hall) at each of these palaces has a common plan and elevation; even the materials used are consistent.\(^\text{25}\)

Perhaps what makes Mughal ceremony different from that of the contemporary Ottomans and Safavids is the formal presentation of the emperor to his subjects and nobles (fig. 1).\(^\text{26}\) The Mughal ruler was charged with the execution of justice, a concept based on well-established Perso-Islamic traditions, but to this was added the Indian concept of kingship identifying the ruler as a father to his subjects.\(^\text{27}\) Abu al-Fazl, who developed for Mughal court ceremony the practice of presentation, conflated the Islamic notion that kings should be accessible to their subjects with the Hindu practice of darshan, that is, beholding.\(^\text{28}\) The practice of darshan in the royal context derives from a religious concept in which beholding a deity’s image imparts auspicious blessing to the beholder. Hindu kingship extended darshan to the monarch. Since the Mughals believed themselves semi-divine, the adaptation of darshan in their own court ceremony with all its connotations—secular and sacred—was intentional.\(^\text{29}\) Underscoring the religious aspect of this ritual were devotees, known as darshaniyya or darshani; they offered prayers for the emperor’s health and safety, and many would fast until they had gazed upon the emperor’s face.\(^\text{30}\) The practice of imperial darshan to the public was maintained until the reign of Aurangzeb (1658–1707), the most orthodox of all the Mughal rulers. Offended by its Hindu origins, he banned the practice.\(^\text{31}\)

We know little about darshan as enacted by Hindu rulers before Akbar’s time. We do not know where it was performed nor do we have details of the ceremony surrounding it, although we know a great deal about the darshan of a deity as represented by an image in the sanctum of a temple (garbha griha).\(^\text{32}\) The imperial Mughal practice of darshan is, however, well documented by chroniclers—both Mughal writers and foreign travelers—and by material remains at the palace sites. The Mughal rulers presented themselves in two ways. One was a truly public presentation that anyone could attend, that is, through a window, jharoka-i darshan, opening to the outside of the palace (fig. 2). The Mughal palace, therefore, had to be in the heart of the city, so the emperor’s subjects could attend the ceremony. Illustrations depicting this ritual under Jahangir and Shah Jahan survive, although it is the nobility, not the Hindu masses, who are shown beneath the imperial jharoka (fig. 1; see Necipoğlu, fig. 23).\(^\text{33}\) The earliest surviving jharoka-i darshan is at Fatehpur Sikri (fig. 3).\(^\text{34}\) It consists of an overhanging balcony probably derived from the small projecting windows that abound on earlier Rajput palaces,
although there they appear to be functional, not ritual, features. At Fatehpur Sikri the jharoka is aligned with Akbar’s sleeping chamber and with his private audience hall. Because Akbar’s personal quarters at Fatehpur Sikri—an architectural extension of himself—are centrally situated between the jharoka and his private audience hall, his role as the dispenser of justice is visually underscored.

The second type of jharoka was situated in the public audience hall, where most of the nobility was admitted. This type, the one at which the emperor presented himself to nobles, was larger than the jharoka-i darshan. The earliest known is Akbar’s jharoka in his public audience hall at Fatehpur Sikri (fig. 4). Under Shah Jahan this type of jharoka evolves rapidly. The most elaborate is the one in the public audience hall of his Shahjahanabad palace (fig. 5; see Necipoğlu, figs. 21–22 [6], 25). This white marble throne was covered with a sloping bangala roof or balda- chin supported by four baluster columns; its elements are borrowed from Western regal and religious iconography.

Other features of imperial palaces also take on iconographic significance. For example, Koch argues that in Shah Jahan’s period, the use of the baluster column and bangala roof on the jharoka in the public audience hall of Shah Jahan’s Delhi palace is a highly conscious projection of Solomonic imagery. In Akbar’s time as well, particularly at Fatehpur Sikri, the widespread use of forms and motifs that earlier had been used commonly on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Muslim and Hindu structures can be linked with the efforts he was making to encourage a more active role for Indians, especially Indian Muslims, in his administration. These forms do not necessarily carry the same meaning in sub-imperial architecture. For example, in Shah Jahan’s reign we do not see the baluster column, an imperial perquisite, in sub-imperial buildings. It is not yet clear whether there was an iconography of formal elements developed on a sub-imperial level.

We tend to associate Akbar’s palaces with red sandstone and Shah Jahan’s with white marble. This represents much more than a simple change of taste in the years between these two monarchs. At the time of Akbar, with the exception of his private audience hall in the Agra fort, white marble was reserved for saints’ tombs, for example those of Mu’in al-Din Chishti in Ajmer and Shaykh Salim Chishti (1580–81) at Fatehpur Sikri (fig. 6). Following Akbar’s reign, marble is increasingly found on the tombs of the royal family. For example, it forms the top floor of Akbar’s tomb in Sikandra, dated 1612–14, but by 1626–27 when the queen Nur Jahan constructed her parents’ tomb in Agra, better known as the tomb of Itimad al-Daula, most of the façade is inlaid marble. Then starting in Jahangir’s reign marble increasingly is used for palaces. But where it is predominantly used has strict limits even in Shah Jahan’s reign. White marble is the medium of his thrones and structures along the waterfront reserved for imperial use such as his private audience halls (Daulat Khana-i Khass) in the Delhi and Agra forts. But marble is not used for the Chihil Sutun (public audience hall), the area where the nobility stood to view the emperor enthroned in his marble jharoka. There the columns are sandstone, albeit faced with burnished plaster resembling marble. Similarly on Shah Jahan’s public mosques marble is restricted to trim or to the qibla wall, but it is the sole fabric only of mosques reserved for imperial use or associated with the Chishti. Thus marble in Mughal palaces helps blur the lines between ruler and the divine.

By contrast to the imperial palace, we have considerably less information on the sub-imperial palace, that is, the dwellings of subadar (governors), jagirdars (landholders), and zamindars (petty chieftains). Although the residences of subadar were erected in every province, the best preserved are in eastern India. These palaces range from Akbar’s time through the early eighteenth century, the period when most imperial palaces were constructed. Three Akbar-period palaces survive in various degrees of completeness. Two of them were palaces of Mun‘im Khan, one at Jaunpur about sixty kilometers north of Varanasi, the other at Chunar, about twenty-five kilometers west of Varanasi.

Jaunpur earlier had been a leading intellectual center in northern India during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries under the Sharqi dynasty and the site of an impressive fortress. The Mughals, aware of the importance of maintaining high visibility in eastern India, gave Jaunpur prime military importance until the Bihar Gangetic valley fell to the Mughals later in Akbar’s reign. In 1567 Akbar gave Jaunpur as his jagir to his vakil, Mun‘im Khan Khan-i Khanan. His tenure in Jaunpur and the extensive surrounding territory, including Chunar, lasted until his death in 1575.

Mun‘im Khan, in response to an earlier imperial order, built a great deal in Jaunpur, including
his famed bridge, and encouraged others to build there as well. The evidence, however, is primarily written since virtually nothing remains of his palace in the fort except a large hammam (fig. 7) and a pavilion known as the Hawalat. The palace was destroyed after the uprising of 1857 out of exaggerated concern for the safety of British civilians. In addition to the extant hammam and Hawalat, we know about a now-demolished pavilion that once formed part of Mun'tam Khan's Jaunpur palace. It was described and drawn by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European travelers.

The palace is located in the fort at the center of the city, adhering to the placement of imperial Mughal palaces. The fortified walls were modified only slightly and a local-style gate was added on the east. The walls surrounding the imperial palaces, however, have been completely rebuilt. For example, in 1565, only two years before Mun'tam Khan became the jagirdar of Jaunpur, Akbar had reconstructed the Agra fort with uniformly bonded Sikri sandstone. This medium for the walls of fortified palaces was to become an imperial trademark in the Delhi Doab, as seen, for example, in Akbar's Allahabad fort (1583) and Shah Jahan's Delhi fort inaugurated in 1648.

Although the fort walls maintained a local character, Mun'tam Khan's palace pavilion and hammam follow imperial taste. The pavilion is situated on the fort's pinnacle and commanded a sweeping view of the river. Hodges's eighteenth-century lithograph (fig. 8) indicates that the Jaunpur pavilion was visible from below, a symbol of Mughal presence in lieu of a former Sharqi one. Although nothing remains of the rest of the palace, its location, overlooking the river, suggests that it was intended for the governor's use.

The hammam dominating the fort's interior may give clues to the palace's ceremonial function. Even though no free-standing pavilion remains, the bath's sheer size, close to that of some at Fatehpur Sikri, indicates that it was a focal feature of the fort. Indeed it is larger than the nearby fourteenth-century mosque which it purportedly served. It is, moreover, the earliest hammam known in eastern India. Its interior vaulting (fig. 9) and exterior form reveal a close relation to the surviving Mughal hammams at Fatehpur Sikri which must have been built about the same time. The Jaunpur hammam's appearance in the easternmost hinterlands early in Akbar's reign indicates a rapid spread of technology and imperial taste, here echoed in a sub-imperial palace setting.

The bath's prominent position and size suggest that the hammam served as a council chamber. Babur had used gardens and their baths to counter the heat and aridity of the Indian plains; ultimately they served as a metaphor for his ability to rule. Can we by extension interpret the presence of this disproportionately large hammam, at the time of its construction a sign of technological innovation, as a symbol of Mughal authority in this easternmost hinterland? Bolstering this suggestion is Mun'tam Khan's bridge at the fort's base, considered even two centuries after its construction by both Mughal and British writers as one of the great achievements of the empire. We might argue that in lieu of particular formal elements or materials to create an iconography of power, here Mun'tam Khan has used technology as the voice of authority.

Mun'tam Khan's Chunar residence appears to have had much in common with the one he built at Jaunpur. He built a bath there, though it cannot be examined today because this part of the fort is in a military zone. We might, however, speculate that he built it for the same reason he built one at Jaunpur. Similarly he built a pavilion overlooking the Ganges. Adhering strongly to an early Mughal idiom, its riverfront façade consists of a pillared veranda, recalling both Central Asian buildings and those Mughal structures inspired by Central Asian prototypes.

We have no record indicating who used this sub-imperial structure or even, in fact, its precise function. Nor do we know if it properly can be considered a palace. Yet its prominent presence, visible from a considerable distance by a traveler on the Ganges below, suggests that it played a role similar to Mun'tam Khan's larger Jaunpur palace. This pavilion appears to be the main part of a once larger complex. It probably served as the qal'adhar's house, that is the house of Mun'tam Khan's Chunar agent. Likely, however, it was recognized as representing the authority of Mun'tram Khan Khan-i Khanan, Akbar's vakil, even though he was absent from Chunar most of the time. This image would seem appropriate for a site associated earlier with a serious Mughal loss.

The best preserved and most impressive sub-imperial palace in all India is in the Rohtas fort (Rohtasgarh) situated in Bihar's Kaimar Hills. In 1587–88 Raja Man Singh was appointed Akbar's governor of Bihar, and there inside the fort he built the enormous palace; it was completed on March 15, 1597, that is several years after Man Singh left Bihar to become the governor of Bengal. Constructing a palace of any sort, to say
nothing of a palace so enormous, in an area he no longer governed is remarkable. It is all the more remarkable since Man Singh’s income-yielding lands had been shifted as well.64 However, his investment in the palace may explain why Akbar and later Jahangir allowed Man Singh to hold Rohtas for twenty years, when most jagirs were shifted after about two years.

Man Singh, like Mun‘im Khan, was a high-ranking noble under Akbar. A Hindu raja, Man Singh was related to the Mughals through marriage and enjoyed a close personal relationship with the emperor. Man Singh had been raised in the imperial court, and Akbar called him farzand (son). Upon the death of Man Singh’s father in 1589, Akbar passed to him his father’s title and control over his ancestral lands (watan jāgir) of Amber in western India. His personal and official status allowed him to play a dual role—one as Mughal mansabdār (military officer) and subadār (governor), the other as a Hindu raja, that is, a prince in his own right.

Like Jaunpur and the imperial models, the Rohtas palace was situated in the most heavily populated portion of the fort.65 Its central location, its size (198 x 182 meters), and the monumental scale of its structures constituted an impressive statement of Mughal authority. Of this there is no doubt, especially when the sophistication of this palace is compared to the rudimentary dwelling of the local chieftain, Puran Mal, considered the area’s finest zamindari estate.66 It consisted only of exterior walls and had no interior pavilions. Raja Man Singh had subdued the recalcitrant Puran Mal and others in eastern India who claimed that Rohtas was originally their home.67 Upon coming to court, these zamindars, now loyal to the Mughals, would see the palace in the context of local lore. For Man Singh had placed the palace so that, when approaching it from the main ascent, the viewer first passed two temples.68 The higher one reputedly was dedicated to the hill’s tutelary deity, Rohitāṣva. At its base is a temple built by Raja Man Singh and said to be dedicated to Hariśchandra, a mythical king whose qualities embodied truth and integrity. By building the monumental palace, the raja further associated himself with the legendary Hariśchandra, for he was said to have had a magic palace that could grant all its owner’s wishes. Thus just as Islamic rulers evoke the glory of Solomon in their palaces,69 so too Raja Man Singh manipulated local tradition to strengthen the aura of power associated with this palace and Man Singh himself. By doing this, we might argue that Man Singh transcends the normative role of a Mughal governor. Like Akbar, when he chose the site of the Allahabad fort, Man Singh played upon the locale’s age-old tradition.

Raja Man Singh’s Rohtas palace is a rich topic, but here I will focus on just three features that help frame problems relating to the sub-imperial palaces. These are layout and function, jharīka, and inscriptions.

Rohtas’s location made the usual water setting for imperial palaces impossible; compensation was achieved through the use of multistoried pavilions that provided a river view. The tallest is a four-storied structure (fig. 10) that contains the private audience hall in the second floor below.70 Its top floor, consisting of two pillared chhatris, provides a panoramic view that includes the Rohiśaṭva temple in the distance and the majestic river below. This palace was aligned with a temple, just as some imperial Mughal palaces—for example, Humayun’s Din-Panah and Akbar’s Fatehpur Sikri—were associated with shrines. The vista from the Rohtas palace’s highest point, accessible only through the private audience hall, is comparable to the view from the emperor’s quarters in imperial palaces.

Rohtas palace like Fatehpur Sikri and other palaces is divided into administrative and domestic units (fig. 11), but unlike both imperial Mughal or Rajput models, it has only one main entrance. Many entrances, however, pierce the massive fortified walls surrounding the palace complex.71 The palace’s entrance (fig. 12), known as the Hathiya Pol or Elephant Gate, is flanked by carved elephants, a traditional emblem of Indian kingship, recalling major entrances to Fatehpur Sikri and other Mughal forts.72

Included in the administrative unit are the fine free-standing pavilions known as the Baradari (fig. 13) and the Phul Mahal. They are immediately visible upon entering the Hathiya Pol; this proximity to the entrance suggests a more public than private function. These multistoried free-standing pavilions probably served no single purpose, but met a variety of needs, as did pavilions generally at contemporary imperial palaces.73

The most private part of the palace (marked “W” on the plan) is the zone furthest from the entrance (fig. 11). Its traditional attribution as a zenana (female quarters) is probably accurate, since it closely resembles surviving Mughal zenanas as well as parts of Man Singh’s own palace in Amber, also considered a zenana.74 Within the zenana courtyard is a large free-standing structure known as the Shish Mahal. Linked by a
narrow passage to the private audience hall, this pavilion probably served as the raja’s own quarters, possibly a link with older Rajput tradition. The ground floor, however, follows a traditional Mughal palace type; that is, it has a large central vaulted chamber surrounded by eight smaller rooms. The entire zenana may seem disproportionately large, but one major purpose of this palace must have been the protection of women residents when the raja was away.

Two of the palace’s key features are sufficiently different from the imperial model in scale and design to suggest a fundamental departure. These are the hammam and the private audience hall. The hammam, unlike that in Mun‘im Khan’s Jaunpur palace or imperial ones, is a small undistinguished structure in a distant courtyard that has no link with the residential units. This seems to reflect the patron’s taste, for hammams were a Mughal not a Rajput feature. There are none at Raja Man Singh’s palace at Amber. None were needed since that palace symbolized his role as raja, not as Mughal agent.

More significant is the area that is almost certainly a private audience hall (fig. 14). Its design suggests that this palace reflects more than Mughal interests. The interior is carved stone, as opposed to all the other pavilions, which have stucco interiors. The privileged use of stone in this chamber recalls the exclusive use of marble for saints’ shrines and the imperial throne by the contemporary Mughal emperor Akbar. While the carved brackets and the vaulting of the semi-domes at the end generally recall Akbar-period architecture, the rest of this hall is much less Mughal in feeling than the other major structures at Rohtas, for example, the Shish Mahal or the Baradari. In part this is a result of the low ceilings and the enclosed feeling given by the heavy brackets and piers.

The central bay on the west wall of the private audience hall almost certainly served as a throne niche, its S-shaped brackets framing the seated governor (fig. 15). Although we do not know what the throne niche at earlier Hindu palaces looked like, these curved stone brackets recall parts of the palace of Man Singh Tomar, which the Hindu raja of Gwalior built about 1500. The private audience hall is the most elaborate part of the Rohtas palace complex. Its use of stone, its heaviness, and the enclosed appearance of the throne chamber located at the back of the hall together recall the porch (mandapa) leading to a temple’s sanctum (garbha griha) where the deity is enshrined—perhaps intentionally since Man Singh was a Hindu ruler (fig. 16).

The ceremonial character of the palace is further evident in the enormous quadrangle measuring 168 x 54 meters that fronts the palace proper. Although traditionally called a saray, this quadrangle is a Daulat Khana-i Khass or ‘Amm (public audience hall) similar to the one at Fatehpur Sikri that contains the emperor’s jharoka. At Rohtas in the center of the quadrangle’s east wall are projecting oriel windows (fig. 17). While such windows belong to the tradition of Hindu Rajput architecture—for example, those at the fifteenth-century palace of Chitor—they’re central position on the wall, just above a raised plinth, suggests that this is the Rohtas palace’s jharoka. This location, behind the private audience hall, follows Abu al-Fazl’s description of a jharoka, which he says “opens into the state hall for the transaction of business.” The identification of this quadrangle with a Daulat Khana-i Khass or ‘Amm and its size raise questions about the role governors were allowed to play in the Mughal hinterlands. If the jharoka is the focal point of Mughal ceremony in the imperial palace—a ceremony that distinguishes this house from other Islamic ones—we must consider how this ceremony and the jharoka needed to be called it out is reflected in the sub-imperial palace.

We might start by asking if Man Singh’s palace included a jharoka because this was a perquisite of a subadar or because he was a raja in his own right and the practice of darshan was part of an older Hindu tradition of kingship. When I first identified the palace’s forecourt and projecting windows as a public viewing court, I assumed that such windows were a traditional part of the sub-imperial palace. Increasingly I wonder, however, how common the jharoka in sub-imperial palaces was. The material remains are few, and I have only found four Mughal texts that mention sub-imperial use of the jharoka: Jahangir’s Tüzuk-i Jahāngirī, Mirza Nathan’s Bahārīstān-i Ghaybī, Shaykh Farid Bhakari’s Dhakhrot al-Khawāsīn, and the Mā‘ūtīr. Farid Bhakari, a seventeenth-century biographer of Mughal amirs, refers to Jagan Nath Kachhwaha, one of Man Singh’s uncles, who built royal buildings and a jharoka-i darshan in Purmandal, his long-term landholding not far from modern Jammu. Jagan Nath was a loyal retainer of Akbar, having served him in the Punjab, Ajmer, and even as overseer of roads, yet he held no independent governorship. It thus seems likely that it is Jagan
Nath’s status as a Rajput prince, possibly even more specifically a Kachhwaha prince, not so much his status as a Mughal amir, that justifies his use of the jharōka. Underscoring this idea is a surviving jharōka at Man Singh’s mansion, the Man Mandir, overlooking the Ganges in Varanasi. This was one of his private homes, built for religious purposes to be near to the city’s esteemed Viṣvanāth temple. The presence of a jharōka here must have been related to his role as a Rajput prince related to the Mughal imperial family.

A second contemporary to mention sub-imperial use of the jharōka is the emperor Jahangir. In 1611, Jahangir complained that amirs on the borders were behaving as if they were rulers, and to discourage it he banned a number of practices considered imperial prerogatives. Prohibited first was the use of the jharōka, followed by bans on the salutation of amirs by officers, prostration before amirs, and holding elephant fights, among other things. Jahangir did not identify these amirs in the hinterlands by name, but he probably counted Man Singh among them. Somewhat earlier he had complained about the raja’s arrogant refusal to leave Rohtas, even though he had been summoned to court six or seven times. Lacking Akbar’s admiration for the raja, yet realizing his power, Jahangir referred to him as “one of the hypocrites and old wolves of this state.”

Despite Jahangir’s order two independent sources report that Islam Khan, the governor of Bengal, introduced the practice of jharōka. One is a Mughal biographer writing long after Islam Khan’s death; he wrote, “He carried the customs of high office (rūsuk-i amārā) to such a high pitch that he used the jharōka for exhibiting himself to the high and low . . . which . . . [is] . . . fitting only for kings.” This is confirmed by a rare eyewitness account of an officer, Mirza Nathan, who served under Islam Khan. Mirza Nathan recounts that Islam Khan erected a jharōka consisting of a small pavilion resting on a “platform higher than the height of two men.” He notes that paying homage to the governor Islam Khan became mandatory, and when some of his officers refused they were imprisoned; however, there was no imperial intervention, and Jahangir continued to praise Islam Khan as one of his most successful officers.

Two points emerge from this: One is that Jahangir enforced his ban on the use of the jharōka selectively; the other is that Hindu Rajput princes appear to have been more readily permitted use of the jharōka than other nobles, Hindu or Muslim, since it was part of their tradition. Moreover, the princes cited are all Kachhwahas, the first Rajput family to give their daughters in marriage to the Mughal emperors and to enter into close relations with them.

The size of the Rohtas palace, the presence of a jharōka and other areas likely to be used for audiences, and the association with local lore suggest that to Man Singh the palace meant more than a governor’s residence. This is bolstered by inscriptions showing that Man Singh recognized his dual role as Mughal governor and Hindu raja. On a large stone slab at the palace entrance gate are two inscriptions, one in Persian and one in Sanskrit. The one in Persian is elegantly rendered in a cursive nasta’i with a sinuous floral design, recalling the 1591–92 inscription on the Buland Darwaza at Fatehpur Sikri. The use of such exquisite calligraphy is unusual in the eastern Mughal hinterlands, which suggests that the inscription was intended to be noticed and read. Its text implies that Raja Man Singh built the palace as a servant of Akbar, for it addresses the emperor extensively and makes only a brief reference to Man Singh, the actual patron. But in the Sanskrit portion, longer in text but with cramped letters on a smaller slab, Raja Man Singh asserts his own authority as head of the Kachhwaha house, and there Akbar’s name is omitted altogether. Instead, Man Singh is mentioned twice, not using his Mughal title, raja, but rather identifying himself as “king of kings, lord of lords.”

The use of an inflated title on a palace intended to serve both the governor’s needs and those of the state underscores the dual nature of the relationship between the raja and Mughal emperor. Under the Mughal state system, serving the emperor included defending one’s own religion, honor, and even patrimony if necessary. Thus evoking a title that symbolized Rajput ideals and aspirations did not conflict with Man Singh’s role as Akbar’s governor, for both were vital to the successful functioning of the Mughal empire.

After Akbar’s reign sub-imperial palaces continued to be built throughout the empire, but few survive. We will look at two in Bengal and one in western India. The earliest of these palaces is the Shahi Bagh built by Prince Shah Jahan as his residence when he was governor of Gujarat. It was constructed between 1616 and 1623, during Jahangir’s reign. The second is Prince Shah Shuja’i’s palace in Rajmahal constructed when he was Shah Jahan’s governor of Bengal from about
1639 to 1659.97 The third is the Lal Bagh in Dhaka built under several governors, but mainly Prince Muhammad A'zam Shah, between about 1678 and 1684.98 Each of these palaces was built by a Mughal prince who also served as governor. Three aspects of these palaces that relate to earlier sub-imperial and contemporary imperial models sum up the continuities and changes in sub-imperial palaces after Akbar's time: enclosure walls, layout, and the role of a jharōka.

In contrast to the Akbar-period models, Jaunpur, Chunar, and Rohtas, later sub-imperial palaces were no longer built within fortified enclosures, probably as a result of an imperial prohibition. None was built to withstand a siege, although one was walled (Rajmahal), another was surrounded by a ditch filled with water (Shahi Bagh), and a third even appears fortified (Lal Bagh).99 Yet these palaces were constructed at a time when the Mughal emperors were building their own fortified palaces. For example, shortly before these palaces were constructed, Aurangzeb had ordered an additional fortified wall built around the Agra fort, and earlier Shah Jahan had built his Shahjahanabad citadel with fortified red sandstone walls.100

Sub-imperial palaces continue to consist of pavilions placed within chahār-bāgh enclosures. The variety of ceremonial activities carried on in them is shown by the grounds that survive and by descriptions and plans made by Europeans who visited them in Mughal times. Prince Shah Jahan's Shahi Bagh, probably built to counter his dislike for dry, dusty Ahmadabad, consisted of a series of pavilions in a terraced chahār-bāgh setting.101 The buildings comprising the zenana were on the riverbank; the governor's residence (fig. 18) was centrally situated. Today it is used as a museum. It consists of two stories above ground, with the basement serving as the ta khāna, a refuge from the summer heat, where octagonal chambers were graced with pools and streams. The ground floor consists of a central chamber around which are eight smaller rooms, a type popular since at least Akbar's time, and exemplified by Wazir Khan's mansion in Lahore.102 There is no indication, either textual or material, that the palace had an audience hall or jharōka.

There were, however, a jharōka and an audience hall at Prince Shah Shuja't's Rajmahal palace (fig. 19), according to travelers' reports.103 The north façade of the palace's only extant pavilion closely resembles Shah Jahan's imperial jharōka at Agra (fig. 2), a resemblance that appears to be no accident; it reflects the ambitions of Shah Jahan's eldest son. As far as we can tell, no other sub-imperial palace of this time had a jharōka.

There is an apparent explanation for the jharōka here as well as for others in eastern India. Shah Shuja't's desire to succeed Shah Jahan is well known; he was among the first of Shah Jahan's sons to proclaim himself emperor when his father's final illness was reported in 1657.104 Bengal was considered the most difficult province to govern, thus explaining why it was from time to time the refuge of rebel princes; the rebel prince Shah Jahan had made Rajmahal his headquarters.105 To secure his position further he captured much of Bihar, but it was possession of Rohtas that gave him the security he most needed.106 Earlier in remote Rohtas, Raja Man Singh had built his own elaborate palace and jharōka. Could such construction have happened closer to the Mughal heartland, in the Delhi Doab?

Perhaps we can get an answer by considering one of the last sub-imperial palaces, the Lal Bagh in Dhaka, reputedly begun by Prince Muhammad A'zam Shah in 1678 and completed under Shaysta Khan Amir al-Umara, one of the great nobles of Aurangzeb's court.107 None of its residential quarters survive, and we have no textual accounts describing their appearance; however, a tomb, mosque, and audience hall (fig. 20) remain intact.108 The audience hall is a two-storied rectangular structure; the triple-arched central bay of both the east and west façades is surmounted by a curved bangala roof. Although larger, it resembles in overall appearance the jharōka at Rajmahal. But it is even closer in appearance to Shah Jahan's own public viewing window (jharōka) at his Lal Mahal at Bari and the one at the Agra fort (fig. 2).109 This suggests that the Lal Bagh pavilion was used as an audience hall and its windows as a jharōka. This seems all the more significant since about a decade before the palace was begun Aurangzeb himself had abandoned the use of the jharōka-i darshan (presentation to the public).110 In other words, at the Dhaka Lal Bagh, the public audience hall has been given the appearance of the now-banned imperial jharōka-i darshan. While the Lal Bagh palace's jharōka was intended for a somewhat more limited audience,111 the very fact that in Bengal the audience hall has a jharōka, even if not one that overlooks the fort's exterior, suggests that in this easternmost province forms elsewhere prohibited, here, as in previous eras, continued to be built and used.
Notes

1. This paper is not intended as a comprehensive survey of Mughal palaces. Rather, it seeks to address such aspects as setting, fortifications, ceremony, and building material. Imperial palaces are discussed only insofar as they set the stage for sub-imperial ones. Under the term sub-imperial palaces I include those intended for governors (subadārs), landholders (jagirdārs), and chieftains (zamindars).


3. For its location at the dargāh, see Ara, Dargahs in Medieval India, 97, fig. 7. The palace is marked Q' on the plan.

4. The founding of Fatehpur Sikri is mentioned in a number of contemporary sources; these references are compiled in Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry, eds., Fatehpur-Sikri: A Sourcebook (Cambridge, Mass.: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1985), 27–40.

5. See Har Bilas Sarda, Ajmer: Historical and Descriptive (Ajmer: Scottish Mission Industries Co., 1911), map facing p. 33, for the placement of the palace and dargāh. The surviving pavilions appear to be Shah Jahan’s.


17. See, for example, the schematic drawings of the Delhi fort in Pratapaditya Pal et al., eds., Romance of the Taj Mahal (London: Thames and Hudson and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989), figs. 72, 252, and, in this volume, Necipoğlu, figs. 21–22.


20. For example, the Akbar-period Jahangiri Mahal, probably used by the highest-ranking palace women, overlooks the river and is next to the Khass Mahal. The Khass Mahal is Shah Jahan’s, but it probably replaced a structure of similar function.

21. For plans of the Fatehpur Sikri buildings, see Brand and Lowry, Sourcebook, 327–29. Koch, Mughal Architecture, 56, however, suggests the layout reflects Rajput traditions.


23. For illustrations, see Brand and Lowry, Fatehpur-Sikri, vi, x–xi, 3, 30–31, 88, 156.


27. While a paternalistic aspect of kingship is elsewhere in the Islamic world, much more public was the traditional Indian monarch who assumed a role known as māhā-pād, i.e., mother and father to his subjects. It is this aspect that is adapted by Abu al-Fazl and differentiates Mughal concepts from other Islamic ones.

28. For a traditional Islamic view of the need for a ruler’s accessibility, see Nizām al-Mulk, Siyāsāt-nāma, 14. Hindu kingship and darshan are examined by Ronald Inden, “Ritual, Authority and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship,” in Kingship and Authority in South Asia, ed. J. F. Richards (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin, 1978), 54. Darshan in Akbar’s court is explained in Ārā-i Akbar, 1:165. Among the most useful European observations of darshan at the later Mughal court are Thomas Roe, The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India, 1615–19, ed. W. Foster (London: Oxford University Press and Humphrey Milford, 1926), 84–86, 270, 276, 282, 325, and Edward Terry in Samuel Purchas, ed., Hakluytus Postumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes, 20 vols. (Glasgow: James McLehose and Sons, 1905–07), 9:47–48. Throughout this paper darshan will be transliterated as a Persian, not Sanskrit, word to avoid using two systems. Also see Gülru Necipoğlu’s paper in this volume for a discussion of darshan in the Mughal court.

29. Elsewhere I have noted that the Mughal rulers believe themselves semi-divine and an emanation of divine light. See Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, 40. Although this topic needs more attention, it appears that during Akbar’s reign darshan was only loosely associated with a conception of the ruler as an emanation of divine light. For example, Abu al-Fazl in his Ārā-i Akbar, 1:165, only states that Akbar appeared at the jarah-i darshan after his morning prayers, while under Jahangir and Shah Jahan timing of darshan is associated quite clearly with the rising sun. See, for example, Terry, Hakluytus Postumus, 9:47–48, and above n. 28. Akbar’s use of light imagery was directed largely at an exclusive core of elite nobles, members of the Din-i Ilahi, a discipleship order in which the emperor was likened to a pār (master) and his nobles to murids (students), not at the larger public for whom light imagery was intended subsequently. Although the masses were not fully aware of an ideology associating darshan with light imagery, they would understand Akbar’s divine status. See J. F. Richards, “The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir,” in Kingship and Authority in South Asia, 267–68. I am also grateful to John Richards for his personal communication stressing that the association of darshan with light symbolism was by no means fully developed during Akbar’s reign.


31. Khāf Khan, Munṭakhab al-Lubāb, 216, indicates that it was against the shari‘a and thus unlawful.

32. For a description of darshan at a Hindu temple during the seventeenth century in Mughal India, see Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Travels in India, 2 vols., trans. and ed. V. Ball (London: Humphrey Milford and Oxford University Press, 1925), 2:183–

33. For a Jahangir-period illustration, see Stuart Cary Welch, *India: Art and Culture, 1300–1900* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985), 186; fig. 1 in this paper is a Shah Jahan-period example.


42. For a Mughal-period account of the marble pavilion at Akbar’s Agra fort private audience hall, see Nur Bakhsh, “The Agra Fort and Its Buildings,” *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India for 1903–04* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1906), 180. There is also a possibility that the marble jharoka in the Lahore fort’s public audience hall is Akbar’s, although it may date to Jahangir’s reign. For it, see Ebba Koch, *Shah Jahan and Orpheus*, pl. 6. There may be some question about the Akbar-period appearance of Mu’in al-Din’s tomb since it was often re-embellished. But paintings from the *Akbar Nama* illustrating Akbar paying homage to the saint show that the tomb was white, almost surely white marble. See Geeti Sen, *Paintings from the Akbar Nama* (Varanasi: Lustre Press, 1984), p. 9. This likelihood is underscored by William Finch in Samuel Purchas, 4:61, who notes around 1611 that the paving surrounding the tomb was marble. The jāli at the tomb of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Auliya Chishti in Delhi, added in 1562–63, are also marble. See Zafar Hasan, *A Guide to Nizam-ud-Din*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India 10 (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1921), 11–12.

43. For illustrations, see Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, pl. IX and p. 75; see also Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, 109, 131.


45. One exception may be the Agra fort Jami Mosque known as the Moti Mosque. While Kanbūt, *‘Amākī Sāliḥ*, 3:133, terms it a Jami Mosque, it could only have had restricted use since it was inside the fort. Moreover, the mosque was completed in 1653, long after the court’s shift from Agra to Shahjahanabad.


48. The Hawalat is a square-plan chamber, about 8 meters on a side, surmounted by a very low dome. It is entered on the north by a large iwan; its south façade consists of a projecting balcony that overlooks the terrain below. Its height and location suggest that it was a pleasure pavilion, but the possibility that it may have been a ceremonial...
jharoka should be considered. Since its function is unclear, I am excluding it from discussion here. I am grateful to Jeffery McKibben for examining this structure for me.

49. For the bath, see Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, 88-89. Although Führer, *Sharqi Architecture*, 21, does not specifically cite the hammam inside the fort as Mun'im Khan's, stylistic considerations date it to this period. Other authors (for example, Mohammad Fasih-ud-Din, *The Sharqi Monuments of Jawnpur* [Allahabad: Empire Press, 1922], 18) uncritically assume the hammam dates to the Sharqi period.

50. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, 11:120-21, decried the senseless destruction of the pavilion known as the Chihil Sutun. William Hodges, *Travels in India during the Years, 1780-83*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by the Author, 1793), 148, states that the fort's interior had a large number of buildings, while his Select Views in India, 1780-83, 2 vols. (London: Printed by the Author, 1787), 2:33, illustrates this pavilion overlooking the river below. The now-demolished pavilion is generally assumed to date to the Sharqi period; however, Markham Kittoe's 1888 drawing indicates strong Akbar-period features. For an illustration, see John Burton-Page, "Jawnpur," *ER*, vol. 2, pl. VIII, between pp. 498 and 499.


52. Akbar Nāma, 2:372.

53. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, 9:120, indicates that the pavilion crowned the highest part of the fort overlooking the bridge below. Führer, *Sharqi Architecture*, 25, states it was on the southwest corner. Hodges, Select Views, 2:33, illustrates this pavilion overlooking the river below. George Annesley Mountnorris, *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt in the Years 1802, 1803, 1804, and 1806*, 3 vols. (London: William Miller, 1809), 1:123, 125, also indicates that the palace's pavilions commanded a similar view.


55. See above n. 7.

56. See *Ma'athir*, 2:291-92, for Mughal appreciation, and Charles Stewart, *History of Bengal: From the First Mohammedan Invasion until the Virtual Conquest of That Country by the English, A.D. 1757* (London: Black, Parry and Co., 1813), 162, gives testimony to the architect's skill. Even when the bridge was completely submerged by violent currents in 1773 it suffered no damage.

57. See al-Badāونī, 2:104, for the extent of Mun'im Khan's jagir that included the pivotal fort of Chunar. He held these lands until his death in 1575. In Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, 89, I note that in 1573-74, a gate was added to the Chunar fort; its inscriptions bear the name of Muhammad Sharif Khan, presumably the fort's qal' adār under Mun'im Khan. Hodges, Select Views, 1:3, illustrates the palace, albeit from a distance.


60. Hodges, Select Views, 1:3.

61. Earlier, Humayun had taken Chunar from Sher Shah, but the considerable time he spent capturing the fort in fact ultimately cost him his empire.


63. I have dealt with Man Singh's Rohtas palace as well
as his career in “The Architecture of Raja Man Singh: A Study of Sub-Imperial Patronage,” in The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (New Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 183–201. Here I have recalculated the completion date according to the Gregorian calendar. Qeyammuddin Ahmad, Corpus of Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bihar (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1973), 176, misprints the common-era date as 1591, although it is clear from the previous page and his discussion of the chronogram he intends 1596–97.

64. Akbar Nāma, 3:999.

65. Nearby are a number of structures that date to Akbar’s reign but before Man Singh’s tenure of the fort, suggesting that this was the fort’s most heavily inhabited area in the early Mughal period. A plan of the fort is in Kuraishi, Ancient Monuments, facing p. 150.


70. Traditionally this has been called the Darbar Hall. Its location in relation to the rest of the palace, the materials used, and its layout all support the accuracy of this identification.

71. For numerous entrances at an Akbar-period Mughal fort, see Koch, Mughal Architecture, 53. For an accurate plan of Amber, see B. L. Dharma, A Memoir on the Temple of Jagatshiromani at Amber (Jaipur: Chirangi Lal Sharma, 1977), pl. XI. Tillotson, Rajput Palaces, 86, argues that the area today called a zenana at the Amber fort was originally an isolated pavilion, but I think that it originally was part of an enclosed complex. If it had been isolated then it would have been unprotected. The palace is not separated by walls from the city below.

72. For the Hathiya Pol at Fatehpur Sikri, see Petruccioli, Fatehpur Sikri, 49.


74. Koch, Mughal Architecture, 69. Tillotson, Rajput Architecture, 86, argues that the Amber zenana was not intended as a dwelling only for women. Perhaps focus on gender-based architecture needs reconsideration. For illustrations of the Rohtas zenana, see Asher, Islamic Monuments, Rohtas District 9:49–10:13.

75. The hammam at Amber, situated in the garden below the palace, is a seventeenth-century structure, probably the product of Mirza Jai Singh’s patronage.

76. For illustrations, see Asher, Islamic Monuments, Rohtas District 8:01–8:08, 9:01–9:16, 9:38–9:41.

77. See Tillotson, Rajput Palaces, 60, fig. 72.

78. Tillotson, Rajput Palaces, 49.

79. The appearance here of two projecting windows in lieu of a single one or even the more symmetrical triple-window arrangement may be dictated by the location of the throne niche in the private audience hall on the opposite wall.

80. Ārin-i Akbarī, 1:165.

81. The problem of the jharokha in the sub-imperial palace needs much more careful examination. For example, as I indicated in n. 48, it remains unclear whether the Hawalat in the Jaunpur fort is a ceremonial jharokha or a pleasure pavilion. Indeed, it is possible that this ambiguity was intentional, allowing the officer to perform a ceremony that strictly speaking was the prerogative of kings, whether Mughal or Hindu.

82. Farīd Bhakkarī, Dhakhīrat al-Khawānīn, ed. S. M. Haq, 3 vols. (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1969–74), 2:366. For the location of Purmandel, see Irfan Habib, An Atlas of the Mughal Empire (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 9 and map 4A. According to the Akbar Nāma, 3:546, Jagan Nath held his jagir in the Punjab by the 1580s. The Mādāthir, 1:724, claims he received it earlier in Akbar’s twenty-third year. He possibly continued to hold it until his death in the third year of Jahangir’s reign.

(1909–14; reprt. ed., Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968), 1:16, reports that when he acceded to the throne, he presented Jagan Nath a robe and jeweled sword. In spite of the esteem in which he was held, his status as a jaggirdar would not seem sufficient to allow him to practice presentation at the jharoka.


85. Jahângîr, Tûzûk, 1:205.

86. Jahângîr, Tûzûk, 1:138.

87. Marâthîr, 1:693.


90. See Jahângîr, Tûzûk, 1:208–9, 247, 257.


92. See Wayne Begley, Monumental Islamic Calligraphy from India (Villa Park, Ill.: Islamic Foundation, 1985), 89.

93. The only other example in eastern India are inscriptions dated 1573–74 at the Ghunar fort. There are no published plates of these inscriptions.

94. It reads, ‘Ṣrī mahârâjâdhîrâja mahârâjâ Ṣrī Mânsî tylko,’ Kuraishî, Ancien Monuments, 168. This and the following paragraph are drawn from Asher, "Architecture of Raja Man Singh," 191.


97. Today in Santal Parganas District, Bihar, Rajmahal is historically part of Bengal and served as its capital under Raja Man Singh (1594–1607) and Shah Shuja'. Secondary sources include Catherine B. Asher, "Inventory of Key Monuments," in The Islamic Heritage of Bengal, ed. George Michell (Paris: Unesco, 1984), 126; Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, 242–44; Kuraishî, Ancient Monuments, 216–17.


100. For Shah Jahan’s walls, see n. 14. For Aurangzeb’s walls, see Sâqî Mustâd Khân, Mâsîr-i ‘Alamgîrî (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society, 1947), 15.


102. Reuther, Indische Paläste, 171, gives a plan and illustration of this Shah Jahan-period mansion.

103. Although they do not agree on the location, see De Graaff, Reisen de Nicolaus de Graaff, 110–11, pl. 4, and Martin, Eastern India, 2:73.

104. Sâqî Mustâd Khân, Mâsîr-i ‘Alamgîrî, 1.

105. See Khondkar Mahbubul Karim, Provinces of Bihar and Bengal under Shah Jahan (Dacca: Asiatic
Society of Bangladesh, 1974), 16–29, for the rebel prince Shah Jahan's tenure of Rajmahal, officially known as Akbarnagar.

106. Karim, Provinces of Bihar and Bengal, 27.

107. Ashfaque, Lalbagh Fort, 5; See Ma'āthir, 2:825–36, for Shaysta Khan's career.

108. See above n. 97.

109. For Bari, see Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, 205–6, and Koch, Mughal Architecture, 104–5. The jharōka overlooks both the palace's interior courtyard and its exterior, so it could serve as a jharōka-i darshan and a private viewing window.


111. Although not stated, it is likely that William Hedges's audience with Shaysta Khan took place in this chamber. In The Diary of William Hedges, Esq., ed. R. Barlow and Henry Yule, 3 vols. (New York: Burk Franklin, 1887), 1:43, he describes the nawab sitting, "under a large canopy of State made of crimson velvet richly embroidered with gold and silver, and deep gold and silver fringes, supported by 4 bamboo poles plated over with gold."
Fig. 1. "Shah Jahan at the Agra fort’s jharōka-i darshan," ca. 1650. 33 x 20.3 cm. D. A. J. Latchford Collection, Bangkok.

Fig. 2. India. Agra fort. Exterior with Shah Jahan’s jharōka-i darshan.
Fig. 3. India. Fatehpur Sikri. Akbar’s jharoṣa-i darshan.
Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies, Center for Art and Archaeology.

Fig. 4. India. Fatehpur Sikri. Akbar’s jharoṣa in his public audience hall.
Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies, Center for Art and Archaeology.

Fig. 5. India. Shahjahanabad (Delhi). Shah Jahan’s jharoṣa in his public audience hall (Daulat Khana-i Khass o’Amm).
Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies, Center for Art and Archaeology.
Fig. 6. India. Fatehpur Sikri. Shaykh Salim Chishti's tomb.

Fig. 7. India. Jaunpur fort. Hammam.

Fig. 8. William Hodges's lithograph of the Jaunpur fort showing the Chihil Sutun. From William Hodges, *Select Views in India, 1780-83*, 2 vols. (London: Printed by the Author, 1787), 2:33.
Fig. 9. India. Jaunpur fort. Hammam, interior.

Fig. 10. India. Rohtasgarh palace. Four-storied palace pavilion containing Raja Man Singh's private audience hall.

Fig. 11. India. Rohtasgarh. Palace plan. From Muhammad Hamid Kuraishī, List of Ancient Monuments, Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series, 51 (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1931), facing p. 155.
Fig. 12. India. Rohtasgarh palace. Hathiya Pol or Elephant Gate.

Fig. 13. India. Rohtasgarh palace. Baradari.

Fig. 14. India. Rohtasgarh palace. Entrance to private audience hall.
Fig. 15. India. Rohtasgarh palace. Raja Man Singh’s throne niche in his private audience hall.

Fig. 16. India. Nagda (Udaipur District, Rajasthan). Sas Bahu temple, ca. 1000. Porch (mandapa).

Fig. 17. India. Rohtasgarh palace. Raja Man Singh’s jharokha in his public audience hall.
Fig. 18. India. Ahmadabad. Prince Shah Jahan's Shahi Bagh (with 19th-century additions). Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies, Center for Art and Archaeology.

Fig. 19. India. Rajmahal palace. Shah Shuja'ı's jharoka.

Fig. 20. Bangladesh. Dhaka. Lal Bagh. Audience hall and jharoka.
FRAMING THE GAZE IN OTTOMAN, 
SAFAVID, AND MUGHAL PALACES

BY GÜLİRÜ NECİPOĞLU

The Topkapi Palace in Ottoman Istanbul, the Safavid palace in Isfahan, and the Mughal Red Fort in Delhi, three palaces built for the rulers of three rival empires that dominated the early-modern Islamic world, used architecture in different ways to frame the gaze in representing the monarch’s official public image. These vast imperial palaces, conceived as architectural metaphors for three patrimonial-bureaucratic empires with their hierarchical organization of state functions around public, semi-public, and private zones culminating in gardens, constituted elaborate stages for dynastic representation. Animated by court rituals, each of them projected a distinctive royal image, invented with a specific theory of dynastic legitimacy in mind.1

The gaze has been analyzed in recent critical theory as an instrument of control and supervision, particularly over women.2 No doubt gender played an important role in the zoning and social organization of the gaze in Islamic palaces where royal women were generally kept away from public view. Relegated to their private spaces in the harem and outlying garden pavilions, the female inhabitants of most palaces could only peer at public court ceremonies from rooftops or from behind screened galleries or grilled windows. No matter how influential their position, therefore, they were forced to exercise their power through intermediaries. Ocular politics also played a role in delineating asymmetries of power in the predominantly male public realm of patrimonial political discourse. The ways in which the three palaces framed the gaze in staging the public appearances of the monarch articulated the nature of his relationship to the extended royal household, his subjects, and the world at large, a relationship that was rooted in a different concept of absolute monarchy in each case.

The Topkapi Palace

The Topkapi is chronologically the first of the three palaces to have been built, but all three assumed their definitive layout about the same time, that is, by the mid-seventeenth century. Each palace no doubt represents the culmination of dynastic traditions that had evolved gradually. Here, however, I will treat them as ideal structures, synchronically located in a slice of time roughly encompassing the late sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century.

The Topkapi Palace, built by Mehmed II between 1459 and 1479, had assumed approximately its present layout by the late sixteenth century. Various rulers had modified it, but chose not radically to alter its original conception (figs. 1–2). Aside from changes in detail introduced to augment the royal magnificence, the sultans also continued to regulate court ceremonial according to the specifications of a book of ceremonies that in the late 1470s had codified the imperial order invented by Mehmed II after the conquest of Constantinople. Mehmed, no longer the chief of a modest nomadic frontier principality, now stood at the head of a world empire ruled by a centralized bureaucracy and an army of household slaves whose ranks and careers were dictated by the book of ceremonies. This rule book stipulated that the monarch remain aloof; he would no longer sit at banquets or appear regularly in public audiences as he used to do. Except for the two religious holidays in which he agreed to give public audiences, he would remain in seclusion, only receiving privileged dignitaries and ambassadors in his private audience hall four times a week.3

Majestically perched on a hilltop next to Hagia Sophia, which had been turned into the premier Friday mosque of the new Ottoman capital, the Topkapi was separated from the city by fortified walls. Its three increasingly secluded courts were experienced in a processional sequence that drew the official visitor from one clearly marked ceremonial station to the next. Three monumental gates occupying the central position at the head of each court funneled the ceremonial procession toward the sultan’s private reception hall attached to the inner threshold of the third gate where all movement converged (fig. 1 [1–3]). The first two outer courts housed various workshops, service areas, and administrative functions, mere extensions of a much more
magnificent inner palace constituting the sultan’s inaccessible private domain (fig. 1 [A, B]). The innermost third court, divided into male and female zones and fronted by a walled hanging garden with kiosks, was more than just a royal residence (fig. 1 [C, D, E]). In it the sultan’s obedient, originally non-Muslim slave pages and concubines who had been converted to Islam were educated in the court culture and then married off to one another. They constituted the Ottoman Empire’s artificially instituted ruling elite that served to consolidate the absolute monarch’s centralized power.

The first gate leading into the first court, known as the Court of Processions, linked the walled-in palace to the city beyond through stately parades. Hidden like a pearl “in the depth of the oyster shell,” the sultan could survey his capital and view public spectacles without himself being seen by sitting behind a grilled window above the entrance arch of that gate, which was originally surmounted by a royal pavilion with an internal gold dome (fig. 3). With its well-established imperial iconography this ceremonial window was reminiscent of the ones used in the domed gatehouses of Byzantine, Abbasid, and Fatimid palaces. It inscribed the sultan’s invisible gaze on the façade of the Imperial Gate (Bab-i Humayyun), thus implying his symbolic presence even when he was absent.

During his rare public appearances at such festivities as princely circumcisions the otherwise secluded monarch went to the neighboring Hippodrome where he watched the parades of guilds and other entertainments from the elevated royal balcony of the Ibrahim Pasha Palace, just as the Byzantine emperors had sat in an imperial loggia to watch the games held there (see O’Kane, fig. 13). The Hippodrome, surrounded on such occasions by temporary wooden booths, thus functioned as an extension of the palace grounds as it had done in the Byzantine era. The only other times the sultan appeared in public were during ceremonial processions through the city. Before these carefully staged parades the royal horse was suspended in the air and left without food all night to guarantee a stately pace that would reinforce the monarch’s awesome magnificence.

Every embassy to the Ottoman court began with a procession through the city which the sultan could watch unseen from behind the grilled windows of a tower-shaped belvedere, known as the Kiosk of Processions, abutting the fortified walled enclosure of the Topkapı (fig. 4). Then the ambassadors entered from the first gate and paraded along a path that led to the double-towered second gate beyond which only the sultan could ride on a horse. Here a respectful silence was imposed, and thereafter progressively increasing degrees of silence prevailed throughout the palace, culminating in the third court whose inhabitants had been taught sign language in order to communicate in total silence.

The second court’s centerpiece was the third gate, fronted by a domed canopy from which one entered directly into the sultan’s private audience hall (fig. 2 [13, 16]). The main administrative structures reached by a diagonal path from the second gate were clustered together in the far left corner and marked by a tower (fig. 2 [9–11]). Inside the public council hall (Divan-i Humayyun), a tribunal of justice, the grand vizier’s cabinet met four times a week. During those sessions the sultan sat behind a grilled window opening from the tower into the council hall so that he could watch legal proceedings and the banquets for ambassadors without himself being seen (figs. 5–7). The window allowed him to check on how his officials were administering justice and whether the reports they later presented to him in the private audience hall were accurate. The sultan’s ceremonial window, reminiscent of those used in the audience halls of the secluded Abbasid and Fatimid caliphs, was connected by a staircase to a belvedere pavilion on top of the tower, behind whose latticed shutters the hidden monarch could survey the second court.

The gilded royal window was placed directly above the seat of the grand vizier, who administered the state in the sultan’s name, to represent the ruler’s centralized authority metonymically. The public council hall’s off-center position inside the second court visually expressed the subordination of administrators to the autocratic ruler, who was represented architecturally by the Tower of Justice that rose high above the palace’s skyline and by the centrally placed domed third gate. The tower’s grilled window and shuttered belvedere pavilion signified the invisible but omniscient sultan’s eternal vigilance against injustice, since his presence there was always palpable even in his absence.

The sultan came out to the second court only twice a year, on the main religious holidays when he was enthroned under the third gate’s domed baldachin. On other days this courtyard resembled a vast theater with an impressively large cast
from which the main actor was perpetually absent. It represented the Ottoman notion of Porte (kapu), that is, the administration of the state and of royal justice in front of the sultan’s gate by his extended family of household slaves (kapu kulü, lit. “slaves of the gate”). The second court encapsulated the Ottoman theory of dynastic legitimacy that revolved around the role of the sultans as just rulers whose administration relied on dynastic law codes (kanunname) which came to be harmonized with the Shari’a by the middle of the sixteenth century. A brief period of experimentation with messianic charisma during the early part of Süleyman I’s reign had been followed by the definitive formulation of an orthodox image of kingship devoid of semi-divine or supernatural elements. The legitimate ruler had to be a descendant of the Ottoman family, distinguished by its victorious record in the holy war, its commitment to Sunni Islam, and its just administration.10

Dynastic law codes complementing the Shari’a allowed the sultans to exercise power in seclusion by delegating authority to other dignitaries. This was noted with surprise by a Moroccan ambassador in the late sixteenth century, since in the Maghrib, a ruler’s visibility and accessibility were central to court rituals:

All the affairs of the empire, interior and exterior are regulated among the Turks by constitutions and written laws that have been codified. The grand vizier has to follow them to the letter and must never deviate from them. In doing so he does not need to consult at all with the sultan; he must only do so for important affairs.11

The consolidation of the empire’s centralized administrative apparatus by the late sixteenth century allowed the sultans to withdraw even further into seclusion, since the self-perpetuating bureaucratic machine had rendered government impersonal.

The private audience hall behind the third gate, where the ruler regularly met with the grand vizier’s cabinet after he had overseen the proceedings of the public council chamber, represented the monarch’s absolute authority (fig. 2 [16]). It was there that the sultan received emissaries who sought the help of his “court of world refuge” by bringing gifts and tribute in return for which they were given ceremonial robes of honor.12 The hall expressed the idea of justice dispensed by the ruler at the threshold of his palace gate, referred to in Ottoman imperial decrees as the “most sublime threshold.” The palace’s outer courts, the city beyond, and even the empire at large represented an extension of that threshold, signifying the invisible sultan’s role as the omnipotent center of the empire from which all power radiated and to which it converged.

The private reception hall obstructed the view into the third court to focus attention on a large ceremonial window with gilded iron grilles placed on its façade (fig. 8 a-b).13 From that window the enthroned ruler could view the third gate’s vestibule where officers found guilty of injustice were executed and ambassadorial gifts were paraded. It also gave official visitors a preview of the sultan enthroned in majesty, framed by the window like an icon. During the silent reception ceremony inside the domed chamber, which sparkled with gold and jewels, the ruler sat in the corner facing his ceremonial window like a speechless and immobile idol (fig. 9). Ambassadors were conducted to him with their arms secured by two gatekeepers; everyone else obediently stood, hands crossed and eyes lowered. The diagonal approach to the royal presence heightened the mystery of the ceremony that allowed only a brief encounter with the sultan, who considered himself beyond any relationship of reciprocity.

Because the ordinary visitor was not allowed to penetrate beyond the private audience hall, attached to the mysterious threshold of the third gate, the processional journey into the heart of the inaccessible inner palace was abruptly arrested. The secrets of the legendary royal setting that lay hidden beyond the palace’s public zones were thus withheld from the public gaze. The spectacular silhouette that the Topkapi projected to the world could only be perceived from a distance. To be viewed as an aesthetic object prominently displayed in the urban fabric, and, in turn, to provide spectacular vistas of the surrounding metropolis to its privileged inhabitants were two central themes informing its design. From the domed belvederes of the third court the sultan, who boasted being “Ruler of the Two Continents and the Two Seas,” could infinitely extend his mastering gaze over his world empire as it fanned outwards from the third court’s silent nucleus of pure potency, known as the Abode of Felicity. The ruler’s gaze, architecturally framed by grilled windows, view-commanding private kiosks, and belvedere towers, signifying his power to see without being seen (or to be seen only as a shadowy silhouette), accentuated the unbridgeable distance between the ruler and the ruled. The privilege of the gaze was so fully embodied in the semiotic discourse of the Topkapi Palace that
catching a momentarily glimpse of the omnivoyant but invisible monarch became the propelling motive of the whole ceremonial.

The impermeable inner palace thus assumed the attributes of a harem, an inaccessible private space differing from its Safavid and Mughal counterparts, which readily displayed their royal halls precisely in order to overwhelm their visitors. The late-sixteenth-century writer Mustafa Ali was quick to note that unlike the Ottoman sultans the contemporary Muslim rulers of Iran and India chose not to remain secluded. The major difference between the Ottoman court and its Islamic contemporaries in the east was its dependence on the master-slave relationship upon which its rigidly centralized organization was based. By contrast the Safavid and Mughal rulers had to rely on the fickle allegiance of powerful nobles and tribal chieftains whose constantly shifting loyalties had to be carefully balanced. They could not afford to remain invisible; the privilege of the gaze was not theirs alone. Their more accessible palaces emphasized the reciprocity of the gaze between the ruler and the ruled, even though the nature of that reciprocal relationship assumed a distinctive coloring in each case.

Much like the Spanish Hapsburg kings, whose dignified majesty also depended on withdrawing from the public gaze, the Ottoman sultans were perpetuating an imperial tradition going back to Byzantine and ancient Near Eastern precedents that had been synthesized by the early Islamic universal caliphs. This allowed them to bolster their claims to the Islamic caliphate after having put an end in 1517 to the line of Abbasid caliphs stationed in Mamluk Cairo and having gained control of the holiest centers of Sunni Islam in Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. By contrast the Safavids and Mughals modeled their rule on the charismatic tribal clan confederations of the Mongols and Timurids. Their royal image thrived on visibility like that of the French kings who rejected the Spanish Hapsburg tradition of seclusion.

According to Peter Burke, Louis XIV, in his memoirs, contrasts the French style of monarchy with the style of nations where “the majesty of kings largely consists in not allowing themselves to be seen.” In addition to the Spanish monarch, as Burke suggests, this statement may also allude to the Ottoman sultan whose rule French writers of the time had come to regard as the epitome of Oriental despotism. Many of them contrasted the sultan’s awe-inspiring invisibility with the public accessibility of the French king who wanted to be loved by his subjects, a topos that links hiddenness with despotism. Their discourse, which used Ottoman rule as a foil for the enlightened ideals of the French monarchy, proved to be so effective that, combined with several other factors, they forced the sultans to reject seclusion in favor of a more accessible royal image in the early eighteenth century.

This transformation of Ottoman court ceremonial, marked by the construction of display-oriented monumental palaces inspired by French models, is foreshadowed by the memoirs of an Ottoman soldier named Süleyman, who had spent a decade in the France of Louis XIV. The repatriated soldier wrote approvingly of how accessible Versailles and the king were and contrasted the Ottoman and the French courts in favor of the latter. When he was asked whether seeing the ruler every day did not reduce the dignity and esteem his subjects held him in, Süleyman answered, “The people not only love him more (ziyade severler) but also esteem him more (ziyade ragbet ıderler).” Eighteenth-century Ottoman palaces set in public parks gave way by the nineteenth century to even more openly Europeanizing palaces no longer hidden behind forbidding walls, and finally to the total abandonment of the Topkapı together with the antiquated political order it represented.

The Safavid Palace in Isfahan

Safavid court ceremonial shared an affinity with that practiced by the French kings in its emphasis on the accessible image of the ruler who readily appeared in public on every possible occasion. Instead of remaining hidden to make himself worthy of respect, the Safavid shah manifested his royal power through constant visibility, spectacle, and display. In his official chronicle of Shah ʿAbbas I’s reign, the court historian Iskandar Munshi praised the ruler’s complete “lack of ceremony,” and his custom of mixing freely “with all classes of society”: “When he is in a good temper, he mixes with the greatest informality with the members of his household, his close friends and retainers and others, and treats them like brothers.”

The Italian traveler Pietro della Valle, who visited Isfahan in 1617–19, wrote that ʿAbbas I frequently strolled through the city either alone or with a few companions, talking to and joking
with all sorts of people. During audiences the affable shah refrained from "odious gravity," treating his guests as companions, and honoring those seated next to him by offering them food and drink with his own hands. In 1608 the Carmelite Friar Paul Simon wrote, "He will go through the public streets, eat from what they are selling there and other things, speak at ease freely or sit down beside this man and that. He says that is how to be a king, and that the king of Spain and other Christians do not get pleasure out of ruling, because they are obliged to comport themselves with such pomp and majesty as they do." In 1609 Friar John Thaddeus provided a similar description of 'Abbas I:

He will go to the place where Julfa Armenians are, to the house of a private person and sit there two or three hours drinking with them, finding out what he wants to know. . . . He is also wont to go for a pastime to other places hardly respectable. . . . Sometimes passing through the city on foot he will come to the shops of the greengrocers, fruiterers, and those who sell preserves and sweetmeats: here he will take a mouthful, there another: in one place taste a preserve, in another some fruit. He enters the house of a shoemaker, takes the shoe that he fancies, puts it on at the threshold of the door, and then continues on his way. Once walking about after this fashion he said to the Augustinian Fathers: "How does what I am doing appear to you, Fathers? I am a king after my own will, and to go about in this way is to be king: not like yours, who is always sitting indoors!"21

'Abbas I's rule was personal and absolute. Using an informal style the ruler sought to gain the love of his subjects and dependents, much like his charismatic forebears who had appealed to the concept of shāhī sevanī, or "love of the shah." His public image as an accessible monarch left its stamp on both the layout and the ceremonial of the Isfahan palace. Though 'Abbas I's successors remodeled the palace and augmented its ritual pomp, they nevertheless perpetuated the tradition he had established. Their reigns marked a departure from his informal style, just as the growing bureaucratic apparatus of the state made them more aloof. Yet in comparison to Ottoman and Mughal court ceremonial, that of the Safavids still remained relatively informal, dominated as it was by banquets where the shahs interacted with their guests.

The Safavid palace in Isfahan, most of which Shah 'Abbas I built in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan (World-Adorning Garden) between 1590 and 1611, was modified by his successors until it came to approximate the plan seen in Engelbert Kaempfer's drawing from 1684–85 (figs. 10a–b, 11).22 In contrast to the Topkapi's organization as a processional sequence of three diminishing courts, the Isfahan palace (now largely destroyed) had no large courtyards. It was instead a collection of many small courts, walled gardens, and pavilions following Timurid precedents, especially in its lack of fortified walls. Far from being isolated from the city by fortifications, the palace complex comfortably merged with two public spaces, the royal square (Maydan-i Shah) and the mansion-lined boulevard (khīyābān or Chahar Bagh avenue) that acted as the stage for royal pageantry.

The palace was sandwiched between these public spaces and was composed of two zones. The first communicated through several gates with the maydan; it contained the royal workshops, service quarters, administrative offices, and residential facilities for gatekeepers and eunuchs. The second zone, which extended beyond this area, was more private; it culminated in the royal gardens lined up along the Chahar Bagh avenue. Its left side housed the imperial harem, which was attached to the shah's residence. Its right side contained two walled rectangular formal gardens—the Bagh-i Khalvat (Garden of Seclusion), and the Bagh-i Chihil Sutun (Garden of Forty Pillars)—featuring various pavilions and communicating with a small vineyard (fig. 10a [a–q]). Beyond these were several other royal gardens (including the still extant Hashi Birhish built by Shah Sulayman), which were reserved for private assemblies with male or female companions (fig. 10a [r–t]). Their surrounding walls were surmounted by a continuous upper gallery allowing the shah to pass from one enclosed space to the other without being seen.23

A diagonal corridor joined the harem to a square multistoried viewing pavilion with latticed balconies at the head of the Chahar Bagh avenue (fig. 10a [ul]). There without being seen the royal women could watch the processions of ambassadors and courtiers, who tried to outdo each other in the pomp of their numerous retinues. The shah's parades as he left the palace precincts to visit Isfahan's suburbs also marched down that ceremonial artery, which functioned as a public promenade open to all classes. The tree-lined Chahar Bagh avenue was bisected by a channel whose water dropped in cascades that collected in differently shaped marble basins (figs. 12a–b).
It extended from the viewing pavilion to a multiterraced suburban royal hunting garden (the Hazar Jarib, or Bagh-i 'Abbasabad) on the opposite shore of the Zayandah river (fig. 13). The terraced garden on a sloping hill, bisected by a tree-lined central grand alley with a channel whose water cascaded into variously shaped basins, provided majestic prospects of the whole city.\textsuperscript{24}

The two sections of the Chahar Bagh avenue were connected by the bridge of Allahverdi Khan, the Georgian commander-in-chief of the slave troops 'Abbas I had established as the backbone of his autocratic regime (fig. 14). Inspired by the Ottoman model, this new standing army of converted Georgian, Circassian, and Armenian slaves free from tribal allegiance (whom the ruler used to call his “mounted janissaries”) had been instituted to counterbalance the unruly chieftains of the Turkmen tribes.\textsuperscript{25} On the orders of Shah 'Abbas I prominent officers of slave origin and the court’s leading dignitaries had built their garden mansions along the Chahar Bagh avenue and on both shores of the river as manifestations of the shift from a polycentric tribal feudalism to a centralized absolute state. The contemporary historian Junabadi describes these mansions:

According to the world-obeying order, the khans, great amirs, viziers, sads, and noble 'ämils who held official rank at that time, whether they were people who lived at the foot of the caliphal throne or held grants (iṣṭā'lāt) in the country . . . . [all] erected fine chahār-bāgh parks each to his own taste and opposite one another along both sides of the avenue beginning at 'Abbasabad. At the entrance of each park they built lofty structures of brick and stucco, the walls and roofs of which were faced with colored tilework. Some were decorated with delightful portraits . . . . and colorfully exotic paintings . . . . On the avenue in front of each [of these structures] they built large cisterns in a variety of forms. Inside [each] park, they took great pains to follow the architectural canon (qānūn-i jarrāh).\textsuperscript{26}

According to Iskandar Munshi, “the land along the sides [of the avenue] was divided among the amirs and notables of the all-powerful state, each of whom was to erect . . . . at the entrance (dārgāh) of his park a suitably royal structure consisting of an entry gate (dārgāh), a lofty roofed passage (sābāt-i rafī‘), an iwan, second-story galleries (bālā khāna-hā), and belvederes (manzara-hā) beautifully decorated with paintings in gold and blue.” The variegated pavilions visible from the avenue through latticework screens were all similar in size and construction, and each had a monumental gatehouse, made to conform to a master plan “fixed in the blessed heart of the eminent one” (fig. 12a-b). They were a product of 'Abbas I’s own “fertile imagination,” just as Mehmed II had once planned the layout for the Topkapı Palace as his “own independent invention” guided by “the architect of his mature royal intellect.”\textsuperscript{27}

Adam Olearium, who accompanied an embassy sent by the duke of Holstein to Isfahan in 1637, writes that the cross shape formed by the intersection of the water channel of the Chahar Bagh avenue and the river divided the royal gardens in that area into four large plots from which the name Chahar Bagh (Four Gardens) originated. It was as if the traditional quadripartite scheme of a chahār bāgh garden had been magnified to an urban scale, turning the whole garden-city into a metaphor of paradise. Just as Kaempfer compared this scheme to earthly paradise, so too Junabadi wrote that “in those buildings and parks, the people of Isfahan encounter ‘Paradise, the houris, and the young pages’ and the [true] meaning of ‘Paradise, beneath which flow the eternal waters’ [Qur’ān 13:35],” a statement repeated by Iskandar Munshi. The painted walls and tiles of the pavilions (often depicting single youths or couples in contemporary costume, comfortably reclining on cushions in gardens with wine cups in their hands, surrounded by precious vessels of gold and porcelain) can therefore be interpreted as allusions to paradise, with its eternally new inhabitants exemplified by the Safavid court’s pages and courtiers. Indeed, Munajjim-i Yazdi referred to these “portraits of wondrous figures” as “effigies of houri-like youths.”\textsuperscript{28}

Pietro della Valle described Isfahan as a “te-trapolis” united by the crossroads of the royal boulevard and the river. ‘Abbas I’s urban project, still incomplete at that time, was made up of four cities (fig. 11 [A–D]), with Muslims residing on the river’s north side and non-Muslims on its south. The shah’s palace attached to the new maydan and bazaar was complemented by three royal colonies featuring wide tree-lined avenues bisected by canals which differed from the crooked alleys of the old city center: 'Abbasabad (or Tabrizabad), where the uprooted Muslim citizens of Tabriz were resettled; Guebrabad, populated by the Zoroastrians; and New Julfa, settled by Armenian merchants and Europeans.\textsuperscript{29} The inhabitants of these colonies, mostly merchants and artisans, were indebted to the shah for the land and interest-free loans he had given them.
Concentrating these loyal colonies, who enjoyed royal protection, and the ruling elite’s mansions at the very foot of the shah’s palace created a microcosm of absolute monarchy. With its new maydan that challenged the old maydan of Isfahan, dominated by interest groups opposed to the shah’s centralizing policies, the royal city objectified ‘Abbas I’s vision of centralized government (fig. 11 [6, 1]). Junabadi proudly wrote, “Now they call former Isfahan (Isfahan-e sāhibī) the ‘old city’ and these places and residences the ‘new city.”

The new royal city not only reflected ‘Abbas I’s autocratic aspirations but also his eagerness to establish trade relations with Europe. The Maydan-i Shah appended to the palace complex was a bustling center for international commerce, surrounded by shops encircled with a tree-lined water channel, and covered by the pitched tents of merchants during the day (fig. 15). At night it became a place where marionette players, comedians, and storytellers performed, while prostitutes plied their trade; nearby were taverns, teashops, and coffeehouses. With its proplike screens rising much higher than the structures behind the stagelike maydan, surrounded by upper-story apartments fronted by balconies, formed a focal point for court ceremonies. Like the Hippodrome in Istanbul, it functioned as a sand-covered arena for sports and festivities, provided as it was with polo posts and an archery target (fig. 14). The shows staged there included polo games, archery competitions, wrestling matches, animal fights, military parades, fireworks, and exhibits of ambassadorial gifts. These displays were accessible to all, unlike the exclusive ceremonies enacted at the public courts of the Topkapi Palace, open only to a restricted audience of courtiers and official visitors, with the exception of the rare public festivities held at the Hippodrome.

The rents from the shops, caravansarays, and baths around the royal square yielded a substantial income for ‘Abbas I who with it endowed a pious foundation on behalf of the Fourteen Infalibles (the Twelve Imams plus the Prophet and his daughter Fatima), to whom he also dedicated the religious monuments of the maydan. This demonstrated the shah’s support of the Twelve Shi’i state religion, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of his rule, which was based on his fabricated holy lineage (traced back via the Seventh Imam and ‘Ali the Prophet), his role as the representative of the Mahdi, and his veneration as the spiritual leader of the Safaviyya order. Unlike the Ottoman sultan, who was no more than a modest servant in the service of Sunni Islam, the Safavid ruler claimed to be a supernatural being whose powers blessed whatever he touched. Loyalty to the shah resembled a master-disciple (pir-murid) relationship transferred into the political sphere. Nevertheless, ‘Abbas I routinized Safavid messianic charisma to bring it in line with his centralizing policies. In his madrasas around the maydan Shi’ism was being codified by powerful theologians, the exponents of a new orthodoxy that assumed rigid doctrinal forms and diminished the centrality of the shah’s person in religion.

Unlike the Topkapi the Isfahan palace projected an image of holiness through its domed octagonal shrine, known as the Tawhid-Khana (House of the Oneness of God), which provided royal asylum to criminals and fugitives much as the ancestral Safavid shrine in Ardebil had done (fig. 10a [1]). In this sanctuary, into which no one was allowed to enter with a weapon, the loyal disciples of the Safaviyya order charged with guarding the ‘Ali Qapu chanted a loud dhikr affirming the unity of God and prayed for the welfare of the dynasty. ‘Ali Qapu, the main ceremonial gate of the palace, was also endowed with a special sanctuary as a sacred and inviolable asylum (fig. 10a [B]). Those wishing to receive grace from the shah would kiss a stone incorporated into its threshold, said to have been transported from the shrine of ‘Ali in Najaf. The shah’s subjects prayed there for the prosperity of their ruler and ambassadors had to salute the gate because of its sacred stone on which nobody was allowed to step. Each new ruler had to cross over that stone without touching it after having received the royal insignia. The shah, referred to in a dedicatory inscription as the “watchdog of ‘Ali’s threshold,” dismounted from his horse before the ‘Ali Qapu beyond which no one was allowed to ride. In addition to the stone associated with the first Shi’i Imam ‘Ali, the gate also featured two columns removed from Persepolis, spolia whose royal associations linked the shahs with the prestige of the ancient Persian kings of the Shāhnāma. In front of the gatehouse, which functioned as the administrative center of the state where the daily councils of justice were held, Ottoman cannons captured during ‘Abbas I’s conquest of Iraq and others taken from the vanquished Portuguese port of Hormuz were displayed as emblems of victory (figs. 10a, 14).
Despite its prominent religious monuments the overriding purpose of the maydan was commerce. That it was a royal shopping center added to the accessible public image Shah 'Abbas I cultivated. He has been aptly described as a grand state capitalist who turned the lucrative silk trade into a royal monopoly as part of an overall policy of centralizing the state under his authority. McChesney has argued that just as the shah had counterbalanced the Turkmen amirs with loyal supporters from the ranks of his household slaves, so he challenged the commercial establishment of the old maydan by using as his agents in the silk trade a rival group of Armenian and Tabrizi merchants more vulnerable to his control. 'Abbas I also sought to attract English and Dutch trading companies to Isfahan to promote overseas trade that would supplement the land routes passing through Ottoman territories.

The presence of European merchants and diplomats in Isfahan, who also frequented the shah’s informal banquets and participated in his hunting parties, was captured in the wall paintings that evoked the city’s cosmopolitan climate. The monumental portal of the Qaysariya (royal cloth-house) which connected the maydan to the bazaar was decorated with images of Europeans holding wine glasses, men and women in debauched postures, and a clock conspicuously placed there by 'Abbas I to impress the Europeans (fig. 11 [9]). Above the clock hung a big bronze bell which never rang, an emblem of victory removed from a Portuguese munery in Hormuz. The same gate, crowned by the music gallery (naqqara-khana)—a royal prerogative since Abbasid times—also featured battle scenes (now badly damaged) depicting the shah’s victory over the Uzbeks. Together with other paintings that once covered the maydan’s walls, these paintings prepared the visitor for the ones that decorated the reception pavilions of the palace and the Chahar Bagh avenue which depicted ambassadorial receptions, military victories, hunting scenes, amorous couples drinking wine, courtly assemblies in garden settings, and images of Europeans. This unrestrained use of figural imagery contrasted sharply with the aniconic decorative program of the Topkapi Palace.

The late-sixteenth-century Venetian diplomat Giacomo Soranzo noted that, unlike the Ottoman sultan who “did not speak to anyone and was visible only rarely,” the Safavid shah who was fully engaged in commercial and diplomatic transactions “constantly stayed in public,” holding audiences several times a week. In contrast to the Topkapi, which featured only one private audience chamber where all ceremonial movement converged, the polycentric Isfahan palace had a diffuse layout with several audience halls. Kaempfer noted that the shah’s receptions called majlises (assemblies) were not linked to a single building, but held wherever he chose. Much like the Timurid majlis, these audiences took place in monumental garden pavilions embellished with narrative paintings. They were often fronted by wooden-pillared porches (tālār) that have been compared to Achaemenid apadanas. With their variegated halls designed to house large assemblies and banquets dominated by wine-drinking, music, and dance performances, these large pavilions contrasted sharply with the Ottoman sultan’s small audience chamber intended for his brief private encounters with official visitors. The most famous among them were the ‘Ali Qapu, the Talar-i Tavileh, and the Chihil Sutun, but there were also others along the Chahar Bagh avenue and the riverfront (fig. 10a [B, m, o]).

The now lost Talar-i Tavileh (Hall of Stables) featured vaulted halls behind a porch of gilded wooden pillars hung with red curtains that could be lowered and raised by silk ropes (fig. 10a [m]). Two drawings by Kaempfer and Olearius allow us to visualize the evening receptions that were held there (figs. 16, 17). Hung with large historical oil paintings executed in Europe, the pavilion’s richly carpeted porch, featuring a central marble basin with floating flower petals, was subdivided into three areas separated by gilt balustrades. On the uppermost platform a central iwan framed the shah, who was accompanied by attendant eunuchs and pages lined up to form a crescent behind him. Grandees and nobles sat along the two sides of a lower second platform, while visitors, ambassadors, and merchants were assigned seats at a lower, third platform, with pages and servants standing outside the porch where wrestlers performed. In several places chained horses decorated with jewel-encrusted gold caparisons were displayed inside a garden bisected by a long central pool with fountains.

The Chihil Sutun, or Hall of Forty Pillars, built by 'Abbas I and remodeled by 'Abbas II in 1647, also stands in a walled rectangular formal garden fronted by a long reflecting pool (fig. 10a [o]). The free-standing structure has a similar layout, consisting of vaulted halls behind a wooden-pillared porch provided with a central royal iwan.
The iwan, now faced with mirrors, was originally covered with figural paintings. Restored wall paintings inside the pavilion include depictions of banquets for famous embassies, with dancers and musicians performing in the front; they well capture the informality of the royal receptions, dominated as they were by merrymaking and wine-drinking (fig. 18). 40

The late-sixteenth-century Ottoman historian Lokman denounced such banquets as unorthodox feasts better suited to taverns and praised the total absence of entertainment at the sober official ceremonies of the Topkapi Palace. The painted reception scenes of the Chihil Sutun, where the ubiquitous wine cup is an indispensable element of the royal iconography, recall those of the Shâhnâma, the ancient Persian royal epic that was the favored subject of illuminated manuscripts at the Safavid court, which had no counterpart for the illustrated dynastic histories of the Ottomans and Mughals. The analogy between Safavid royal receptions and those of ancient kings depicted in Shâhnâma manuscripts was often underlined by rendering the miniatures with figures in contemporary garb. Another reference to the pre-Islamic Persian heritage can be found in the Chihil Sutun’s wooden pillars whose bases with sculpted lions were inspired by ancient Near Eastern models. 41

Kaempfer’s drawing of an ambassadorial banquet held at a now-lost shore pavilion at the Asadabad Garden adjacent to the Chahar Bagh provides another glimpse of Safavid court ceremonial (fig. 19). The free-standing pavilion was once again fronted by a tripartite tâlūr from which guests seated according to rank watched a theatrical display of animals, musicians, and dancers. 42 The drawing shows how uniform the layout of such Safavid reception pavilions was with their brick-and-tile-vaulted halls fronted by spacious wooden porches featuring a central iwan and a marble basin in the middle. These generic Chihil Sutun pavilions were no doubt modeled on no longer extant Timurid prototypes mentioned in the written sources. 43 Their porches, open on all three sides, provided an unhindered view of the surrounding landscape and the spectacles. These stagelike porches, often hung with protective curtains which were raised for special occasions, framed the reciprocal gaze between the accessible ruler and his audience, allowing each to observe the other in a manner that blurred the distinction between spectator and spectacle. Seeing and being seen became inseparable.

The five-storied gatehouse of ‘Ali Qapu, built by ‘Abbas I and modified by his successors, also features a tâlūr from which the shah and his guests watched performances enacted in the maydan, while exposing themselves to the curious gaze of the crowds gathered below (figs. 10a [B], 14, 15, 20). The gatehouse, whose ground floor housed the divan where public justice was administered, contained various administrative offices, spaces for guards, guestrooms, and richly decorated royal halls. Although its tâlūr is generally attributed to ‘Abbas II, it must have featured one from the very beginning. Pietro della Valle refers to a viewing balcony overlooking the magnificent “theater” of the maydan where ‘Abbas I held several evening receptions for ambassadors in 1619. The prominent wooden porch, which was hung with red silk curtains, once again features a central royal iwan and a basin in the middle. Besides serving as an audience hall this was the site of the shah’s annual receptions during the Persian New Year (Nauruz), and of the councils he held to discuss matters of state and business. 44

During evening receptions given there to ambassadors thousands of musketeers would line up around the maydan whose arcaded shops were lit with a myriad of candles that reflected on its channel, a ceremony called chîrâghân (illumination). After observing the displays at the maydan from the gatehouse, ‘Abbas I would come down from it with his guests to tour the royal cloth-house, the mint, the caravansarays, and the daily decorated shops where they were offered drinks by the merchants. Pietro della Valle, who participated in one of these tours in 1619, describes how the shah wandered up and down the square, looking more like a manager than a king. He would stop here and there to drink a cup of wine, all the time chatting with the ambassadors, laughing, and cracking jokes. He especially favored the Spanish and Indian ambassadors, treating the Indian more familiarly than all the rest, calling him “old cuckold,” giving him digs in the back, whispering funny things into his ears, and then pulling them both. The unpopular Ottoman ambassador was humiliated by a group of courtiers who pushed him so hard that he fell on the ground and his turban came off to roars of laughter. The astonished ambassador swore at this unseemly behavior which was so foreign to the “serious gravity of his nation.” 45

The informality of these spectacles is also captured in Iskandar Munshi’s description of a
reception given in 1611 for a deposed Uzbek ruler who sought ʿAbbas I’s help. First the guest was received at the royal quarters where the shah “with complete lack of formality” supervised the arrangements for the banquet, where “rosy-faced pages” poured the wine, and musicians and dancers “banished care from all hearts.” Then the displays at the maydan, where a packed crowd came to watch the show, were followed by a tour the shah gave his guests who walked around the square to admire its illuminated shops and caravansaries in celebration of Isfahan’s prosperity. Iskandar Munshi writes: “Convivial private parties were going on on all sides. The Shah became momentarily more unbuttoned, and radiated even a greater degree of geniality and hospitality than before, and kept talking about other celebrated festive occasions held in the Naqsh-e Jahan Square [i.e., Maydan-i Shāh].”

These illuminated festivities occasionally spilled beyond the confines of the palace when the shah ordered the inhabitants of the suburbs of ʿAbbasabad and New Julfa to decorate the uniformly built gatehouses of their garden mansions with candles so that he could watch the spectacle with his guests from the ʿAli Qapu which commanded a view of the whole city. From there the monarch extended his masterful gaze over the illuminated city in celebration of his autocratic power, which could magically transform the “new Isfahan” into a brilliant stage for courtly spectacles. The whole royal city thus became a theater that helped enlist popular support for the Safavid shah’s charismatic rule. The frequent extension of royal pageants into the city turned public spaces such as the maydan, the Chahar Bagh avenue, the Allahverdi Khan Bridge (used during the annual Ab-Pashan festival), and the suburban royal colonies into appendages of the palace whose boundary as a result became blurred.

**The Red Fort in Delhi**

By contrast to the palace in Isfahan but not unlike the Topkapi, fortified walls clearly divide the palace-fort of Shahjahanabad, now known as the Red Fort, from the royal city Shah Jahan built in Delhi between 1639 and 1648 (figs. 21, 22). Like ʿAbbas I’s “new Isfahan,” which may well have inspired its wide avenues bisected by water channels, the “new Delhi” was built next to the city’s old core whose ruins provided it with construction materials. The contrast between the crooked alleys of Agra, which Shah Jahan had found too narrow for royal processions, and the wide regular streets of Shahjahanabad was apparent to the seventeenth-century French traveler Bernier. The Red Fort of Delhi was modeled on earlier forts in Agra and Lahore, but it remodeled their irregular layout into a system of axially ordered rectilinear courts on a larger scale. Shah Jahan played a central role in conceptualizing its plan and ceremonial, as Mehmed II and ʿAbbas I had done before him. Rather than invent a new imperial order, however, he chose to consolidate one that had already been developed by his predecessors, modifying its details to conform to a more orthodox Islamic framework. Because the Mughal emperors ruled over a predominantly non-Muslim population, the syncretic practices they adopted to appeal to Hindu sensibilities at times contradicted Islamic traditions. Shah Jahan and his successor Aurangzeb tried to eliminate these contradictions by recasting court rituals into an orthodox Islamic mold. While Akbar’s innovations have their parallel in those of Mehmed II, Shah Jahan’s can be compared to Suleyman I’s “classical” Ottoman order harmonizing inherited dynastic tradition with the prescriptions of the Shari’a.

Shah Jahan was dissatisfied with the palace-forts in Agra and Lahore some of whose old red sandstone structures he replaced with white marble buildings of his own design. The Red Fort in Delhi gave him the chance to create a new palace whose royal structures, built entirely of white marble, would express his imperial vision. The court historian Lahori describes the emperor’s involvement with the planning of royal buildings which would be a memorial to his glorious reign:

The royal mind, which is illustrious like the sun, pays full attention to the planning and construction of these lofty edifices and substantial buildings, which in accordance with the Arabic saying “Verily our relics tell of us,” speak with mute elegance of His Majesty’s God-given aspiration. . . . For the majority of buildings, he himself draws the plans. . . . And, on the plans prepared by skillful architects, after long consideration he makes appropriate alterations and emendations.

With its three successive courtyards culminating in a royal residence that overlooks the Jamna river, the Red Fort in Delhi, though now largely destroyed, still carries the distant memory of the riverfront palaces in Abbasid Samarra, particularly the Balkuwaras. Proceeding from public to
increasingly private zones these three central courtyards also recall those of the Topkapi Palace, except that they are governed by the strictest symmetry and axiality. Two monumental gates connect the main bazaar arteries of the city to two avenues inside the fort; their intersection is marked by a large square courtyard with a central water tank (figs. 21–22 [1, 2, 5]). The shorter avenue is a covered imperial bazaar based on Safavid prototypes. The longer one was originally bisected by a straight water channel recalling those in Isfahan.

Like the Safavid palace in Isfahan, the Red Fort in Delhi establishes a strong connection with neighboring bazaars and caravansarays built by the leading members of the royal household along the city’s main arteries, a connection notably absent in the Topkapi, where politics dominates commerce. The two avenues that intersect inside the palace-fort were flanked by arcaded shops, royal workshops, offices, storerooms, mints, and stables. The longer avenue parallel to the river divided the palace grounds into two zones. The larger one along the riverfront contained the king’s administrative and residential courts; the smaller public one facing the city housed most of the palace’s inhabitants and its outer services.

The first court, known as the Jilau-Khana (forecourt), was surrounded by booths where the vassal Rajput amirs pitched tents to mount their weekly guard. Like the maydan of Isfahan this informal public forecourt was a rendezvous for jugglers and astrologers as well as the locale for an occasional bazaar; in it grooms exercised horses and officials inspected the mansabdars. At the head of the forecourt is a monumental gatehouse, known as the Naqjar Khana because the royal band performed in its upper gallery (figs. 21–22 [4]). This was the ceremonial entrance to the administrative second court, beyond which only the emperor and the royal princes could ride on horseback. Here the amirs, ministers, ambassadors, and petitioners assembled before attending the emperor’s daily public audiences (darbār) in the second court, which was once surrounded by porticoes.

A central axis passes through the gatehouse, the emperor’s public audience hall in the second court, and his private palace (Rang Mahal or Imtiaz Mahal) in the third court beyond, bisecting the strip of white marble royal halls along the riverfront (figs. 21–22 [4, 6, 11]). The private half at the right functioned as the harem (zenāna) and the semiprivate one at the left contained the emperor’s reception halls, his ceremonial bath, and formal gardens with several pavilions. Unlike the Topkapi, where centrally placed monumental gates dominate each court and off-center buildings and diagonal movement articulate the absence of the ruler, in the Delhi Fort there is hardly a diagonal line; its frontally approached halls occupy central positions at the head of their respective courts. This crucial difference can be explained by the centrality of the emperor’s person in Mughal court ceremonial, punctuated by the ruler’s regular appearances in public and private audiences several times each day. The emperor, whose revered body was weighed on his birthday against various precious materials, which were then distributed to the poor, embodied in his person the political center of the empire.

Mughal court ceremonial, as it came to be codified by Shah Jahan, occupied an intermediate position between the official impersonality of its Ottoman and the festive informality of its Safavid counterpart. The Red Fort in Delhi was built to frame Shah Jahan’s exalted royal image, an image rooted in a theory of kingship first formulated in Akbar’s reign, which syncretically combined Turco-Mongol, Persian, and Hindu traditions. Following Timurid precedents Akbar’s father Humayun had largely relied on Persianate royal themes originating in the Šāhnāma. The historian Khvandamir’s description of court ceremonial under Humayun testifies to the inspiration provided by the Haft Paykar, a legendary palace built for the Sasanian ruler Bahram Gur in the image of the heavens with its seven domed pavilions, each painted in a different color corresponding to the hues of the seven planets. Humayun copied Bahram Gur by giving audiences in a different room of his palace at Din-Panah in Delhi each day of the week, varying the color of his robe to match the decor of that day’s room. The Mughal ruler, who also had tents and pavilions constructed to imitate the structure of the heavens, used to put a veil over his face and then raise it to the acclaim of his courtiers who would shout, “Light has shined forth.”

One of the popular games in Humayun’s court involved a round Carpet of Mirth that depicted circles corresponding to the sun and the planets on which courtiers would sit after throwing dice to determine their position. Humayun himself occupied the central circle of the gold-embroidered cloth “like the Sun,” reflecting “beauty,” “light,” and “purity.” The game embodied the kernel of the theory of a heavenly court with a sun
king at its center, a theory that was further elaborated by Akbar’s court historian Abu al-Fazl. This he did by linking the Mughal imperial lineage to the legendary Mongol princess Alanquwa, who had been miraculously impregnated by a divine light like “her Majesty Maryam” (i.e., the Virgin Mary). From Chingiz Khan and Timur, the Lord of the Conjunction of Planets (Sahib Qiran) from whom the Mughal emperors traced their genealogy, this “world illuminating light” passed through the generations on to Akbar, who thus became endowed with a spiritual authority strengthened by the legitimizing charisma of the Timurid line.58

Referring to the divinely illumined right of the emperor to rule, Abu al-Fazl wrote:

Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun, the illuminator of the universe. . . . Modern language calls this light far-i izadi (the divine light), and the tongue of antiquity called it kiyan khura (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone, and men, in the presence of it, bend the forehead of praise towards the ground of submission.59

This divine aura (possessed by the pre-Islamic Persian kings) is represented in Mughal imperial portraits by a halo; it endowed the just ruler with the virtues needed to govern successfully, including a paternal love of his subjects, trust in God, prayer, and devotion.

Through Abu al-Fazl’s ingenious theory Akbar could assume the role of spiritual leader, the long-awaited Mahdi whose reign marked the beginning of a “divine era” celebrated by the adoption of a new solar calendar. The calendar announced the end of Islam’s first millennium, during which the Muslim lunar calendar dating events from the hegira had been in use. At that time Akbar also instituted the so-called “divine faith,” a form of imperial discipleship that turned loyalty to the person of the emperor into a master-disciple (pir-murid) relationship recalling the Safavid example. The Mughal circle of disciples, however, transcended religious affiliation. It constituted a much smaller, intimate group of Muslim and non-Muslim nobles who formed a loyal body unified by its ties to the emperor’s person. Those nobles chosen for initiation as imperial disciples were required to wear as a token of devotion the emperor’s portrait adorned with the genealogical tree of the Timurid dynasty, and to prostrate themselves before their master, a practice abolished in the more orthodox reign of Shah Jahan.60

The concept of divinely illumined kingship found special resonance among the emperor’s non-Muslim subjects because of the importance the rising sun had in Hindu phenomenology and the semi-divine status of some Hindu kings seen as incarnations of the sun. Akbar expressed this connection by instituting the darshan (a Sanskrit term for “sight” or “beholding”), a ritual in which the emperor would appear before the gaze of the public every morning after sunrise. The ritual enabled the disciples of the darshaniya sect, who were devoted to emperor worship, to offer prayers to and to prostrate themselves before the sun king in order to receive his benediction.61 The darshan was abolished by the orthodox ruler Aurangzeb, who regarded it as an un-Islamic practice snacking of idol worship. Shah Jahan’s chronicler Lahori describes it as follows:

About two or three gharis after sunrise, the mercy-crowned monarch appears at the palace window which is called in the Hindustani language the jharoka-i Darshan (“Balcony for Viewing”). Upon His Majesty’s appearance, the assembled masses in the plain beneath the window perform their obeisance and all their temporal and spiritual desires are gratified. . . . The object of the institution of this mode of audience, which originated with the late Emperor Akbar, was to enable His Majesty’s subjects to witness the simultaneous appearance of the sky-adorning sun and the world-conquering Emperor, and thereby receive without any obstacle or hindrance the blessing of both luminaries. By their presence in this space . . . the harassed and oppressed of the population may freely represent their wants and desires.62

As the emperor stood framed by the jharoka-i darshan that overlooked the river, his gaze emanating from above assured the multitudes gathered below of his continuing existence, without which they feared the universe might collapse, while their upward gaze convinced him of the adoring devotion of his subjects. However, the architectural and spatial framing of the ritual emphasized the disjuncture of these reciprocal gazes. Two Mughal miniatures depict Jahangir and Shah Jahan at their jharoka-i darshan in the Agra fort, with nobles standing below on a raised platform, separated from the common people (fig. 23; see Asher, fig. 1). There is no eye contact between the emperor shown in profile and the crowds gathered below the fortress walls. The profile, presenting an averted gaze, is used in
these miniatures as a pictorial convention to express the remoteness of the iconic ruler whose central window is flanked by two smaller windows framing the princes who would perpetuate his rule for all eternity. The miniatures effectively express the asymmetry of power that turned the idol-like emperor’s fetishized body into an object for the gaze.

The miniature representing Jahangir in his jharōka-i darshan at the Agra fort also shows the “chain of justice,” a chain hung with golden bells that was an ancient symbol of royal justice associated with the Sasanian ruler Anushirvan and believed to have been attached to the Taqi Kisra in Ctesiphon (fig. 23). This chain was revived by Jahangir to exhibit his commitment to justice; it could be pulled any time by the oppressed to alert the emperor to an injustice that had been perpetrated. Anushirvan’s chain of justice also appears in a nineteenth-century inscription on the Tower of Justice in the Topkapi Palace which refers to the sultan’s ceremonial window overlooking the grand vizier’s public audience hall: “The grilled window resembles the chain of justice / It shows the one who is right to the sovereign without having to be pulled.” Unlike the window from which the unseen sultan could check officials administering justice in his name, however, Jahangir’s chain provided direct access to the emperor who promised personally to hear the grievances of his oppressed subjects any time of the day.

In the days of Akbar and Jahangir the jharōka window in the Agra fort was located in a white marble pavilion that crowned an octagonal tower known as Shah Burj (Royal Tower) (fig. 23). When Shah Jahan replaced that building with the belvedere pavilion known today as Muthamman Burj (Octagonal Tower), the jharōka-i darshan was moved to a tripartite bangala pavilion situated between the royal bedroom and the octagonal tower (see Asher, figs. 1, 2). Lahori describes it as follows: “Midway between this auspicious building [the royal bedroom] and the Shah Burj [Royal Tower] is the blessed Bangalā-Darshan of marble, which is the rising place of the sun of caliphate, adorned with paintings in gold. On its roof the gold plates have been so used ‘That the people are misled to think of two suns’.”

In the Red Fort of Delhi the jharōka-i darshan is generally believed to have been located in an octagonal tower pavilion of white marble crowned by a gilded dome (figs. 21–22 [12]). However, a now lost projecting white marble balcony with three windows, which is shown on a nineteenth-century painting in exactly the same position as Shah Jahan’s triple-arched bangala pavilion in Agra, is a more likely candidate for that function (fig. 24). After he appeared there at sunrise, the emperor often watched elephant fights which, like jharōka, were considered a royal prerogative and forbidden to others. Written petitions gathered beneath the jharōka by the administrators of justice were then brought to the public audience hall (Daulat Khana-i Khass o ‘Amm, or Audience Hall for High and Low) at the second court, where the emperor regularly held audiences after the darshan ceremony (figs. 21–22 [6]).

During his daily public audiences at the Red Fort of Delhi the emperor again sat framed by a raised jharōka of white marble in the shape of a baldachin with a curved bangala roof supported by four baluster columns (fig. 25; see also Asher, fig. 5). The throne’s baluster columns and its baldachin form, inspired by European illustrations of royalty and of holy personages, have been interpreted as symbolizing the image of Shah Jahan (World Emperor) as a semi-divine world ruler. Its pietra dura revetments, which depict birds and lions amidst floral motifs, inset with a Florentine panel showing Orpheus playing his lute to pacified wild animals, have been identified as references to the throne of Solomon and the Solomonic justice of Shah Jahan’s ideal rule.

The jharōka throne in Delhi has restrained figural imagery dominated by floral motifs. It no longer features the Christian imagery seen in miniatures that depict the public audience jharōkas of the Agra and Lahore forts, an omission that demonstrates the growing religious orthodoxy of Shah Jahan’s reign, when Jesuit missionaries had lost their earlier influence (figs. 26–28). Paired portraits of Christ and the Virgin, accompanied by winged angels, had been used in jharōkas and on the walls of the private reception halls to enhance the semidivine Mughal imperial image. The portrait of the Virgin depicted in a miniature above Jahangir’s jharōka of public audiences most likely alluded to the Queen Mother, the “Mary of the Age” (Maryam al-Zamani), who was revered for giving birth to the divinely illuminated emperor, the counterpart of Christ (fig. 26).

Miniatures representing Shah Jahan at the public audience halls of the Lahore and Agra forts depict under his jharōka allegorical scenes showing the scales of justice, the chain of justice,
Chishti shayks holding the insignia of royalty, as well as wild and tame animals lying peacefully on the earth’s globe (figs. 27, 28). Seen in conjunction with these allegorical images, the Orpheus panel in Delhi can be read as alluding to much more than Solomonic symbolism. It no doubt evoked the universal justice inaugurated by the millennial regime of the world emperor Shah Jahan, the long-awaited Mahdi whose blissful messianic rule would unite a single flock under a single shepherd. Shah Jahan was in fact hailed in official chronicles as the mujaddid, the “renewer” who ushered in a golden age of peace and justice by reviving the law of Islam.

The protective canopies seen in early miniatures in front of public audience jharōkas were first replaced by Shah Jahan with a wooden-pillared hall at the Agra fort. The emperor then ordered the construction of a more permanent stone structure there; it is he who built the forty-pillared public audience halls seen today at the Red Forts of Agra, Lahore, and Delhi, which reflect the increased pomp and formality of court rituals in his reign. These Chihil Sutun halls, which resemble their wooden Safavid counterparts, also carried the distant memory of shared Timurid prototypes. Built in white-plastered red sandstone they imitated the private palaces of Shah Jahan’s forts whose white marble halls signified royal status. The one in Delhi is a hypostyle hall with cusped arches open on three sides; its wider central aisle culminates at the emperor’s mihrab-like niche containing his inlaid white marble baldachin throne (figs. 21-22 [6], 25). Before that throne all petitioners had to signify their readiness to serve the emperor by a salutation that replaced Akbar’s custom of prostration. The latter had been abolished as irreverent because it recalled the posture of prayer in front of a mihrab.

Shah Jahan’s public audience halls were divided by three railings of differing materials (gold, silver, and red sandstone) into zones reserved for groups ordered according to their place in the hierarchy. Unlike the tripartite tālāns of Isfahan, where guests were seated by rank on both sides of the shah, in the Mughal case only the emperor sat in his raised jharōka (which corresponds to the central royal iwans in wooden-pillared Safavid audience halls), with all others standing below, except for those few honored by a reception at the royal balcony. The emperor’s jharōka can also be seen as a Mughal counterpart of the Ottoman sultan’s ceremonial window overlooking the grand vizier’s public council hall. Unlike the grilled window that framed the depersonalized sultan’s omniscient gaze whose potency was felt indirectly through its effects, the jharōka exhibited in glory the Mughal emperor who personally administered the state without any intermediary. All office holders and nobles had to report directly to the emperor and to attend his court at regular intervals, including such annual celebrations as the Persian New Year (Nauruz), when the sun crosses the vernal equinox, and the royal birthdays. The emperor, whose “royal sight” was “as efficacious as alchemy,” handled the routine matters of state himself, received ambassadors, conferred ranks, awarded robes of honor and other gifts, and watched the stable masters parade horses and elephants before his “blessed royal eye.”

Petitions, reports, and gifts were handed to an officer, who stood on a marble platform below the jharōka, rather than directly to the emperor. Miniatures depicting Jahangir’s and Shah Jahan’s public audiences show them accompanied by princes, attendants, and nobles being honored by an invitation to the jharōka (figs. 26-28). Those attending the public audience had to remain silent, standing with their hands crossed in a gesture of obeisance, and their eyes avoiding direct contact with the paternalistic gaze that the emperor extended over them from his raised position. The lack of eye contact between the ruler and his subjects is once again captured in these miniatures which depict the icon-like emperor and his audience in profile, their mute and expressionless faces reflecting the gravity of a timeless ritual that gave the illusion of an order transcending mere human experience.

The French physician Bernier wrote to the inquisitive Colbert that the daily public audiences of the Mughal ruler involved a “disgusting adulation”: “Whenever a word escapes the lips of the King, if at all to the purpose, how trifling soever may be its import, it is immediately caught by the surrounding throng; and the chief Omrahs, extending their arms towards heaven, as if to receive some benediction, exclaim Karamat! Karamat! wonderful! wonderful! he has spoken wonders!” Then the emperor suddenly gave the order, “takhliya” (meaning “leave”) and the red curtain of his jharōka dropped to mark the end of the show. Shah Jahan then went to his inlaid white marble private audience hall (Daulat Khana-i Khass) facing the river, where he held daily
meetings with a more restricted group of trusted advisers, nobles, and ambassadors. As in Agra the hall is in a small court, paired on an elevated marble platform with a ceremonial royal bath of inlaid white marble whose intimate atmosphere provided an ideal setting for even more exclusive audiences where the most delicate matters were privately discussed by a select few (figs. 21–22 [14, 15], 24, 29). 73

The private audience hall whose white marble piers support cupped arches was once inlaid with precious stones and covered with a silver ceiling. A continuous straight water channel, the Nahr-i Bihisht (River of Paradise), which runs through this hall connects it to others along the riverfront and alludes to the ubiquitous theme of paradise made explicit in the inscription: “If there is a paradise on the face of earth / It is this, it is this, it is this.” As the emperor sat there on his famous jeweled peacock throne raised on a central platform, he wrote replies to petitions, awarded grants, held philosophical and religious discussions, inspected the artifacts produced by the court ateliers, and approved architectural projects. A miniature, which depicts Shah Jahan receiving his son and grandson at the private audience hall in 1651 (fig. 50), captures the increased formality of court rituals that departed from the relatively informal assemblies of Jahangir at his private audience hall where he used to eat opium and drink all night with guests and attendants. 74

From the private audience hall Shah Jahan went to the Royal Tower (Shah Burj) where his privy council met; it consisted only of the princes and a few dignitaries. This must have been the octagonal tower attached to a group of chambers, marked by a carved marble screen over the River of Paradise which depicts the scales of justice on a crescent moon amidst clouds and celestial bodies (figs. 21–22 [12], 24, 29[top]). A long Persian inscription there refers to the nizām-i ādāl (balance of justice), mentions the construction dates of the fort, cites its cost, and praises its patron Shah Jahan, whose palace is compared to the mansions of heaven. 75 The small size of the tower complex reflected privacy and intimacy. Here the emperor addressed the most secret affairs of the state, cultivating close ties with the highest officers of his court, even though these ties were no longer expressed in terms of imperial disciples as they were in the days of Akbar and Jahangir.

After a nap at noon in the harem, where he responded to petitions from women, Shah Jahan continued to make his rounds from audience to audience until he finally retired to his bedchamber. 76 Marking the times of the day by regular appearances in the morning, at noon, in the evening, and at night, the just emperor thus followed the movement of the sun, the center of the universe which was the source of his divinely illumined kingship. A Persian inscription of Shah Jahan at the private audience hall of the Red Fort in Agra, dated 1636–37, takes up this theme when it compares the hall to the highest heavens and the emperor himself to the sun in the sky. The royal timetable was as precise as an astronomical phenomenon, reinforcing the idea that the emperor was the undisputed center of the empire; without him the very foundations of the state and of the world would be shaken. 77

The Red Fort in Delhi, built to frame the various functions of the divinely illumined royal person, was a celestial abode of felicity. Unlike Akbar’s predominantly red-sandstone palace-fort in Agra, where the only white marble structure facing the river had been an octagonal tower pavilion functioning as his jharokha-i darshan, all the royal structures of Shah Jahan’s Red Fort in Delhi were built of white marble, like the illuminated pure white shrines of India (fig. 24). Their glittering gilded domes and curved bangala roofs covering brilliant white marble royal halls were no doubt intended as metaphors for the aura of sublime light radiated by the sun king. 78

The Red Fort in Delhi functioned as an extravagant stage for the daily performances of an endless show that exalted the Mughal emperor as the most powerful ruler of the world, worthy of his title Shah Jahan (World Emperor). Louis XIV, another sun king whose palace-theater reflected the cosmos, was familiar with the Mughal court. His advisers had diligently gathered information about the Mughals, Ottomans, and Safavids, as well as the rulers of China and the ancient Near East. Despite the obvious parallels between various versions of absolute monarchy in early-modern Europe and in the East, however, French writers of the time would insist on classifying the latter as examples of Oriental despotism, far removed from the ideals of the enlightened French kings. 79

Comparing Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal palaces shows that their architecture and ceremonial fabricated distinctive images of absolute kingship rooted in different theories of dynastic legitimacy. The gaze was carefully controlled in
each case through framing and staging, from the grilled windows screening the omniscient but invisible Ottoman sultan, and the open tālārs of the accessible Safavid shah acting as interactive stages, to the jharōkas where the auspicious Mughal sun king exhibited himself in glory. The theatrical “display culture” of these three early-modern courts assigned a central role to the gaze in articulating the social hierarchies built into the discourse of absolutism. In each of the three palaces the power of the eye to naturalize the culturally constructed royal rhetoric of dynastic legitimacy was fully exploited. Just as in the realm of gender relations, so in the sphere of patriarchal political discourse the gaze played its role in constructing asymmetries of power.

The three palaces in which sign systems governed everything from uniforms, food, and gift exchange to architecture and ritual constituted rich semiotic universes that served to validate the imperial systems they represented in microcosm. Embodying a particular blend of sacred and imperial themes, dominated by the leitmotif of royal justice, these palaces shaped the perception of the imperial order as it was passed from generation to generation. They therefore provide an essential key to the understanding of the court-centered artistic and architectural products of each empire which developed their own distinctive visual idiom that functioned as a recognizable stamp of dynastic identity. The three palaces, which made use of cultural practices sometimes at odds with orthodox Islam, had a diversity that cannot be accounted for by a monolithic concept of “Islamic” palace.
Notes

1. The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires are compared in Marshall G. S. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam: The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times, vol. 3 (Chicago and London, 1974). For a comparison of their capitals (Istanbul, Isfahan, Delhi) with those of the Tokugawa shogunate (Edo) and the Ming empire (Beijing), see Stephen P. Blake, Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639–1739 (Cambridge, Eng., New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney, 1991), 183–211. Diplomatic relations are discussed in Riazul Islam, Indo-Persian Relations (Tehran, 1970); Riazul Islam, A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations (Karachi, 1979); Naimur Rahman Farooqi, Mughal-Ottoman Relations (Delhi, 1989); and Adel Allouche, The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (906–962/1500–1555) (Berlin, 1983).


6. For the Ibrahim Pasha Palace and Ottoman festivities held at the Hippodrome, see Nurhan Atasoy, İbrahim Paşa Sarayı (Ibrahim Pasha Palace) (Istanbul, 1972); Metin And, Osmanlı Şenliklerinde Türk Sanatları (Turkish Arts in Ottoman Festivities) (Ankara, 1982).

7. The sultan’s horse is mentioned in Philippe du Fresne-Canaye, Le Voyage du Levant de Philippe du Fresne-Canaye (1753), ed. M. H. Hauser (Paris, 1897), 126. The seventeenth-century French traveler Bernier found the Mughal emperor’s Friday processions on an elephant less impressive: “I cannot say that this train resembles the pompous processions, or (which is a more appropriate term) the masquerades of the Grand Seignior”; François Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656–1668, trans. A. Constable (New Delhi, 1983), 280.


9. The second court is described in Nicosoglu, Architecture, Ceremonial and Power, 53–90. For the argument that the grilled window at the public audience hall of the Topkapi originated in late Abbasid ceremonial where the secluded caliph observed councils from behind a grilled window covered by a curtain made from the kiswa of the Ka’ba, see İ. H. Uzunçarşı, Osmanlı Devleti Tezkilatına Medhal (Ankara, 1941), 5. The insignia of the Abbasid caliph al-Qa‘im bi Amr Allah (overthrown in a rebellion at Baghdad in 1055–56 by Fatimid allies) which the amir al-Basasiri sent to Egypt as a trophy
for the Fatimid caliph included a large ceremonial iron grilled window originally installed in the Dar al-Khilafa in Baghdad behind which the caliphs sat in state. First reinstalled in the Fatimid grand vizier’s palace in Cairo, which later served as a residence for Ayyubid rulers, the grilled window was subsequently reused on the street façade of the khanqaq of the Mamluk amir Baybars al-Jashankir built in 1308–9 on the site of the Fatimid grand vizierial palace (see Howyda Nawaf al-Harithy, “Urban Form and Meaning in Bahri Mamluk Architecture,” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992, 78–96; Behrens-Abouseif, “The Façade of the Aqmar Mosque,” 34). For the audience halls of the Fatimid caliphs, where they sat on an elevated throne (sidillā) behind a grilled window (shubbāk) draped by a curtain, with their grand vizier seated below, see Behrens-Abouseif, “The Façade of the Aqmar Mosque,” 34–35. During the audience the ministers stood to the right and left of the Fatimid caliph’s window with the grand vizier sitting directly under it, an arrangement strikingly similar to that of the Ottoman sultan’s public audience hall in the Topkapi. A similar ceremonial window (shubbāk) existed in the Dar al-Niyaba (Vicergerency Palace) built in the Mamluk citadel of Cairo by Qalawun for his viceroy Tumranay in 1288, where this officer used to sit when he presided over official hearings; see Rabbat, “Citadel of Cairo,” 76–77, 110–11. An elevated grilled window in the Mustansiriyya madrasa in Baghdad which overlooked the lecture hall below and allowed the Abbasid caliph to eavesdrop without being seen is mentioned in Yasser Tabbāa’s paper in this volume. Also see n. 5 above.


12. For the history of robes of honor used by Islamic dynasties since Abbasid times, see N. A. Stillman, “Khilfa,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (hereafter EI2), 5:6–7.

13. The sultan’s private audience hall, the third court, and the royal garden pavilions beyond are described in Necipoğlu, Architecture, Ceremonial and Power, 91–241.


15. For the long history of household slaves recruited from non-Muslim backgrounds and trained to rise to high offices from the days of the Abbasid dynasty onward, see D. Sourdel, P. Hardy, and H. İnalcık, “Ghulām,” EI2, 2:1079–91. The Mamluks of Egypt and the Ottomans were the last great examples of centralized sedentary dynasties that relied on slave-soldiers on a large scale. The predominantly nomadic Mongols and Timurids, by contrast, were tribal clan confederations in which the role of slave troops was considerably smaller. The Safavids and Mughals largely perpetuated the Timurid heritage. Unlike the medieval sultanates of Delhi, under the Mughals, slaves played a very minor part in the administration and the army. The military basis of the early Safavid state was the Turkmen Kızılbash tribal divisions. Although Shah ʿAbbās I attempted to balance their power with converted slave troops of Georgian, Armenian, and Circassian origin, the Kızılbash continued to outnumber them.

16. The mechanisms of state formation and the dynamics of tribal politics under Timur, who transformed a loose nomadic confederation of Turco-Mongolian tribesmen into a disciplined army subservient to him, are discussed in Beatrice Forbes Manz, The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane (Cambridge, Eng., 1989).

17. Louis XIV’s Spanish uncle and father-in-law Philip IV rarely appeared in public; when he did he remained virtually immobile “like a marble statue” with only his lips moving. Calm dignity, gravity, and sobriety were highly prized qualities in the Spanish royal tradition, much as they were at the Ottoman court; see Peter Burke, The Fabrication of Louis XIV (New Haven and London, 1992), 180. The statement in Louis XIV’s memoirs was repeated in a funeral sermon which described the late king as “very different from those mysterious kings who hide themselves to make themselves respected”; Burke, Fabrication of Louis XIV, 184.

18. For example, an eighteenth-century French traveler contrasted the instability that the Ottoman sultans adopted to inspire awe in their subjects
with the exhibitionism of the French kings, who wanted to be loved by them; see Jean-Claude Flachat, *Observations sur le commerce et sur les arts d'une partie de l'Europe, de l'Asie, de l'Afrique, et même des Indes Orientales* (1740–1758), 2 vols. (Lyons, 1766–67), 2:177. For a Lacanian deconstruction of the fiction of Oriental despotism in European travelogues written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Alain Grosrichard, *Structure du sérial: La fiction du despotisme asiatique dans l'Occident classique* (Paris, 1979). The Ottoman political discourse in the early eighteenth century, at the time when court ceremonial was being transformed, has not yet been studied.


25. The term "mounted Janissaries" (*janissaires à cheval*) is mentioned in Chardin, *Voyages*, 5:307; and Vladimir Minorsky, ed. and trans., *Tadhkīrat ad-Mulūk: A Manual of Safavid Administration* (ca. 1137/1725) (repr., Cambridge, Eng., 1980), 33. Chardin adds that 'Abbas I also trained infantrymen armed with muskets to imitate the Ottoman janissaries so that he could fight them back more effectively; Chardin, *Voyages*, 5:297–98. For 'Abbas I's centralizing reforms, the groundwork of which was laid by Shah Tahmasp, see H. R. Rooomr, "The Safavid Period," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, ed. P. Jackson and L. Lockhart (Cambridge, London, New York, 1986), 262–78, 343–47. Besides serving in the new regiments, slaves were also employed in the royal household and made their presence felt at the higher levels of Safavid administration until they filled about one-fifth of the high administrative posts; see R. M. Savory, "The Safavid Administrative System," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, 6:351–72.


29. Pietro della Valle, *Les fameux voyages*, 2:53, describes the grand "tetrapolis" of Isfahan as "une belle ville de quatre citez, qui sont si proches l'une de l'autre, & si contigues entr'elles, qu'elles ne sont separees seulement que de la largeur de la belle rue de cahrabahg, & de celle du fleuve, qui la divise justement en croix"; also see 2:39–45, 53, and 3:40–41. The inhabitants of Tabriz and New Julfa were resettled in Isfahan's new colonies because 'Abbas I had ruined their cities in order to combat the Ottomans. For Isfahan's suburbs, see Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, 192–97; Olearius, *Les Voyages*, 2:775–76; Chardin, *Voyages*, 8:67–117. The district of Zoroastrians was moved to New Julfa after 'Abbas II converted it into a royal garden.

30. Junabadi's passage is translated in McChesney, "Four Sources," 114. For the opposition to Shah 'Abbas I in the old maydan, see McChesney, "Four Sources," 112, 114, 117–18. For the statement that 'Abbas I built the new maydan in order to divert commerce away from the old one where an influential prince belonging to the old aristocracy held rights which he refused to transfer, see J. B. Tavernier, *Voyages en Perse* (Geneva, 1790), 54–55. Tavernier says that the vengeful shah lodged the Augustinians and Carmelites there to annoy the inhabitants of the old maydan. Chardin says 'Abbas I lodged the Augustinians at the Husayniiya district of the old maydan in order to annoy the revered descendants of Husayn who lived there. Their leader, a powerful mujtabid, had named his sons "Shah" in order to challenge the legitimacy of the Safavid ruler; see Chardin, *Voyages*, 8:7–12.


33. For the still extant octagonal shrine, see Zander, ed., *Travaux*, 206, figs. 94 and 95; della Valle, *Les fameux voyages*, 2:69–70; Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, 212, and Minorsky, *Manual of Safavid Administration*, 33–34, 55, 126. Iskandar Munshi, *History*, 1:463, describes the ritual at the octagonal shrine where those who "love the shah" formed a "circle of divine unity [halqa-e tawhid] as is the custom of the Sufis of the Safavid Order, and began to chant the name of God and to declare His unity." He also mentions (*History*, 2:1166) the death penalty given to some assassins who had forced their way into the private quarters of the palace with weapons, "since they had violated the sanctity of the royal palace, which is a place of refuge for criminals." Chardin, *Voyages*, 7:369–71, says that the 'Ali Qapu, the tombs of imams, and the stables and kitchens of the Safavid kings also provided asylum to criminals.

34. For the gatehouse, see Galdieri, *Esfahan: Ali Qapu*; Zander, ed., *Travaux*, 133–289; Blunt, *Isfahan*, 72; della Valle, *Les fameux voyages*, 2:47, 70; Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, 208; and Chardin, *Voyages*, 7:368–69. There is some confusion about the name of the gatehouse; Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, 208–9, 211, says that it was not called the "Gate of 'Ali" but the "Gate of Allah," but rather "Colored Gate" (Ala Qapu). According to Chardin, *Voyages*, 7:368, it was not called the "Gate of 'Ali," but the "Sublime Gate" (i.e., 'Ali Qapu). However, the gate's inscriptions added by later rulers consistently allude to 'Ali; see Galdieri, *Esfahan*, 149–53.

35. Minorsky refers to the shah as a grand capitalist in *Manual of Safavid Administration*, 14. Pietro della Valle, *Les fameux voyages*, 3:50, wrote that the shah was the only great merchant in his kingdom since he monopolized the commerce of almost every article sold in Isfahan's maydan where "they even sell the onions of the king." For the
shah’s centralizing economic policies that paralleled his political reforms, see McChesney, "Four Sources," 118-19; and Linda K. Steinmann, "Shah ʿAbbās and the Royal Silk Trade, 1599-1629," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1986.

36. The Qaysariyya portal is described by Chardin, Voyages, 7:356-57, who says the clock had been removed in his time because nobody could repair it. The clock was made by an Englishman according to Olearius, Les Voyages, 2:768. Pietro della Valle, Les fameux voyages, 2:47-50, describes ʿAli Qapu’s erotic figural paintings, which depicted men and women in lascivious postures representing Bacchus and Venus united. Holding wine cups in their hands, most were dressed in contemporary costumes, some of them wearing European clothing. For the few paintings that survive, see J. Daridian and S. Stelling-Michaud, Le peinture séfévide d’Ispahan. Le Palais d’Ala Qapı (Paris, 1980). Natanzi compares the painted walls of the maydan to "a copy of the Aįñib al-makhšūfāt" (trans. in McChesney, "Four Sources," 107). Chardin, Voyages, 7:19, observes that the Safavids were more tolerant of figural paintings in secular buildings than the Ottomans and Uzbeks. The Safavids had inherited the Timurid tradition of figural wall painting described in Basil Gray, “The Tradition of Wall Painting in Iran,” in Highlights of Persian Art, ed. R. E. Ettinghausen and E. Yarshater (Boulder, Colo., 1979), 313-27.

37. Archivio di Stato, Venice, Busta 5, no. 13, fol. 7r; no. 15, fol. 22r.

38. Kaempfer, Am Hofe, 246. Olearius, Les Voyages, 2:706-55, describes a wide variety of pavilions in which banquetts were held for ambassadors; some of them were located in suburban hunting parks where ambassadors were invited to participate in royal hunting parties. ʿAbbās I used to give audiences "in all sorts of places" according to Friar Thaddeus, Chronicle of the Carmelites, 1:286.

39. See Luschey, "Der königliche Marstall," 71-79; Kaempfer, Am Hofe, 210-11; Olearius, Les Voyages, 706-11; and Jean Chardin, Le Couronnement de Soleiman, troisième Roy de Perse (Paris, 1671), esp. 108-35. Ambassadors were held under the arms by officials while being led to the shah’s presence to perform obeisance; they then had to retreat backwards to their assigned seat. During their farewell audience they had to wear the robe of honor given them by the shah.

40. Chardin, Voyages, 5:468-500 and 7:377-79, describes the Chihīl Sutun as the palace’s largest reception hall capable of accommodating 250 to 300 people, and provides a detailed account of a banquet held there which was much more formal than those given in ʿAbbās I’s time. For Chihīl Sutun, see Zander, ed., Travaux, 291-382. The paintings are discussed in Grube, "Wall Paintings," 511-42; and E. G. Sims, "Late Safavid Painting: The Chihīl Sutun, the Armenian Houses, the Oil Paintings," in Akten des VII. Internationalen Kongresses für Iranische Kunst und Archäologie (Berlin, 1979), sec. 3, 408-18.

41. Loḵmān, Hūnernāme, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, ms. H.1528, fols. 16r-18r.

42. Kaempfer, Am Hofe, 252-83.


44. Iskandar Munšī, History, 1:536, refers to ʿAbbās I’s gatehouse as "the five-storied royal palace." For the theory that ʿAbbās II added its tālār, see Galdieri, Esfahan, 38-40. Also see the descriptions in della Valle, Les fameux voyages, 2:47, 3:35-36; and Kaempfer, Am Hofe, 208-10. The daily council (dīvān) of ministers at the ground floor of ʿAli Qapu is described in Chardin, Voyages, 5:237-39, 7:369; and Minorsky, Manual of Safavid Administration, 42-55.

45. Della Valle, Les fameux voyages, 3:9-56. Sometimes the maydan’s illuminated shops were visited in the company of harem women, eunuchs, the wives of ambassadors and of Armenian merchants; della Valle, Les fameux voyages, 3:10-18. The illumination spectacles are also described in Herbert, Travels, 128. Chardin, Voyages, 7:337, says ʿAbbās I was particularly fond of these pompous spectacles which his successors repeated less frequently and only to impress ambassadors.

46. Iskandar Munšī, History, 2:1044-48. The New Year’s (Nauruz) celebrations also had an informal atmosphere: "Every night, the Shah would wander through the park, stopping to talk with whichever group he pleased; sweet-voiced singers and dexterous musicians banned everyone’s cares, and rosy-cheeked girls passed the wine and kept the revelers in a happy mood"; Iskandar Munšī, History, 2:977.


48. For the Water Festival in 1619 when people of all classes started to throw water on one another at a sign from the shah, who watched the spectacle together with ambassadors from the beyleredes of


52. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 55–57, also see map on 72–73.


55. The Rang Mahal (Colored Palace), also known as Imtiyaz Mahal (Distinguished Palace), corresponds to the Khass Mahal that Shah Jahan built in the Red Fort of Agra which functioned as the emperor’s sleeping quarters, according to Lahori. It was in this principal courtyard of the zenāna, the emperor’s private palace, that Shah Jahan listened to music, poets, and storytellers, played with his children, and watched dancers; see Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 39. Although the adjacent octagonal tower in Delhi is known today as the emperor’s sleeping quarters (khwābghā), it seems more likely that he slept in the Rang Mahal since the tower had official functions; see nn. 65, 75. Unlike the Red Fort in Agra where official buildings (the public and private audience halls) are aligned on a central axis, in Delhi the central axis culminates at Shah Jahan’s private palace, an arrangement that highlights the centrality of the emperor’s person.


58. The carpet is described in Khvāndamīr, *Qānūn-i Humâyūn*, 80–81. For Abū al-Fażl’s theory of kingship, see J. F. Richards, “The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir,” in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. J. F. Richards (Madison, Wisc., 1981), esp. 260–66. Abu al-Fazl who compares Alanquwa with the Virgin Mary writes, “That day of Alanquwa’s conception was the beginning of the manifestation of his Majesty, the King of Kings [Akbar] who after passing through diverse stages was revealed to the world from the womb of her Majesty Maryam Makani (i.e., the Queen Mother);” Abū al-Fażl, *The Akbarname*, vol. 1, trans. H. Beveridge (Calcutta, 1907), 179–80.


325

pt. 1, 61. In his memoirs, pt. 1, 37, Jahangir points out that Akbar’s tolerance of all religions differed from the practice of the Safavids, Ottomans, and Uzbeks: “This was different from the practice in other realms, for in Persia there is room for Shias only, and in Turkey, India, and Turan there is room for Sunnis only.” Akbar and Jahangir were married to Rajput princesses to seal political alliances. According to Blake, Shahjahananabad, 126–30, between 1658 and 1678, the corps of mansabdāris, or office holders, was 41 percent Indian, 36 percent Iranian, and 18 percent Turanian. Rajputs, Hindu warrior clans from North India who had been drawn into the Mughal system by Akbar, comprised just over one-third of the Indian group. For the abolition of prostration by Shah Jahan, see Mubarak Ali, Court of the Great Mughuls, 32.

61. For darshan in Hindu kingship, see Ronald Inden, “Ritual, Authority and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship,” in Kinghip and Authority, ed. Richards, 54. The ritual of darshan in Hindu temples, where to see and be seen by the image of a deity continues to play a central role, is discussed in Diana L. Eck, Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India (Chambersburg, Penna., 1985). See also Catherine Asher’s discussion of darshan in this volume.


63. Anushirvan’s chain of justice, which can be traced even further back to the Achaemenid dynasty, is described in the Seljuk grand vizier Nizam al-Mulk’s Siyāsatnāma; for references, see Ebba Koch, Shah Jahan and Orpheus: The Pietre Dure Decoration and the Programme of Shah Jahan’s Throne in the Hall of Public Audiences at the Red Fort of Delhi (Graz, 1988), 46 n. 134. According to some Islamic texts the chain was attached to the Sasanian throne room in Ctesiphon from whose vault hung a gold chain carrying a crown: “At the other end of the golden chain was [fastened] a bronze one [which hung] outside the iwan. When a plaintiff came, he went to the bronze chain and pulled it, and [thus] set in motion the crown that hangs over the king’s head”; the crown would then order the gatekeepers to bring the plaintiff before him so that he could mete out justice against the oppressor; see Ghada Hijjawi Qaddumi, “A Medieval Islamic Book of Gifts and Treasures: Translation, Annotation, and Commentary on the Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa al-Tuḥaf,” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1990, 134–35. For Jahangir’s chain of justice, see Rogers and Beveridge, trans., Memoirs of Jahangīr, pt. 1, 7. An inscription of Shah Jahan at the Khass Mahal in the Agra fort mentions the fastening of the chain of justice there. Humayun had used a drum of justice that seekers of justice could beat; see Khvāndamīr, Qānūn-i Humāyūn, 82. For the inscription at the Topkapi, see Necipoğlu, Architecture, Ceremonial and Power, 86.


65. The octagonal tower pavilion in Delhi is identified as the jharokā-i darshan in Blake, Shahjahananabad, 37, 39; Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, 198; and Nicholson, The Red Fort, 50. Jahangir forbade the amirs at the provinces to make use of the following royal prerogatives “which are the private affair of kings”: sitting in the jharokā, having officers perform the kūrnīsh (prostration), staging elephant fights, inflicting the punishment of blinding or cutting off ears and noses, forcing Islam on others, conferring titles, forcing singers to remain on duty in the manner of royal darbars, beating drums (naqqārā), making elephants perform obeisance, going in procession with retinues, and using a seal on written documents; see Rogers and Beveridge, trans., Memoirs of Jahangīr, pt. 1, 205. For the use of jharokās in sub-imperial palaces, see Catherine Asher’s article in this volume.


67. For the use of Christian imagery in Mughal palaces before Shah Jahan’s reign, see Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, 112–15; Ebba Koch, “The Influence of the Jesuit Mission on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors,” in Islam in India, ed. C. W. Troll, Studies and Commentaries 1 (New Delhi, 1982), 28–29; Ebba Koch, “Jahangir and the Angels: Recently Discovered Wall Paintings under European Influence in the Fort of Lahore,” in India and the West, ed. J. Deppert (New Delhi, 1988), 173–95. Also see the accounts of William Hawkins (1608–13) and William Finch (1608–11) which describe the figural paintings in Jahangir’s palaces, in Early Travels in India (1583–1619), ed. William Foster (reprt., New Delhi, 1968), esp. 115, 162–64, 184. In 1623 della Valle, Les fameux voyages, 1:97–98, wrote that Shah Jahan, who disliked the Christians, had removed from the Ahmadabad palace a picture of the Virgin put up there by Jahangir. For the analogy between the Mongol princess Alanquwa, the Virgin Mary, and Mughal queen mothers, see n. 58 above.

68. For the allegorical images depicted under the
jharoka and the role of the Chishti shaykhs in legitimizing Mughal rule, see Robert Skelton, "Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Priscilla P. Soucek (University Park, Penna., and London, 1988), 177–87. Koch overemphasizes the theme of Solomon’s throne in her iconographic study of the jharoka throne in Delhi, thus underplaying its messianic message. Apocalyptic millennialism, with its vision of a golden age, played an important role in Mughal theories of dynastic legitimacy ever since Akbar had inaugurated the millennium. For chronicles referring to Shah Jahan as the mujaddid, see Koch, Shah Jahan and Orpheus, 44 n. 93. Apocalyptic millennialism in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean world in Muslim, Jewish, and Christian settings is studied in a forthcoming book by Cornell H. Fleischer.

69. Nur Baksh, "Agra Fort," 174–76. The elaborate tents used during Mughal court ceremonies are described in Peter A. Andrews, "'The Generous Heart' or the 'Mass of Clouds': The Court Tents of Shah Jahan," *Mugarnas* 4 (1987): 149–65. Particularly elaborate tents were erected in front of the public and private audience halls on the Persian New Year (Nauruz) and the emperor’s birthdays. In contrast to the Ottoman court these two occasions were also publicly celebrated by the Safavids.


71. For the three railings and the hierarchical ordering of groups, see the diagram in Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 90–97; Begley and Desai, eds., "Daily Activities of the Emperor Shah Jahan," 567–69.


73. Bernier, *Travels*, 263–64. Lahori describes the ceremonial bath at the Agra fort: "During the reign of 'Arsh-Ashiyani the late Emperor Akbar, between the Hall of Public Audience and the royal seraglio, there was a bath chamber (hammam) in which the Emperor used to bathe. In this place, only the most trusted royal attendants received admittance. . . . Because of the bath chamber built nearby, this hall came to be called Ghusal Khana (or 'Priy Chamber') by both high and low, but now it is referred to as the Hall of Private Audience (Daulat Khana-i Khass)"; Begley and Desai, eds., "Daily Activities of the Emperor Shah Jahan," 569–71.


75. Begley and Desai, eds., "Daily Activities of the Emperor Shah Jahan," 571. Asher identifies this place as the Shah Burj, or King's Tower at the northernmost edge of the palace’s river front (figs. 21–22 [18]), but Lahori’s description of the Agra fort implies that the audience tower was adjacent to the emperor’s bedroom to which he retired directly after holding his late-night meetings at the tower; see Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, 196.

76. Begley and Desai, eds., "Daily Activities of the Emperor Shah Jahan," 571–73. Shah Jahan’s ceremonial schedule had grown more complex than that of his predecessors, who did not give as many daily audiences.

77. The full inscription is cited in Nur Baksh, "Agra Fort," 177–78. The centrality of the sun, which was associated with the emperor, was expressed in astrological charts cast by the court astrologers for Shah Jahan’s important audience sessions. The emperor was the sun, the amirs the planets, and the lesser mansabdars the minor heavenly bodies; Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 96. This scheme was foreshadowed in Humayun’s Carpet of Mirth; see n. 58 above.

78. A passage by Lahori describes Akbar’s marble jharoka: "In the reign of His departed Majesty [Akbar], on the Shah Burj which is adjacent to the Daulat-Khana-i Khass there was a small marble pavilion with a chamber of the same stone in front, excepting which no other building had been built of marble. In the reign of His departed Majesty [Jahangir] marble halls were built on the three sides of it. As the said buildings were not liked by the critical disposition of . . . [Shah Jahan] . . . they were demolished in his august reign, and a new marble building, extremely delightful, was made, consisting of an octagonal chamber"; cited in Nur Baksh "Agra Fort," 180. For the use of white marble to "blur the lines between ruler and the divine," see Catherine Asher’s article in this volume.


80. Official written sources and miniatures rarely provide a glimpse of the varied responses court rituals evoked in participants, including a critique of the very institutions they sought to legitimate. Far from remaining static, these rituals were modified over time to accommodate changing circumstances. For an application of recent theories of ritual to artifacts and architectural settings, see Kathleen Ashley and Irene J. Winter, eds., *Art in Ritual Context*, special issue of the *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6 (Winter 1992).
Fig. 1. Model of the Topkapi Palace around the 19th century.
From the exhibition catalogue Türkische Kunst und Kultur aus osmanischer Zeit (Frankfurt, 1985).

Key:
A. First Court, B. Second Court, C. Third Court (court of male pages), D. Third Court (iharem), E. Third Court (hanging garden with pavilions), F. Outer Garden with Pavilions, 1. First Gate, 2. Second Gate, 3. Third Gate.
Fig. 2. Axonometric drawing of the main core of the Topkapi Palace as it stands today, drawn by İlhan Öz.

**Key:**

Fig. 3. Parade of the carriages of royal women entering the First Gate. From Muradgea Ignace d'Ohsson, Tableau général de l'Empire ottoman (Paris, 1787-1824).

Fig. 4. Murad III watching the parade of a Safavid embassy from the tower pavilion known as Kiosk of Processions. From Lokman, Shahanshahnāma, 1592, Topkapi Palace Library, B. 200, fols. 33v–34r.
Fig. 5. Ceremonies at the second court with the sultan overseeing the proceedings at the public council hall from his grilled window at the Tower of Justice. From Lokman, Hünername, ca. 1584–85, Topkapi Palace Library, H.1523, fols. 18v, 19r.

Fig. 6. Selim II overseeing the proceedings at the public council hall from his grilled window at the Tower of Justice. From Lokman, Shähnâme-i Selim Khan, ca. 1581, Topkapi Palace Library, A. 3595, fol. lir.

Fig. 7. A banquet given in honor of a European ambassador at the public council hall, with the sultan’s silhouette seen behind his grilled window, which is flanked by the royal monogram (tughra) and topped by Qur'anic inscriptions referring to justice. From D’Ohsson, Tableau général de l’Empire ottoman.
Fig. 8a-b. Ceremonial grilled window on the façade of the sultan's private audience hall.

Fig. 9. Murad III receiving Austrian ambassadors at his private audience hall. From Album, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ca. 1590, Cod. 8626, fol. 122r.
Fig. 10a. Engelbert Kaempfer’s axonometric drawing of the palace grounds in Isfahan executed in 1684–85. From Amoenitates Exoticarum (Lemgo, 1712).

**Key:**

Fig. 10b. E. Galdieri’s redrawing of Kaempfer’s "Planographia," copied by H. Gaube with added cross-hatchings to indicate still-extant buildings. From H. Luschey, "Der königliche Marstall in Isfahan in Engelbert Kaempfers Planographia des Palastbezirkes 1712."

Key:
Fig. 12 a–b. Views of Chahar Bagh avenue. From Cornelis de Bruyn, Cornelis de Bruyn reizen over Moscouie door Persie en Indie (Amsterdam, 1711).

Fig. 13. Hazar Jarib Garden. From Jean Chardin, Voyage en Perse, et autres lieux de l'orient, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1711).

Fig. 14. Views showing the Maydan and the Bridge of Allahverdi Khan.
Fig. 15. The Maydan-i Shah with pitched tents. From Cornelis de Bruyn, *Reizen over Moscovie*.

Fig. 16. Evening Reception at the Talar-i Tavileh showing Shah Suleyman’s accession ceremony in 1666. From Kaempfer, *Ameritae Exoticarum*.
Fig. 17. Reception given at the Talar-i Tavileh to the embassy of the duke of Holstein by Shah Safi in 1637. From A. Olearius, *Muskowitische oft bekehrte Beschreibung der neuen orientalischen Reise* (Schleswig, 1656).

Fig. 18. Wall painting at the Chihil Sutun depicting a royal reception, mid 17th century.

Fig. 19. Royal reception at the Garden Pavilion of Asadabad, located on the riverfront adjacent to the Chahar Bagh avenue. From Kaempfer, *Amenities Exoticum*.

Fig. 20. Talar of 'Ali Qapu. From Chardin, *Voyages en Perse*.
Fig. 22. Axonometric view of the Red Fort showing buildings up until the British occupation in 1858, adapted from Sanderson. From L. Nicholson, The Red Fort. Key: same as fig. 21.

Fig. 23. Jahangir at the jharokha darshan in the Red Fort of Agra, Tuzuk-i Jahangir, ca. 1620. Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Geneva.
Fig. 24. (top) Panoramic view of the Red Fort in Delhi seen from the river; (bottom) The Octagonal Tower, with the private audience hall to the right and the Rang Mahal (Imtiyaz Mahal) to the left; the triple-windowed balcony between the Rang Mahal and the tower possibly functioned as Shah Jahan’s jharokha darshan. From Emily Bayley and Thomas Metcalfe, *The Golden Calf*, ed. M. M. Kaye (Exeter, England, 1980).

Fig. 25. (top) Public audience hall at the Red Fort in Delhi; (bottom) The jharoka throne for public audiences. From Bayley and Metcalfe, *Golden Calf*. 
Fig. 26. Jahangir at the jharōka of the public audience hall in Agra, receiving Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan) and his grandson, Tuzā-ī Jahāngīr, ca. 1620, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Francis Bartlett Donation of 1912 and Picture Fund, 14.654. Photo: courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Fig. 27. Shah Jahan honoring 'Ali Mardan Khan at the jharōka in the public audience hall of the Lahore fort in 1638. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Album, Ousley Add. 173, no. 13.

Fig. 28. Shah Jahan's ceremonial reunion with his three sons at the jharōka of the public audience hall in the Agra fort in 1628, Windsor Castle, Royal Library, Pādshāh-nāma, fol. 50v. Photo: courtesy The Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, 1993, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
Fig. 29. Private audience hall with a partial view of the neighboring Octagonal Tower in the Red Fort of Delhi; in the private audience hall of the Red Fort in Delhi in 1651. From Bayley and Metcalfe, Golden Calm, Leningrad, Institut Narodov Azii, Album no. E, fol. 25.

Fig. 30. Shah Jahan receiving Prince Aurangzeb and his grandson in the private audience hall of the Red Fort in Delhi. Interior of the private audience hall with central throne platform. From Bayley and Metcalfe, Golden Calm.
ARS ORIENTALIS

XXIV
ARS ORIENTALIS
Editorial Statement: *Ars Orientalis* solicits scholarly manuscripts on the art and archaeology of Asia, including the ancient Near East and the Islamic world. The journal welcomes a broad range of themes and approaches. Articles of interest to scholars in diverse fields or disciplines are particularly sought, as are suggestions for occasional thematic issues and reviews of important books in Western or Asian languages. Brief research notes and responses to articles in previous issues of *Ars Orientalis* will also be considered. Submissions must be in English, with all non-English quotations provided in translation. Authors are asked to follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. A style sheet is also available from the managing editor.

Editorial Offices: The Department of the History of Art, Tappan Hall, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1357.
## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>University/Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Padma Kimal</td>
<td>Colgate University</td>
<td>Playful Ambiguity and Political Authority in the Large Relief at Māmallapuram</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan L. Huntington</td>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>Kings as Gods, Gods as Kings: Temporality and Eternity in the Art of India</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan N. Erickson</td>
<td>University of Michigan, Dearborn</td>
<td>“Twirling Their Long Sleeves, They Dance Again and Again . . .”: Jade Plaque Sleeve Dancers of the Western Han Dynasty</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy McNair</td>
<td>University of Kansas</td>
<td>Early Tang Imperial Patronage at Longmen</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuang Shen</td>
<td>Academia Sinica</td>
<td>Archaeology in Late Qing Dynasty Painting</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Jeffrey McKibben</td>
<td>Columbus, Ohio</td>
<td>The Monumental Pillars of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasser Tabbaa</td>
<td>University of Michigan, Ann Arbor</td>
<td>The Transformation of Arabic Writing: Part 2, The Public Text</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BOOK REVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>University/Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. B. Garrison</td>
<td>Trinity University</td>
<td>Urartu: A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B.C.E., edited by Rivka Merhav with contributors</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasser Tabbaa</td>
<td>University of Michigan, Ann Arbor</td>
<td>Oriental Splendour: Islamic Art from German Private Collections, edited by Claus-Peter Haase, Jens Kroger, and Ursula Lienert</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila S. Blair</td>
<td>Richmond, New Hampshire</td>
<td>Islamic Manuscripts in the New York Public Library, by Barbara Schmitz with contributors</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan M. Bloom</td>
<td>Richmond, New Hampshire</td>
<td>Architecture of Mughal India, by Catherine B. Asher</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Ehnbom</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
<td>Hindu Art, by Richard Blurton</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Ehnbom</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
<td>Amarāvati: Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stūpa, by Robert Knox</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Markel</td>
<td>Los Angeles County Museum of Art</td>
<td>Lahore: Illustrated Views of the 19th Century, by F. S. Aijazuddin</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael D. Willis</td>
<td>The British Museum</td>
<td>Forms of the Goddess Lajjā Gaurī in Indian Art, by Carol Radcliffe Bolon</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila Avrin</td>
<td>The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art,</td>
<td>The Hebrew University of Jerusalem</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila Avrin</td>
<td>Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the</td>
<td>The Hebrew University of Jerusalem</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holocaust on the Visual Arts, by Ziva Amishai-Maisels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Edwards</td>
<td>Fascination of Nature: Plants and Insects in Chinese Painting and</td>
<td>University of Michigan, Ann Arbor</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceramics of the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), by Roderick Whitfield</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan M. Reynolds</td>
<td>Art, Tea, and Industry: Masuda Takashi and the Mitsui Circle,</td>
<td>University of Michigan, Ann Arbor</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by Christine M. E. Guth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina L. Barnes</td>
<td>Ancient Japan, by Richard Pearson and contributors</td>
<td>St. John's College, Cambridge</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ART HISTORIANS HAVE DEBATED FOR DECADES THE MEANING OF SCENES CARVED DURING THE PALLAVA PERIOD INTO A CLIFF AT MĀMALLAPURAM IN SOUTHERN INDIA (FIG. 1). DEPICTED ON A SHEER GRANITE FACE ARE MORE THAN A HUNDRED FIGURES, EACH WELL OVER LIFE-SIZE AND CHISELED IN A HIGH RELIEF THAT CATCHES THE BRIGHT COASTAL SUNSHINE (FIG. 2). DO THESE FIGURES, CARVED DURING THE SEVENTH CENTURY, ALLUDE TO PENANCE THE WARRIOR ARJUNA UNDERTAKES IN ORDER TO GAIN A SUPREME WEAPON OR TO THE MYTHICAL KING BHAGĪRATHA’S SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO BRING THE CELESTIAL RIVER GANĪGA (GANES) TO EARTH? 

POSED AS EXCLUSIVE ALTERNATIVES, NEITHER ARGUMENT HAS WON UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE. BOTH STORIES CORRELATE WITH MANY OF THE FIGURES ON THIS ROCK, AND YET ELEMENTS OF THE COMPOSITION RESIST EACH NARRATIVE WITH EQUAL STUBBORNNESS.

MY PURPOSE IN THIS ARTICLE IS TO PURSUE THE SUGGESTION ADVANCED BRIEFLY BY MICHAEL LOCKWOOD AND SUSAN HUNTINGTON: THAT THE RELIEF MEANS TO TELL BOTH OF THESE STORIES. I BELIEVE THAT, ALONG WITH THESE TWO NARRATIVES, AUDIENCES WERE MEANT TO PERCEIVE IN THIS FRIEZE A COLLECTION OF METAPHORS, COMIC ALLUSIONS, AND POLITICAL PROMISES THAT THESE multiple elements do more than coexist peacefully. THEY INTERACT, AS VOICES IN A DIALOGUE, WORKING IN COOPERATION RATHER THAN CONTEST. ESTABLISHING THESE SEPARATE VOICES AND FACILITATING THEIR INTERACTION IS A SERIES OF PURPOSEFULLY CONSTRUCTED AMBIGUITIES, DELIBERATE EXPLOITATIONS OF THE multiple CONNOTATIONS EMBEDDED WITHIN A SINGLE, FIXED ARRANGEMENT OF CARVED FIGURES. THERE IS, FURTHERMORE, A PLAYFUL QUALITY TO THESE AMBIGUITIES. THE WITTY INTERPLAY AMONG THESE VOICES SETS UP A DECIPHERING GAME FOR VIEWERS. SOME NARRATIVE ELEMENTS ARE OPENLY COMIC.

THEREFORE, I AM ARGUING THAT MIKHAIL BAKHTIN’S IDEAS ABOUT DIALOGUE, VOICING, AND HUMOR HAVE DIRECT RELEVANCE TO THIS PIECE OF EARLY INDIAN SCULPTURE, DESPITE THE MANY KINDS OF DISTANCE THAT SEPARATE THIS RELIEF FROM THE EUROPEAN LITERATURE BAKHTIN DISCUSSES. PATTERNS OF INTERACTIVE AND DELIBERATE AMBIGUITIES EMERGE, FURTHERMORE, IN STUDIES CONDUCTED BY A NUMBER OF SCHOLARS IN A WIDE VARIETY OF DISCIPLINES. MĀMALLAPURAM DOES NOT REPRESENT AN ISOLATED NON-EUROPEAN EXAMPLE OF THESE MODES OF EXPRESSION.

IT IS IN THE DELIBERATE NATURE OF THESE AMBIGUITIES THAT I FIND MY COLLEAGUES’ POLITICAL READINGS OF THE MĀMALLAPURAM RELIEF TO MAKE THE MOST SENSE. MANY OF THE THEMES ARTICULATED IN THIS RELIEF CONVERGE UPON A SET OF IDEAS ABOUT KINGSHIP. THIS POLITICAL MEANING EMERGES WITH PARTICULAR CLARITY WHERE SEPARATE VISUAL NARRATIVES OVERLAP, AS THEY DO AROUND THE THEME OF ROYAL PROTECTION. IN TONES THAT ARE ALTERNATELY HEROIC AND HUMOROUS, THREATENING AND COMFORTING, THEY ARTICULATE THE PALLAVA KING’S PROMISE TO PROTECT HIS PEOPLE AND THE LAND THEY INHABIT FROM ALL DANGERS—HUMAN, CLIMATIC, AND DIVINE. THE DIALOGUE COMMUNICATING THIS MESSAGE INVOLVES THE VOICES OF A SECOND RELIEF ADJACENT TO THE LARGE RELIEF IN FIGURE 2, AS WELL AS THE VOICES WITHIN THE DESCENT/PENANCE RELIEF ITSELF.

THESE VOICES CONVEY THEIR MESSAGE ALL THE MORE POWERFULLY FOR HAVING BEEN TEMPORARILY PERCEIVED AS SEPARATE. EACH NARRATIVE CAN READ AS THE DESCRIPTION OF YET ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE KING’S PROTECTIVE CAPABILITIES. THE INITIAL CONFUSION PRODUCED BY THE APPARENTLY COMPETING MEANINGS IS, I MAINTAIN, A CONSTRUCTIVE AND INTENDED PHASE OF READING THIS RELIEF. COMPETITION BETWEEN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES ELUDES A QUICK READING. UNCERTAINTY CAN MAKE VIEWERS PAUSE, LOOK BEYOND INITIAL IMPRESSIONS, AND APPRECIATE THE CLEVERNESS OF THIS VISUAL GAME. LENGTHY CONTEMPLATION CAN ALERT VIEWERS TO THE COMPLEXITY OF MESSAGES CONVEYED; IT CAN DIVERT THEM WITH AMUSING SUBPLOTS; IT CAN ALSO REVEAL CONVERGENCE AMONG THESE APPARENTLY CONTRADICTORY MEANINGS.

WHO WAS INTENDED TO RECEIVE SUCH MESSAGES? ANOTHER PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE IS TO ANALYZE THE COMPOSITION OF AUDIENCES THAT CONGREGATED IN FRONT OF THIS RELIEF DURING THE PALLAVA PERIOD AND TO IMAGINE THE PROCESSES THROUGH WHICH VIEWERS MIGHT HAVE ABSORBED ITS IDEAS. I WILL COME TO THIS TASK AT THE END OF THIS STUDY, AFTER DELINEATING VARIOUS NARRATIVE VOICES OF THIS PIECE AND THE INTERACTIONS AMONG THEM. BUT FIRST I MUST DESCRIBE SEVERAL PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF THIS SCULPTURE THAT SUGGEST CLUES ABOUT THE AUDIENCES AT WHOM
Fig. 1. Māmallapuram. Location of the town and its large reliefs.

Fig. 2. Large relief of Arjuna’s Penance and the Descent of the Ganges. Māmallapuram.
the relief was initially directed. These material realities have encouraged, in both the seventh century and the present, just such a process of protracted viewing as I have sketched above.

The relief overlooks the Bay of Bengal. While none of the area’s many other rock outcroppings obstructs its view of the ocean, time has necessarily transformed the experience of viewing this work: more recent buildings and vegetation now interfere with the view from the east. Currently, most visitors arrive here by tour bus along the highway that extends north to Madras, and Mamallapuram (also called “Mahablipuram”) is now a small, remote fishing village. Originally, however, the huge carving must have been one of the first sights to greet the crowds that arrived by sea at what was once a teeming port. Since the Pallava dynasty was heavily engaged in maritime warfare and trade, and since Mamallapuram was its primary port, these crowds were probably sizeable. During the Pallava period great quantities of Mamallapuram’s copious granite were carved into cave temples, free-standing monoliths, structural temples, and reliefs, and many of these monuments were inscribed by the Pallava kings themselves. The intense concentration of sculpture in this town suggests that the Pallavas recognized the opportunity offered here for addressing a substantial audience. I suspect that the prominent relief at the town’s center made a particularly eloquent statement in this visual introduction to the Pallava kingdom.

Viewers drawn to this relief by its address to the sea and its monumental scale are then urged to study the composition at some length, moving to the left and right repeatedly and perhaps interacting with other members of the large crowds that probably assembled before this broad frieze. A deep pit in front of the relief establishes a distance of some ten meters between audience and carved surface, delaying a bit longer the viewer’s recognition of figures presented. The great quantity of figures represented and the complexity of their interactions further encourage deliberate observation. Figures that wrap around the edges of the cliff and nestle in its central crevice also invite viewers to traverse this cliff’s wide face. The figures accommodate both the moving viewer and the large crowds of spectators by projecting prominently and at a consistent angle from the rock surface. Figural proportions are not distorted, that is, in order to privilege a single viewing angle. This establishes a shifting perspective that resolves coherently from any point across this facade, in contrast to a one- or two-point perspective, which would restrict observers to a single ideal vantage point.

The methods of narration employed here further detain the viewer. Rather than reading from left to right as Indian written languages do, or in a clockwise direction as the sculptural programs on Hindu temples often do, each narrative in this work demands to be traced by a gaze that hops about, linking distant figures, zigzagging up, down, left, right, and back again. With the recognition of additional readings, the mind revisits each figure, perhaps in a slightly different sequence, rethinking its significance and relationship to surrounding figures. Each time these paths are retraced, they become more familiar, more intimately within the viewer’s possession. Like a verbal epic, this relief offers rewards of increasing intensity with each of the many rereadings it demands.

**Arjuna’s Penance/Descent of the Ganges**

To assist modern readers in reconstructing this process of reading, I will summarize the two narratives most often perceived in this relief by modern scholars and the arguments for and against each interpretation. One of the most prominent of the narratives embedded here, Arjuna’s Penance, is related in the Mahābhārata and in a poem (mahākārya) reputedly popular at the Pallava court, the Kīratārjunīya by Bhāravi.

The Mahābhārata describes Arjuna and his brothers, deprived of their kingdom by their cousins, retreating to the forest and preparing to win back what they had lost. Armed with a magic spell (māṇtra) that would compel the gods to grant his wishes, Arjuna headed north, settled in the wilderness where he practiced severe austerities, and succeeded in capturing Śiva’s attention. Śiva appeared to him but in the guise of a hunter claiming to have shot the same boar Arjuna’s arrow had just brought down. The hunters fought. When Arjuna recognized his opponent’s identity, he stopped fighting and offered obeisance to the god. Śiva then granted Arjuna the weapon he had been seeking, the pāṣupatāstra, which was strong enough to destroy the world.

Scholars who would see this narrative in the Mamallapuram relief read the penitent Arjuna in the emaciated, bearded man just to the left of the
Fig. 3. Śiva, ascetic, and nāgas. Detail of cleft in large relief, Māmallapuram.
vertical cleft that bisects the rock (fig. 3). His protruding ribs and untrimmed hair reveal that, in true ascetic fashion, he has abandoned care of his physical body. In the posture of the Penance of Five Fires, he stands on one leg, his hands joined together over his head, his face raised toward his hands and staring at the sun. (Four other fires are to be understood burning on the ground around him.) To his left stands a fourarmed and colossal figure that may be read as Śiva granting Arjuna the pasupatāstra.11 Wielding his famous trident in his lower right hand, Śiva extends his lower left hand toward the emaciated man, palm open and fingers extended downward in a gesture of bestowal (varada mudrā).12 Directly beneath that hand stands a dwarf, his round belly ruptured into a leering demonic face. Is this a personification of the pasupatāstra that iconography texts describe as a terrifying aspect of Śiva?13

Five other fat dwarves of the sort that frequently accompany Śiva cluster behind the god.

The wilderness, appropriately, surrounds this scene of penitence. Lions, elephants, a lizard, and birds cluster amid trees and caves in the relief’s lower registers (fig. 2). One of these animals is a boar (fig. 4). Near the animals on the left half of the cliff are male figures that represent hunters, distinguished by their mustaches, short kilts, and the bows they carry. Serpentine creatures (nāgas) undulate in the central crevice of the composition, their multiple cobra heads fanning out behind human heads and upper bodies (fig. 3). Frequently described as water spirits in Hindu mythology, these nāgas suggest here the presence of water in the vertical cleft beside Arjuna, perhaps a river beside Arjuna’s camp.

Several disjunctions exist, however, between this relief and verbal narratives of Arjuna’s Penance. For one thing, the boar who would lie pierced by two fatal arrows as Śiva grants Arjuna’s boon spryly twists its neck and lifts a delicate foreleg (fig. 4). Though this boar matters to Arjuna’s story more than the other wild creatures surrounding it, it receives no particular sculptural emphasis. Moreover, the hunters arranged across the left half of the cliff are difficult to peg as Arjuna or Śiva. There are four of them rather than two, and all four ignore the boar. They do not fight or, for that matter, interact with one another at all. Figures in the relief that might be components of Arjuna’s story—hunters, the boar, Śiva, and the ascetic—are dispersed among other animals and host of flying beings who have no obvious connection to that narrative. The ascetic’s pose also seems not to fit this story. Why is he still performing penance when Śiva grants the boon? Once Śiva appears in his divine form, wouldn’t Arjuna be bowing in adoration?14

Yet those who designed this relief may not have held the rigid and linear sense of time embedded in such objections. The designers15 may have intentionally collapsed a diachronic sequence (first Arjuna’s asceticism, then Śiva after the fight) into a single scene, framing that within yet another moment (the boar and hunters before any arrows are shot).16 Nevertheless, this process of chronological manipulation does not account for the curious and, I think, deliberate omission of features that could articulate this narrative more precisely. At the Kailāsanāth temple in Kāñcipuram, for example, Arjuna’s Penance is clearly identified through the depiction of the
Fig. 5. Arjuna and Śiva battle over the boar. Kailāsanāth temple, Kāñcipuram.

Fig. 6. Celestials and animals ignoring the ascetic. Detail from left half of large relief, Māmallapuram.

The bodies of Śiva, clearly identified by his tall crown, and Arjuna, wearing the crossed chest straps of the archer, cross over each other in a bold "X" of energetic conflict. Bracing to deliver and receive blows, reaching for arrows, bows, and staves, the two figures take up mirroring poses as they act out their excruciatingly protracted and well-balanced duel. Just behind Śiva's bent leg, a single boar may help identify this scene (although it seems, curiously, to be alive here too).

By contrast, the large relief at Māmallapuram avoids the finality that would exclude other interpretations of the same figures. The large relief merely contains Arjuna's Penance as a possible subject. Scenes that indicate Arjuna's Penance without ambiguity seem conspicuously absent from the large Māmallapuram relief. The emphasis this composition places on the idea of water presents a further obstacle to reading the relief simply as Arjuna's Penance. Since the interaction between Arjuna and Śiva is the climactic event of that narrative, that scene should compel the attention of figures as they look, gesture, and move toward the center of this relief. However, two celestial couples, two geese, and a monkey pointedly ignore Śiva and Arjuna to gaze at the watery cleft (figs. 3 and 6), an element that has little significance beyond scene-setting for that story. Thus, a river that is only incidental to Arjuna's story eclipses the warrior as the focus of this composition.

Clearly, Arjuna's Penance cannot account for the entire design of this relief, and yet the work communicates this resistance so quietly. The figures ignoring Arjuna are tucked well into the cleft, where they might initially escape notice, and the juxtaposition of penance group and cleft leaves viewers uncertain, at least for a moment, of the frieze's true focus. This is a moment of very productive uncertainty, a moment during which images tug in several directions at once and viewers have the opportunity to glimpse the rich complexity such ambiguities can offer.

Something else has been encoded here as well, but that too has been done with a very light,
almost slippery, touch. The emphasis on water, the strongest indication of the presence of another narrative, suits nicely the story of the Descent of the Ganges. That story, a subplot in both the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, describes the terrible drought caused after the sage Agastya swallowed all the water of the earth.

For centuries the land had been barren and the ashes of the deceased, including those of King Bhagiratha’s ancestors, lay unsanctified. Finally Bhagiratha performed penances in order to win the gods’ assistance. Impressed by the king’s austerities, the celestial river Gangā agreed to descend to earth, but she warned that if she fell from such a height she would reach the earth in a murderous torrent. Śiva again intervened, catching the falling river in a lock of his matted hair where she wandered for years until the energy of her fall was spent. She trickled out gently, purifying and fructifying the earth. The multitudes of creation witnessed and celebrated her descent.¹⁹

Here is a story about divine water falling from the sky, an idea dramatically expressed by the precipitous angle of the cleft, by the devout gestures (āñjali mudrā) of the nāgas in that cleft, and perhaps on festival days by a cascade of actual water over that cleft.²⁰ This water could then have pooled in the wide pit in front of the relief, lapping at the feet of the humans and elephants carved in the lowest register. Ascetics beside the base of the cleft take up the postures of prayer one still observes among bathers entering the Ganges River at Vārāṇasī, and the smiling elephants and their cavorting babies appear to rejoice in the glorious wetness at their feet (fig. 7).

Fig. 7. Elephant and her babies.
Detail from right half of large relief, Māmallapuram.

Penance in Gangā’s story is only a prelude to the fall of waters, which could explain why the cleft rather than the ascetic draws the attention of almost every figure in the composition. This rich variety of beings united by their focus upon the cleft could represent the entirety of creation witnessing and celebrating the momentous event. Assembled together are minor divinities, human beings, and animals. In the upper registers of the composition are celestial couples (male gandharvas and female apsarāsēs) who look human but for the way they lift their feet behind them, a device suggesting that they float through the air (fig. 8). Interspersed among these couples are pairs of kinnaras, minor divinities who possess the lower bodies of birds and the upper bodies of humans. Hunters and the holy men (jisē)
beneath the ascetic allude to the human sphere of creation (fig. 3). Sharing the earthly realm with them are all manner of animals, among them lions, elephants, monkeys, lizards, turtles, deer, antelope, geese, mice, and a cat.\(^\text{21}\)

The ascetic can easily be read as Bhagiratha performing his penance and gaining his boon from Śiva. His juxtaposition with the cleft articulates the causal link between virtuous penance and the purifying cascade. Placed between Śiva and the cleft, his image links the visual representations of the boon won (falling water) and the boon realized (Śiva in varada mudrā), just as Bhagiratha's action linked Gāṅgā to Śiva physically by causing her to fall through the god's hair.

Directly beneath this ascetic stands a small Viṣṇu temple surrounded by jātis in prayer. The figure seated to the left of that shrine could also represent Bhagiratha, here thanking Viṣṇu, who in his form as the sage Kapila helped to convince Śiva to break Gāṅgā's fall.\(^\text{22}\) That several of the other men turn their backs upon the cleft as they pray to Viṣṇu suggests that this ashram scene is chronologically separate from the moment of Gāṅgā's Descent.

Beyond the imagery of the relief itself, external circumstances suggest that the Pallavas found the Descent of the Ganges a theme directly relevant to themselves. Gāṅgā's Descent appears on at least eleven other Pallava monuments, sometimes with the same arrangement of Śiva and the ascetic.\(^\text{23}\) Pallava inscriptions liken Pallava kings to Gāṅgā, claiming that these kings similarly purified the earth by their presence.\(^\text{24}\)

Other elements of this frieze, however, resist the Gāṅgā narrative. The prominent hunters and Śiva's gesture differ from that in other Pallava representations of Gāṅgā's Descent. At Māmallapuram he does not hold out the lock of hair that will interrupt Gāṅgā's torrential descent, nor

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**FIG. 9. Śiva Gāṅgādhara. Kailāsanāth temple, Kāṇcipuram.**

**FIG. 10. Śiva Gāṅgādhara. Lalitānikāra's cave temple, Trichy.**
does he bend one leg to brace himself against the force of her fall; he does both in shrine no. 24 of the Kailāsanāth temple in Kāñcipuram (fig. 9) and at Trichy (fig. 10). In these and other Pallava representations of Gaṅgā’s Descent there is also a tiny female personification of the river suspended just above Śiva’s outstretched lock of hair, but the large Māmallapuram relief contains no such figure.

**A Purposeful Multivalence**

I would maintain that it is at this point—once the familiar and the puzzling narrative cues are recognized and sorted—that the viewer can discern the dialogue in which the multiple voices of this work engage. The complexity and the purpose of that interaction, which initially may sound quite discordant, begin to emerge as the viewer recognizes the deliberate quality of this narrative’s ambiguity. By omitting the outstretched lock of hair, the personification of Gaṅgā, and fighting hunters, the designers of the Māmallapuram work have omitted iconography familiar to seventh-century viewers, iconography that could have identified either narrative exclusively and thus restricted the reading of the relief. The absence of such unequivocal signs creates space for the coexistence and interaction of multiple voices and therefore meanings. Selecting instead the ascetic’s penance and Śiva’s acquiescence, features common to both stories, keeps that space open. So do supporting figures that fit both narratives: the river could flow beside Arjuna’s camp or down from the heavens; the animals and trees could describe Arjuna’s wilderness or Bhagratha’s universe; the celestials could be celebrating the world’s purification or sharing with all creation a vulnerability to Arjuna’s weapon of universal destruction.

These ambiguities may even create room for further narrative voices. One scholar has viewed this relief as a depiction of mārga worship; others have read it the story of Śiva as the beautiful mendicant (Śiva Bhikṣātana), or a declaration of the supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu, or a Jain legend; yet others have understood it to identify this site as a sacred bathing place (ārtha). While none of these readings has as yet been supported by sufficiently compelling evidence, and none accounts for nearly as many elements of the relief as Arjuna’s Penance or the Descent of the Ganges do, the capacity of this relief to invite a wide variety of interpretations seems significant in itself. The representations seem to possess a degree of neutrality that deliberately leaves them open to multiple readings. They are not infinitely open; boundaries do govern the limits of this piece’s intelligibility. Penance, Śiva, and water are so visually assertive that any persuasive reading must involve them. But within such limits a flexibility is apparent, and that flexibility signals the strong possibility that this relief speaks in yet other narrative voices.

Comparisons between this relief and a smaller relief less than 200 meters to the south (see fig. 1) further suggest that the multivalence operating in the larger relief is purposeful. The smaller relief appears to have been a source of inspiration for the larger cliff, where similar forms have been subtly altered and rearranged to absorb additional readings. The two reliefs are clearly variants on the same composition. The smaller relief depicts animals, heavenly beings, hunters, and jīs turning toward a deep cleft that vertically bisects an east-facing granite hillside (figs. 11 and 12). Here too Śiva makes his boon-granting gesture to an ascetic who practices the Penance of Five Fires. Differences in style and iconography reveal that the smaller relief is the earlier of the two and that its iconography seems less multi-voiced: Arjuna’s Penance is not at all evident here. Perhaps the designers’ realization of potential in that composition for added voices motivated them to leave the earlier project unfinished.

A rather steady stylistic transformation from shallowly incised limbs, flally arranged, to more three-dimensional and relaxed forms is discernible among the sculptures on datable Pallava monuments, and figures in the smaller relief resemble the former end of that spectrum. They emerge only tentatively from the rock surface (compare figs. 3 and 12), striking poses almost as angular as figures of the early seventh century. Elbows and wrists bend back upon themselves as if pressed behind a pane of glass. The suppressed energy of these limbs works in dynamic tension with the static quality in the upright torsos, frontally presented. By contrast, figures in the larger relief give the illusion of breaking free from the rock wall. Their rounded limbs and fluid silhouettes recall later carvings patronized by Māmalla (r. 630–68) and Parameśvara (r. 672–700). Set in three-quarter profile, these celestial couples project assertively into the space around them. The smooth diagonals articulated by their
Fig. 11. Left half of the smaller relief of the Descent of the Ganges, Mâmallapuram.

Fig. 12. Right half of the smaller relief of the Descent of the Ganges, Mâmallapuram.
bodies convey an impression of graceful, easy motion.

Stylistic contrasts between these two reliefs stand out with special clarity in static figures. In the smaller relief, Śiva’s flattened limbs adhere so closely to the surface of the rock that bright sunlight almost obliterates them (fig. 13). The rock’s convexity intersects with the arch of his tensely jointed form, lending a special breadth to the shallowly incised thighs. In the larger relief, deep shadows imply the freedom of Śiva’s torso from the rock and articulate the bold parallel forms of his columnar legs. The arch of his lower back gives the appearance that Śiva has pulled free from the stone matrix, lending his pose an elasticity and majestic calm.

Iconographic differences between these two reliefs occur in precisely those features central to the interpretative debate: the numbers, locations, and interactions of boars and hunters; the compositional relationship between the penance group and the cleft; and Śiva’s pose. The smaller relief contains no intimations of boar-shooting or hunters arguing. Two boars, both very much alive, mingle with lions and elephants (fig. 14). Three hunters already laden with spoils of the

Fig. 13. Śiva and Bhagfratha. Detail from left half of the smaller relief of the Descent of the Ganges, Māmallapuram.

Fig. 14. Boars. Detail from left half of the smaller relief of the Descent of the Ganges, Māmallapuram.
hunt (two appear in fig. 15) move peacefully away from that cluster of animals. These hunters and almost every other creature carved on these boulders look toward the deep fissure at the center of the composition. Śiva and the ascetic do not stand near that fissure but are instead isolated on a separate stone facet at the upper left corner of the rock, so most of the figures in the left half of this relief turn their backs on the penance scene to address the cleft. Here there is no room to doubt that the cleft has primacy over Śiva and the penitent and that penance is a separate moment, merely a prelude to the climactic event in the fissure. Gaṅgā's fall rivets all eyes. To ensure this reading of the scene, the image of Śiva holds out a lock of his hair.

Certain new elements of the reworked version still emphasize the narrative of Gaṅgā's Descent. Nāgas have shifted from the upper reaches of the rock plane to the cleft itself; the cleft plunges down a steeper vertical, more effectively evoking a waterfall; the pit excavated in front of the cliff, and possibly a cistern above it, might have introduced the drama of real water. More substantial revisions, however, open up other levels of interpretation that the smaller relief cannot support. Shifting the ascetic and Śiva to a spot beside the cleft lends greater emphasis to the idea of penance, thus accommodating Arjuna's story. Both penance and the cleft now seem to draw the crowd's attention. Śiva holds an ax instead of a lock of his hair. Inverting the positions of Śiva and the ascetic enlarges upon this constructive confusion by adding Śiva to the list of beings who appear to direct themselves simultaneously to the ascetic and the cleft. The larger relief reduces the number of boars to one and locates her closer to hunters. The introduction of the cat weaves another narrative into the web as it reemphasizes the centrality of penance.

Revisions that generated ambiguity probably received warm support from Pallava patrons, who seem to have appreciated the multivalence of visual and verbal signs as enthusiastically as they appreciated the themes of Arjuna's Penance and Gaṅgā's Descent. The Pallava court, located roughly 50 km inland at Kāṇṭipuram (fig. 1), was a place of considerable literary sophistication: one of the kings was himself a playwright, and another king reputedly admired Bhāravi's Kīrātārjunāyaṇam. The language of these works and of Pallava inscriptions is Sanskrit, a language rich in synonyms and one that lends itself well to punning and other multilayered verbal devices, for which it has its own term: dhvāni. The power of a Sanskrit term (or signifier) to encompass multiple and diverse meanings (to signify flexibly, that is) permitted authors to construct ornate parallels between quite separate entities. Writers took advantage of this, even constructing double entendres that ran the length of an entire book.36 Pallava inscriptions take advantage of this capacity of Sanskrit, employing terms and titles that carry multiple meanings, dilating upon each of those meanings, and then pointing out intersections among them. One such inscription, mentioned above, parallels the Pallava kings and Gaṅgā as purifiers of the earth.37 Other inscriptions use puns on royal names to identify the Pallava king, his wife, and son with the holy family
of Śiva, Umā, and Skanda. In Trichy’s Lalitāṉkura cave temple a poem flanking the image of Śiva Gaṅgādhara (fig. 10) creates synonymy between King Mahendra’s claim to intimate possession of the Kāverī River and Śiva’s relationship with the river goddess who dallied for eons in his hair. Part of this inscription reads:

Being afraid that the God who is fond of rivers [Śiva], having seen the Kāverī, whose waters please the eye, who wears a garland of gardens, and who possesses lovely qualities, might fall in love with her [also], the Daughter of the Mountain [Gaṅgā] has left her father’s family to reside . . . permanently on this mountain, calling this river [Kāverī] the beloved [wife] of the Pallava [king].

This text expands upon the idea of rivers, establishing parallels between Gaṅgā and south India’s Kāverī by introducing Kāverī with three encomia (“whose waters please the eye,” etc.) that apply equally well to Gaṅgā. Here too a moment of productive confusion creates an opportunity for the receiver to appreciate the similarities between separate entities. Since Kāverī’s beauty and the fecundity she lends the earth (i.e., she “wears a garland of lovely gardens”) equate her with Gaṅgā, she becomes a rival for Śiva’s subtly adulterous attentions. Gaṅgā in her jealousy then abandons her own mountain home for the rocky hilltop in Trichy, a conceit that points out the proximity to mountains that further likens these two rivers. When Gaṅgā acts on her jealousy, her admonition to Śiva exhibits yet another parallel, this time between Śiva and the Pallava king Mahendra. Through Mahendra’s claim to possess exclusively a lovely river, that king asserts himself as the god’s earthly analog.

While Michael Lockwood ultimately rejects the possibility that the Māmallapuram relief represents these two narratives simultaneously, he has proposed that Sanskrit’s capacity for word play generally predisposed artists and viewers of the Pallava period to make and view art images on multiple levels. Certainly, Pallava designers often paired these punning inscriptions with visual counterparts. The inscription quoted above frames the sculpted image of Śiva Gaṅgādhara in figure 10. Inscriptions equating the royal family with Śiva’s family marked temples that housed representations of Śiva seated with Umā and Skanda (Somaskanda) in their inner sancta. It seems likely, then, that these visual counterparts embrace the multiple voices that their accompanying inscriptions do. These representations of Śiva may have functioned as metonyms for the Pallava king, describing through divine metaphors the nature of the king’s authority and responsibility.

Projecting Political Authority

I see this sort of political statement as one purpose of the erudite playfulness operating in the Descent/Penance relief. Puns can be eloquent indices of the surprising commonalities between their seemingly disparate layers of meaning, and in this case those layers intersect with some intensity at issues central to Pallava kingship. The narratives about Gaṅgā and Arjuna converge on the subject of penance, and in both cases penance leads to protection. In both stories, heroic leaders protect their families, their kingdoms, and the earth from threats of war, natural disaster, and divine wrath. Arjuna’s act of penance makes him the supreme warrior, enabling him to defend his brothers and their shared kingdom against rival kings. Bhagiratha’s act of penance establishes the ritual purity and fertility of his kingdom and of the entire earth as well. Self-sacrifice gives both men special access to the gods, access that they use to elicit from the gods items (such as weapons and water) that enable kings to guarantee the safety of their kingdom. Śiva too embodies the protective when he grants Arjuna the weapon that guarantees victory in the great war and when he averts natural disaster by catching Gaṅgā in his locks. Meanwhile, the adult elephants that dominate the right half of the composition shelter their playful babies under their powerful bodies.

These themes had considerable political resonance for kings of early south India. The paramount duty of kings was to protect their subjects from all manner of threats. Like Arjuna the king needed to be the best warrior in the land, and he enacted that role by waging almost constant battles against neighboring kings. The king’s protective responsibilities extended beyond the human sphere. He was thought to link his kingdom to the rest of the cosmos and to maintain through the performance of special rituals the proper balance in the climate, the fertility of the fields, and the good will of the gods. Heroic in stature, the king was the conduit through which good things flowed from the rest of the cosmos to the people of his kingdom.
The coincidence between the narratives in this relief and the rhetoric of early south Indian kingship seems purposive and calculated. Indeed, the desire to expati ate upon the power of the king may have motivated designers to interpolate multiple narratives into the larger relief. The coexistence of Arjuna’s and Garigâ’s stories within the large relief articulates these ideas about kingship with special force. Points at which these narratives interact most energetically are the issues central to ideals of royal behavior. The possible identities of the ascetic characterize the Pallava leader as both king (Bhagiratha) and military hero (Arjuna). Divergences between the two narratives also enrich the royal promise: Bhagiratha offers his kingdom climatic and ritual protection; Arjuna’s story adds the dimension of military safeguard. Both stories demonstrate that beings in all levels of creation rely upon the heroic behavior of the king.

It is appropriate to listen for kings’ voices in these works because, for one thing, the Pallava kings are the most likely patrons of Mâmallapuram’s carvings. Furthermore, the nature of early Indian kingship permitted art to play a significant role in promulgating royal authority, which depended heavily upon popular perceptions of a king’s heroism, potency, and strength, upon his ability to project charismatic images of himself that elicited the devotion of his subjects. The visual arts provided an opportunity for presenting appealing, compelling reflections of himself to large audiences of potential subjects whose loyalty he wooed. Indeed, the Pallavas and other kings in early India patronized numerous art works depicting the feats of mythic heroes, and these may incorporate allegories demonstrating precisely the qualities the patrons claimed to possess.

Another hint of the political in the Descent/Penance relief is the presence of half a dozen heraldic male lions carved at the left and right edges of this composition (fig. 16). The manner in which they are rendered suggests that they are royal emblems of the Pallavas, and their flanking placement suggests that issues raised by Garigâ’s Descent and Arjuna’s Penance lay within the sphere of the Pallava kingship. Whereas the other animals in this relief are softly carved in poses of gentle alertness, these lions snap to attention.

Fig. 16. Heraldic lions at right edge of the large relief, Mâmallapuram.

Fig. 17. Lion column. Dharmârâja Ratha, Mâmallapuram.
with the stylized rigidity of a military guard. They take on postures almost identical to one another. Each lion strains his mouth open in the same wide snarl and arches his tail in an elegant loop. The exaggerated sinews of their legs stand out dramatically, a schematization of ferocity and power. Each mane is composed of a precise grid of tight curls. This energetic stylization lends the lions an emblematic quality that separates them from the narrative flow of the rest of the relief. Their resemblance to heraldic lions atop columns bearing inscriptions of the Emperor Aśoka’s decrees may have lent these lions royal associations. Such lions also had specifically Pallava connotations. They are rendered sedent on column bases or rampant along exterior walls in almost every structure excavated or constructed by the Pallavas after the early seventh century (see for example fig. 17). At least two Pallava kings, Simhavishnu and Rājasimha, used the term for lion, simha, in their coronation names. Rājasimha (Nandivarman II Pallava) drew heavily on leonine symbolism to present himself. His inscriptions characterize him as “the lion in battle . . . the lion among princes . . . he who resembles the lion in valor.” He also appears to have been responsible for excavating the fantastic cave in Śaluvankaupam that is rendered as a colossal lion’s open mouth.

A second relief panel further urges viewers to see in the large relief allusions to the king’s protective capabilities. Beyond the left or southern edge of the Descent/Penance relief, a long panel depicting Kṛṣṇa lifting Mount Govardhan (figs. 18 and 19) expresses this idea through the voice of another ancient myth.

Fig. 18. View from the left end of the Kṛṣṇa relief, Kṛṣṇa mandapam, Māmallapuram.

Fig. 19. Villagers and cows under Mt. Govardhan. Left half of the relief in the Kṛṣṇa mandapam, Māmallapuram.
The *Bhagavata Purāna* describes Kṛṣṇa, one of the most charismatic of Lord Viṣṇu’s earthly incarnations, lifting Mount Govardhan to shelter his village against Indra’s wrath. Insulted when Kṛṣṇa told the cowherds to stop worshipping Indra, the rain god sent a torrential storm to drown their village. Saying, “I shall . . . by my own divine power protect [the village of] Vraja, which has sought shelter in Me, looks upon Me as its Protector, nay, which constitutes My own family!” Kṛṣṇa held up the mountain top as a sort of giant umbrella, and under it the entire community huddled in safety until the downpour ended.\(^5\)
The scene depicted in Māmallapuram captures the sense of security conveyed by Kṛṣṇa’s resolution of this crisis. Here too myth articulates a royal promise, and stylized lions frame a scene in which a leader heroically defends his followers. And once again this act of heroism involves the threat of climatic disaster, divine intervention, and great quantities of water. Babies and old men, young men, women, and cows cluster around Kṛṣṇa as his miraculous strength saves them all. He appears twice in this relief, once supporting the mountain, his body tall, erect, and columnar (fig. 20), and once curved protectively around an older man, perhaps his adoptive father Nanda (fig. 21). A cow solicitously licks her calf (fig. 22), paralleling Kṛṣṇa’s enveloping posture and embodying his protective spirit. Lions with manes composed of regular curls watch this scene from either end of the frieze (fig. 23). The startlingly human, mustachioed face on the second lion from the left seems to insist that we read these stylized creatures emblematically and that as emblems these lions and the scene they frame are indices to the world of human affairs.

Presentation as well as content links the Kṛṣṇa relief to the large relief of Arjuna’s Penance and Gāṅgā’s Descent. Although the Kṛṣṇa relief has been masked since the Vijayanāgara period by a pillared mandapa, these compositions would originally have operated as a visual pair, forcing attention toward the ideas they share. The reliefs are contemporary in style. The figures of the Kṛṣṇa relief are of the same heroic scale, and they display the easy torsions and gentle modeling of figures in the large relief. The Kṛṣṇa relief stands just a short distance to the south of the large relief (see fig. 24), carved from the east face of the same granite hill. The Kṛṣṇa relief, squatter and set
deeper into the hill, may have read as a kind of subordinate clause, a secondary voice or echo of the themes in the larger relief.51

Pairing like punning can alert viewers or readers to convergent meanings.52 A new set of figures here rearticulates and thus reinforces ideas around which the multiple voices of the Descent/Penance relief converge. The three narratives and their symbols overlap at the same place. The heroic leader who possesses special access to divine power protects his community from yet another imminent disaster. Krṣṇa keeps company with Śiva, Bhagtratha, and Arjuna as yet another metonym for the king. If Arjuna’s and Gariga’s stories delineate a king who can protect his kingdom against climatic and human threats, the Krṣṇa narrative adds the promise of protection from the wrath of other gods. Again, the threatened cataclysm involves water as an uncontrolled force that must be mastered by the heroic leader.

Controlling water was a central feature of Pallava kingship, as the Trichy inscription suggests in its boast that Mahendra possessed the Kāverī River. The Pallavas would have derived enormous popular support from building reservoirs and the canal system that still remains in Māmallapuram.53 In this monsoon climate where water must be carefully managed to permit cultivation during the ten dry months of the year, such public works meant the difference between survival and famine. Sponsoring these projects was one way in which kings could demonstrate their ability to guarantee the kingdom’s fertility. Sexual innuendo in the Trichy inscription about Mahendra’s relationship to the lovely Kāverī is another way of expressing this function of the king. The king was expected to guarantee the land’s fecundity with the potency of his own body. Intercourse between him and the fecund river, who “wears lovely gardens,” paints a vivid image of him doing just that.54

While inscriptions and artistic style identify the king of the Trichy inscription as Mahendra I and the likely patron of the Descent/Penance relief as Māmallā or Parameśvara I, the messages of these reliefs were relevant well beyond the reigns of these individual kings. The notion of the king as a cosmic and terrestrial protector of kingdom, crops, family, and all living beings informed Pallava rhetoric for decades before and after Māmallā.55 The large Māmallapuram relief expressed the collective aspirations of many individual rulers, lending the work an enduring power to signify. These images were capable of evoking meaningful associations throughout the Pallava period, and perhaps beyond.

The unfinished state of the lower left side of the composition has led some to understand this relief as the product of a single king’s patronage, abandoned because of successors’ lack of interest in the work. Both the quantity of work done at Māmallapuram and the substantial shifts in style apparent there make the single-patron theory unlikely, however, and since almost every piece of sculpture at Māmallapuram remains unfinished to some degree, incompleteness at this site seems to reflect something other than the death of a patron and the indifference of his successors to his projects.56 Death alone seems an insufficient explanation for kings having initiated dozens of projects and completed none of them. Nor, to my knowledge, does the large relief bear traces—apparent on other monuments in Māmallapuram—of later kings’ hostility toward it.57 Joanna Williams has demonstrated that in numerous contexts Indian sculptures have been regarded as fully adequate without being technically complete.58 This relief may have been found to perform its intended functions satisfactorily without the addition of more forest scenes in the lower left corner.

The Parodic Element

A political reading of this relief emphasizes the majesty of its message and form, but regal grandeur is by no means an unanswered voice in this visual dialogue. Another voice demonstrates quite clearly the presence of the comic in this frieze. This voice speaks through the scene of the cat just to the right of the cleft’s lowest point (fig. 25). The cat upon his hind legs and the adoring bevy of mice surrounding him recall the Pañcatantra story of a cat who lived beside the Ganges and preached brilliantly about his own enlightenment, abstinence, and mercy, only then to feast upon his credulous audience.59 The cat in this sculpture, who stands right beside the riverine cleft, demonstrates this professed abstinence by striking up the Penance of Five Fires. Several plump mice gather at his feet; one gazes at the cat with special devotion, his front feet pressed together as if in aṅgali mudrā.60 It is this cat that alerts us to the presence, and indeed the considerable significance, of humor in this relief. That he parodies the Arjuna/Bhagtratha figure is inescapable. His location and posture forge that link. Just opposite the cat, and
between the cat’s greedy calculation and noble self-sacrifice is meant to warn viewers against false leaders or, somewhat sardonically, to allude to the wide range of good things to be gained by penitent behavior.

More promising are the possibilities suggested by similar applications of parody, inversion, and travesties of the sacred that Bakhtin finds in the writings of Rabelais. Bakhtin understands these devices as the “language of the marketplace,” forms of carnival, or “the culture of folk humor,” which in medieval Europe helped to unify society by dissolving, at least periodically, the barriers of rank. The shared language of this humor, he argues, permitted genuine communication among disparate elements of society and thus a sense of commonality. Bakhtin also discerns in Rabelais’s humor references to the entwined significance of eating and death as interconnected phases of regeneration and decay. Certainly, that interconnection informs the story of this cat too, as it informs widely held Hindu beliefs of the cyclic nature of existence. That association could function in this relief to unify other apparently disparate components of narrative, such as epic drama and feral farce.

And yet what evidence exists that these meanings and social processes operated in seventh-century south India? Perceptions of the comic are, of course, not static or continuous between cultures. There is, furthermore, some disparity in the source of the voices I am comparing: Rabelais articulated the humor of the common people, who bore considerable hostility toward those of high rank, whereas the Descent/Penance seems in at least some of its voices to speak for the king. Rabelais’s humor threatens to undermine the royal implications of the entire relief. Does the presence of the cat’s parody indicate that the Pallava kings were not, after all, authors of the relief’s messages? The right half of this relief, with its devious feline and cheery elephants, may function in a kind of dialogue with the other half of the composition, providing a jovial counterpoint to grander events acted out at the left. Both sides, however, must tolerate to some degree a humorous reading if the messages of the work are not to be undercut by this satiric cat. Something of the jaunty note this cat strikes in its direct mimicry of the penitent who stands near Śiva suffuses the tone of the entire relief. If royal interests were somehow still served by imagery that mocked the authority of the king, what could those interests have been?

Again, however, I believe we are presented with
multiple voices that appear discordant only at first. Two plays, The Bhāgavadajjuka and The Mattavilāsa, indicate that the Pallava sense of the comic had much in common with the "folk humor" Bakhtin finds in the medieval European marketplace. These raunchy farces are peppered with Rabelaisian imagery of the body's "lower stratum." One of the central characters, a Śaivite holy man consumed by every carnal appetite, broadly satirizes contemporary religious traditions.66 These plays have been attributed to the Pallava king Mahendra I. Far from seeing himself excluded from this mode of humor, or from seeing such humor as undermining royal style, then, the Pallava king may have perceived gluttony, decay, debauchery, parody, and inversion as rhetorical devices well suited to his own motives for writing. In fact, David Shulman finds that the comic (vilaiyātal) was, along with the tragic, one of the most important modes through which south Indian kingship expressed itself. In Tamil literature, he finds the comic expressed through "inversions," "mirror effects," and "transformative powers," among other devices.66 Might he have gone even farther in the visual arts, permitting parody of himself and his kingly duty? That possibility depends much, I think, on the composition of the audience.

**Viewers of the Relief**

Who would contemporary viewers of this relief have been, and would they have perceived the purposeful ambiguities, parodic humor, and royal aspirations that I read there? Would deliberately elusive iconography have enhanced the dialogic relationship of these voices for seventh-century viewers, keeping the process of reading open and permitting multiple allusions? I can deduce two modes through which contemporary audiences may have perceived the ambiguities of this work, one of interactions between individuals and one in which the multiple voices interacted within the thoughts of a single viewer. In the first or "externalized" mode, the diverse voices would each have addressed viewers separately, meeting them at their own preferred level of understanding and conducting them along one of several pathways toward common conclusions about kingship. The adamancy of the recent iconographic debate suggests that for modern viewers a single pathway can be very tempting: most scholars have perceived a single story to the exclusion of other readings. This model also corresponds to some aspects of the Pallava period's viewing context. Each narrative may have addressed a different constituency among the eclectic crowds arriving at this port of entry. The Pallava kingdom's considerable maritime contacts would have brought to Māmallapuram Southeast Asians who knew the Rāmāyaṇa well, Mediterranean merchants who might have been familiar with Pañcatantra tales through Aesop, and people from other parts of the Indian subcontinent who would have known the Mahābhārata as well as the Rāmāyaṇa. Multiple points of entry into this relief's narrative content would have permitted culturally diverse viewers to feel themselves included in this introduction to the Pallava kingdom. Interaction among the various narrative options would have occurred if viewers were able to converse together, comparing and perhaps arguing about their divergent perspectives. The wide face of the cliff bearing these images would have permitted large crowds to assemble before it for such interaction. In this capacity, the sculptural ensemble may have worked to teach viewers to read on multiple levels.67

The second or "internalized" mode would operate if an individual viewer were capable of perceiving multiple, interactive, and contradictory voices within this set of signs. The viewer who perceived in this relief Arjuna's Penance as well as the Descent of the Ganges appreciated the king's ability to protect his subjects from military as well as climatic threats. Extra voices gave the royal promise extra weight. The viewer who perceived the Pañcatantra reference appreciated the humor and whimsicality that is part of this interaction of voices. Engaged by this cleverness, the viewer may have been more receptive to the political message embedded here. The viewer who perceived connections between this relief and the adjacent Kṛṣṇa scenes may have felt comforted that humble villages of herders could expect the same protection granted to the powerful kingdoms of the Ganges plain.

The internalized mode relies on viewers who could read the ascetic figure simultaneously as Arjuna, Bhāgiratha, and the king and who could also conversely see metonyms for the king in the figures of Śiva, Kṛṣṇa, and the ascetic. Such viewers would have shared with the designers of these reliefs an interest in the plurality of voices that speak through a given sign and enjoyed the interplay among those multiple voices. Sophisticated
games of this sort rely upon makers and viewers also sharing knowledge of the same body of myths and common visual languages for depicting them.

The monoculturalism of this discourse might appear to have addressed only those viewers already integrated into Pallava culture and thus to work against the dynamics of a port city. And yet the relief’s address to the sea suggests designers who presumed that the culture defined by this discourse extended well beyond the geographic limits of the Pāḷār River basin. Indeed, many visitors may have had access to this internalized mode of reading because the stories in this relief had earned international recognition and because its interactions of multiple voices ask the mind to work in patterns so similar to those demanded by the word plays of Sanskrit, the lingua franca of India. The indirect and repetitive manner through which the Descent/Penance relief narrates also parallels closely a technique used in the widely known Sanskrit epics. Both the Rāmāyāṇa and the Mahābhārata clarify events in the main story line by interjecting numerous subplots that parallel, contrast with, and expand upon similar themes.

Given an audience of such diversity and yet with so many overlapping fields of knowledge, the humor of the marketplace to which Bakhtin ascribes great powers of social unification would have suited the Pallava agenda rather well. Māmallapuram’s port may have been a Pallava-period equivalent to the marketplaces of medieval Europe: a place in which certain types of theatricality and humor were sanctioned and expected, a place for the interchange of ideas and rough treatment, a place where disparate groups mixed. Parody invited an eclectic crowd to share in the bond of communal laughter and thus encouraged a perception of social cohesion. Since the parody was based on literature familiar to a wide range of viewers, recognition of the familiar may have produced in viewers a sense of inclusion in the Pallava kingdom. Bakhtin points out that travesties upon the notions of the sacred only work for audiences that share a language of images, an audience “initiated in familiar intercourse.” As the Descent/Penance relief permits a large audience to view it together, viewers could have heard one another laugh and may thus have been made aware of their cultural commonality. These results may have been, to Pallava kings, worth the expense of self-travesty.

Modern audiences that arrive by tour bus have lost much of this viewing context, but they still stand in large groups before the Descent/Penance relief for protracted periods as if feeling themselves directly addressed; they still converse together about the images; and they still move left and right across the facade, taking in the richness and complexity of the composition. Although dogmatic tour guides tend to present only the case for reading Arjuna’s Penance, these audiences still bring some familiarity with other narratives to their experience of the relief, and many of them speak languages that retain from Sanskrit a penchant for punning. The potential still exists for recognizing the encoded ambiguities. And these audiences still laugh if one among them finds the cat. Almost everyone derives joy from the smiling elephants. Humor, at some level, certainly persists.

Conclusion

The strenuous tone of my call for tolerating ambiguity may strike the reader as somewhat ironic, but my purpose in writing this article has not been to close debate about the Descent/Penance relief. Far from finding the persisting debate “disheartening,” I hope others will continue to discover in this relief new voices interacting with those I have described above. It seems quite likely that a single intellect—even one trained to look for dhvānī—cannot exhaust the panoply of references already located in this relief. The relief’s unfinished state invites us to consider that yet other voices may have been encoded. At the same time, I wish to stress that I do not see indecision as having permeated the process of creating this relief. I do not believe that the creators of this relief, the senders of these signs, were uncertain about what the relief could mean, nor do I suspect that these designers sought to bewilder viewers. I see the ambiguities as opportunities for communication among the work’s many voices. In this case, that communication reveals an intramural coherence among the work’s supposedly competing voices and links between this relief and representations in adjacent sculptures. These conclusions emerge only if the process of reading remains as open as possible and the separate voices of the work are permitted to reverberate and even conflict.
Notes


3. Lockwood, *Māmallapuram*, 6, considers the possibility of what he calls punning in this relief but rejects it because the evidence for Arjuna’s Penance seems weak to him. Susan Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India* (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), 303–4, raises in a footnote the possibility of intentional ambiguity and calls for “further substantiation” of that idea. I am indebted to Joanna Williams for introducing me to issues surrounding this relief, particularly to the possibility of its intentional double meaning.

4. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) and T. Todorov, Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle, trans. W. Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Many thanks to Matt Leone of Colgate University for carefully reading a draft of this article and for helpfully explaining Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories about dialogism, heteroglossia, and other ways of analyzing the voices articulated in works of art.


7. The view has since been obstructed by a museum, the later Talaśayana Perumāl temple, and the eighth-century Shore Temple. Little evidence has emerged, however, to support the hypothesis that the buildings of Māmallapuram originally extended considerably to the east. For a rebuttal of the theory that much of the ancient city has been submerged by the Bay of Bengal, see Willetts, *Bibliography*, 2.


As the Ajanṭa murals are located in common halls between monks’ dwelling cells, the complexity of this narrative mode seems to have relied upon viewers’ deep familiarity with the subject matter. See also C. Pinney, “The Iconology of Hindu Olographs: Linear and Mythic Narrative in Popular Indian Art,” Res 22 (Autumn 1992): 33–61, on the interlace of optical paths laid out in Indian visual narratives.


11. Ramachandran, “Krītarjunīyam,” 70–71, takes this gesture to mean that Śiva is revealing a secret to Arjuna (that Arjuna is linked to the sage Nara because both are forms of Viṣṇu) and pointing below to a representation of Nara, the figure seated to the left of the small shrine. These would, however, be very unusual meanings for varada mudrā to sustain.

12. Perhaps designers of this relief also intended viewers to read, as some of my students have, the triangular shape above the ascetic as one of the boulders Arjuna hurled at Śiva during their dispute over the boar. It seems at least as likely, however, that this segment of rock was outlined in order to be removed. Similar indentations form grids on several other sections of this cliff, as if sections of rock were outlined prior to being chipped away.


14. On this as the standard iconography for this subject, see Rao, Hindu Iconography, vol. 2, pt. 1, 216.

15. I refer to the people who conceived and executed this relief by the term designers in order to encompass artisans, workshop directors, intellectuals, even kings themselves—anyone who may have contributed to these designs. The process by which decisions were made in the creation of Indian works of art remains a topic of much discussion. Recent evidence suggests that artisans may have had some choice in the iconographic details of what they rendered and perhaps in details of composition as well. See J. Williams, “From the Fifth to the Twentieth Century and Back,” Art Journal 49, 4 (Winter 1990): 363–69; and B. N. Goswamy, “Pahari Painting: Family as the Basis of Painting Style,” Mārg 21 (1968): 17–62. For other studies on traditional modes of artistic production in India, see Making Things in South Asia: The Role of Artist and Craftsman, ed. Michael Meister, Proceedings of the South Asia Seminar 4 (1984–86) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).


17. Lockwood, Māmallapuram, 7, brought to my attention this relief, which is in shrine 16 of the small alcoves lining the interior of the precinct wall. This is the only other Pallava illustration he has found of this narrative. The panel on the north side of the Shore Temple’s enclosure wall, mentioned by Ramachandran, “Krītarjunīyam,” 87, as another example of Arjuna’s Penance, is a later (eighth-century) reinterpretation of the large relief, however one reads the latter. Lutzker, “Reinterpretation,” 115, describes other renderings of Arjuna’s Penance in Rajasthan.

An anonymous reviewer of my essay has alerted me to the recent discovery of a large carved image of a boar recently excavated just north of the precinct of the Shore Temple in Māmallapuram. Walter Smith has been kind enough to share with me his slides of this piece. From these, however, I cannot discern any firm iconographic evidence that this represents the boar shot by Arjuna. Under the creature’s belly curved forms seem to indicate teats, which would eliminate Varāha as the subject of this piece. I cannot read the coiled mass beneath the teats. If it comprises intestines, might they indicate the boar’s slaughter? The boar stands, however, apparently alive.

18. These figures were first brought to my attention by Markel, “Iconographic Assessment,” 11. Ramachandran, “Krītarjunīyam,” maintains that the Gaṅgā flowed beside Arjuna’s camp; Lutzker, “Reinterpretation,” 115, points out that the Gaṅgā is not mentioned in this light in either the Krītarjunīyam’s or the Mahābhārata’s presentation of this narrative; but Michael Rabe, in personal communication, notes that both texts locate Arjuna’s camp on the bank of the Ganges.

19. Summary derived from Vālmiki, Rāmāyana: Sanskrit Text and English Translation (Gorakhpur, 1960),
20. On the possibility of a water system at Māmallapuram and a cistern above the cliff, see Huntington, *Art of Ancient India*, 304; Lockwood et al., *Mahabalipuram*, "Introduction," n. 6; and Lutzker, "Reinterpretation," n. 24.

21. [H]osts of Rais and Gandharvas as well as the inhabitants of the globe touched [sipped] the water fallen from the person of Lord Śiva ... as purifying." Vāmiki, *Rāmāyaṇa*, bk. 1: Bāla-Kāṇḍa, canto 42, ll. 23–29, 135.

22. Lutzker, "Reinterpretation," 116–17. Lutzker dismisses Ramachandran’s reading of this as Nara worshipping Kṛṣṇa (Nara was an earlier manifestation of Viṣṇu and thus a sort of precursor to Arjuna), noting that the iconography of the figure within the shrine points unambiguously to Viṣṇu.


25. Lutzker, "Reinterpretation," 116, points out that only the Rāmāyaṇa describes Śiva catching Gaṅgā in his hair. Since the *Mahābhārata* does not, she argues, that could be the verbal correlate of this relief. However, the *Mahābhārata* describes Śiva catching Gaṅgā on his brow, and the large Māmallapuram relief does not illustrate that either. This verbal text, from a time and place quite distant from this relief, seems a less useful object of comparison than nearby, Pallava-period, visual representations of the same subject. For other Pallava Gaṅgādhara images, see n. 23 above.

26. While the Kailāsanāth temple was built roughly a century after the Māmallapuram relief, the Trichy example precedes the Māmallapuram relief by as much time. Similar representations of Śiva Gaṅgādhara at Māmallapuram’s Ādi-Varāha temple and Dharmarāja Ratha (Lockwood, *Māmallapuram*, 10) are roughly contemporary with the large relief.

27. Moreover, Markel, "Iconographical Assessment," 7, points out that Śiva’s specific attributes are inappropriate for both narratives. Rao, *Hindu Iconography*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 216, 315–17, lists the deer, nose, lock of hair, kataka mudrā, abhaya mudrā, and touching Umā’s chin as suitable occupations for Śiva Gaṅgādhara’s four hands; Śiva as the hunter granting Arjuna’s request may hold the bow, deer, nose, or bāna. In the Māmallapuram relief, Śiva holds the ax, trident, and varada mudrā. His upper right hand may once have held a deer.

28. The *Kīrataṛjunīyam* also describes a host of gandharvas and apsarasēs visiting Arjuna to tempt him away from his austerities. *The Kīrataṛjunīyam by Bhāravi*, canto 10, pp. 109–45. This, however, does not address the presence of kinnaras.

29. For discussions of these interpretations, see Lutzker, "Reinterpretation," 117–18; and Ramachandran, "Kīrataṛjunīyam," 59–66.

30. Williams was the first to bring to my attention the importance of this smaller relief to a reading of the larger relief. Ramachandran, "Kīrataṛjunīyam," 86–88, and Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture*, pt. 2, 44–45, also saw this smaller version as a sort of rough draft for the larger relief, although Ramachandran maintained that this relief also depicted Arjuna’s Penance.

31. Joanna Williams also understands the smaller relief to precede the larger in date of execution. See "Unfinished Images," *India International Centre Quarterly* 13, 1 (March 1986): 96–97. To my knowledge the only published study of such a shift in Pallava sculptural style is Michael Dan Rabe, "The Monolithic Temples of the Pallava Dynasty: A Chronology," 3 vols., Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1987. I have deduced this sequence from a study of sculpture on buildings to which rough dates can be assigned. Scholars have produced a relatively secure chronology for Pallava architecture. That chronology has persisted with only minor adjustments from Longhurst’s work to the recent chapters by K. R. Srinivasan in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture*, ed. M. Meister (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1983– ).

Nagawarsamy has challenged this chronology, proposing that the Pallava king Rājasimha (r. 700–28) commissioned all the monuments at Māmallapuram. See R. Nagawarsamy, "New Light on Māmallapuram," in *Silver Jubilee Volume*, the Archaeological Society of South India, 1960–62 (Madras: Archaeological Society of South India, 1962), 1–30. This intriguing article is ultimately unconvincing in large part because it fails to address style, which varies enormously at this site. In its place Nagawarsamy offers a rather mechanistic analysis of motifs and poses, building his argument instead upon a discussion of terms used in stone
inscriptions. His thesis does not address the visual dimension of this art, nor can it. For further rebuttals, see Srinivasan, *Encyclopaedia, 76-78*; and Lockwood et al., *Mahabalipuram, 62-86.


33. I consider this flattened quality a function of style rather than of the incomplete state of carving. The surfaces of these shallow images are essentially finished. Further work on this relief would more likely have focused upon removing the shelves of rock that still hang over some figures and upon smoothing the surfaces between figures.


36. The entire Rāmacaritam of Sandhyākaranandānī reads simultaneously as a retelling of the Rāmāyaṇa and a history of the Pāla king Rāmapaladeva. See *Rāmacaritam by Sandhyākaranandānī*, ed. Haraprasad Sastri, Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 3, 1 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1910). My thanks to an anonymous reviewer of this essay for suggesting this example. For another example of Sanskrit punning see a passage from the “Nāṣadhacarita” of Śrīharṣa in B. N. Goswamy, *Pahari Paintings* of the *Nala-Damayantī Theme* (New Delhi: National Museum, 1975), 16.

37. See n. 24 above.


39. This inscription was first published by E. Hultsch in *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 1, nos. 33 and 34, but in the translation quoted here Lockwood, *Māmallapuram, 62-73*, alters Hultsch’s translation in several significant details. In particular, Lockwood proposes that Śiva’s jealous consort is Gaṅgā rather than Parvati.

40. Lockwood, *Māmallapuram, 6-13, 76-79*. Huntington, *Art of Ancient India*, 642, n. 18, also sees links between linguistic predilections and visual double meanings. She suggests that a relief image of an ascetic on the Vaikunta Perumāl temple in Kāṇčipuram may represent Āsvatthaman and Bhaṭṭarātha simultaneously.

41. See n. 40 above.

42. On the military aspect of the king’s protective duties, see Burton Stein, *All the King’s Mana: Papers on Medieval South Indian History* (Madras: New Era Publications, 1984), 3-11.


44. Although to my knowledge no inscriptions have been found on the large relief itself, other inscriptions at this site name Pallava kings (and no other patrons) and frequently link them directly to the monuments. See Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture*. This situation contrasts sharply with that of the early Gōla period, for example, in which most names mentioned in association with art patronage are not royal. See Kaimal, “Stone Portrait Sculpture,” ch. 5.

of an Indian Kingdom (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

46. Asher, for example, reads the Udayagiri relief of Varāha rescuing Earth as an "historical allegory" for Candra Gupta II uniting the Gupta empire. F. Asher, "Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art," in Essays on Gupta Culture, ed. B. Smith (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 53–66. Asher defines allegory as "a story which serves as an analogy to a real-life person or event, usually making that person or event more vivid, poignant, or dramatic" (p. 54). J. Williams, Art of Gupta India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 45–46, has a similar reading, noting that Candra Gupta II rescued his sister-in-law as Varāha rescues Earth. Huntington, Art of Ancient India, 298, finds a Pallava case of such allegory, reading references to King Māmalla's military victories in the Varāha cave's depictions of Varāha and Trivikrama triumphing over demonic forces. In the iconography of the Arjuna Ratha she suggests that royal and divine imagery overlap and that a single figure may signify three deities at once. S. Huntington, "Iconographic Reflections on the Arjuna Ratha," in Kalādārśana, ed. J. Williams (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH in collaboration with American Institute of Indian Studies, 1981), 60, 63. Huntington, Art of Ancient India, 303–4, also suggests that the theme of Arjuna's Penance in Māmallapuram alluded to Pallava conflicts with the early Western Cālukyas.

47. Lutzker, "Reinterpretation," 113, and Hirsh, "Royal Implications," also read these lions as Pallava royal emblems but use evidence to argue for reading the relief exclusively as either the Descent or Arjuna's Penance, respectively.

48. Seventh-century audiences in Māmallapuram may well have been exposed to the ideas in these much older sculptures at least through later versions of the same imagery. The Aśokan motif of adored lions on capitals persisted at least through the first century C.E. and into central India (on a free-standing column before the chaitya hall at Karle and on a gateway leading to the circumambulatory path around Stūpa 1 at Sāńcī). Lions atop pillars flanking gateways also appear as far south as Amarāvati in relief representations of stūpas between the first and third centuries C.E. See D. Barrett, Sculptures from Amarāvati in the British Museum (London: British Museum, 1954), pl. I–IV. For illustrations of the lion capitals at Lauriyā Nandangarh and Sārnāth attributed to Aśoka Maurya’s patronage, see Huntington, Art of Ancient India, figs. 4.4 and 4.5.

49. For inscriptions describing Rājasimha in leonine terms, see South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 1, no. 24, v. 11; no. 25, v. 7, 13, 20, 52, 54; no. 27, v. 3. On the attribution of the Śālukanikam yādi-mandapam, see Srinivasan, Cave-Temples, 182.

50. A verbal narrative of these events exists in the Śrimad Bhagavata Mahapurāṇa, Part II: Books 9 to 12, trans. C. L. Goswami, 2nd ed. (Gorakhpur, 1982), bk. 10, discourse 25, 1162–65.

51. To the right or northern side of the Descent/Penance relief is a free-standing carving of three monkeys. The largest monkey pokes over a female, closely grooming the back of her head, while the female nurses a baby and strokes its back. These too seem to amplify the theme of protection, albeit in a comic vein, but they were not originally part of the sculptural ensemble with the large relief and the Kṛṣṇa relief. The monkey group was discovered near a separate Śiva temple in Māmallapuram and was moved by Lord Napier to its current location in 1871. On this move, see Willett, Bibliography, 34.

52. On a similar use of pairing in Indian sculpture, see D. Sanford, "Early Temples Bearing Rāmāyaṇa Relief Cycles in the Chōḷa Area: A Comparative Study," Ph.D. diss., Los Angeles, 1974.

53. Huntington, Art of Ancient India, 296, sees the presence of water symbolism in Pallava art as a reference to the public reservoirs those kings constructed. Asher, "Allegory in Gupta Art," 64–66, sees these two reliefs as references to the king’s control of water through the Māmallapuram canal system.

54. Inden, "Ritual, Authority," 35–37, describes a ritual in which the king guaranteed the fertility of the earth by plowing it, a gesture symbolic of sexual insemination.

55. This heroic mode of kingship seems to have predominated at least from Mahendra I until Pallava-malla (r. 731–96), if not later. See Stein, King’s Mana.

56. See n. 31 above on this debate among Nagaswamy, Srinivasan, and Lockwood.

57. Such as the imprecatory verse carved by Parameśvara I on the floor of his grandfather’s Ādi-Varāha cave. See Kaimal, "Stone Portrait Sculpture," 71–73.


59. In one version of the verbal text, he eats a rabbit

60. Mieke Bal mentions the cat segment of this relief as an example of a narrative aspect she describes as “focalization,” “the relationship between the ‘vision,' the agent that sees, and that which is seen.” M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, trans. C. van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 102–4. She bases this interpretation, however, on a line drawing (by Fransje van Zoest) of the relief that seriously misrepresents these figures. Locating in the drawing one mouse who falls over backward and another who raises one paw, Bal reads the mice as laughing with relief as they “realize they are safe.” She understands the cat to be comic because it has foolishly attempted to imitate Arjuna, “impressed by the beauty of absolute calm.” Bal seems unaware of the *Pañcatantra* tale, which accounts for the mice and the cat’s pose without involving Arjuna. Whether the cat sees Arjuna or whether it even exists in the same time and space as Arjuna’s narrative is debatable. Comparison with my figure 25 will indicate, furthermore, that in the actual relief no mouse falls backward and that the mouse with the raised paw has raised his other paw as well, joining them together in *añjali mudrā*, connoting respect rather than mirth.

61. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 192 and chap. 3, cites the episode of Gargantua drowning a crowd in his urine as a parodic travesty of Christ’s miracle with the loaves of bread. Bakhtin cites a number of examples of inversion, in which Rabelais narrates the degradation of kings to clowns.


64. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 133–34 and 188.

65. See n. 35 above.


67. Spolsky, *Uses of Adversity*, 10, points out that texts thus premised on viewer incompetence are not unusual.

68. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 188.

69. “It is disheartening that scholars should continue to argue about [the subject of this relief]”: *The Indian Express*, Madras, 28 December 1974, as cited by Lockwood, *Māmallapuram*, 8, n. 4.
FRONTISPICE. Dual image of Śiva as Gāṅgādhara and King Mahendravarman I of the Pallava dynasty. Lalitārikura’s cave, Tiruchirāppalli, Tamil Nadu, India. Pallava period, reign of Mahendravarman I, ca. 600-630. Photo: Susan L. Huntington.
KINGS AS GODS, GODS AS KINGS:
TEMPORALITY AND ETERNITY IN THE ART OF INDIA

BY SUSAN L. HUNTINGTON

In the past several decades, a number of scholars have analyzed various works of art in India and have concluded that these images are at once representations of deities and allusions to historical kings. The article by Padma Kaimal in this issue of *Ars Orientalis* is an excellent example of a well argued case for this view, to which I am, as she suggests, a subscriber. Butressed by the enormous evidence of such dual references in inscriptions and literary materials, the case seems irrefutable that those responsible for artistic creations in ancient India sometimes intended their images to refer to kings and gods simultaneously.

This essay focuses exclusively on Hindu imagery and attempts to suggest a possible framework within the Hindu context for such images. I hope to show that, while specific religious, political, and other purposes may explain the creation and use of these images individually, the overarching Hindu worldview, specifically relating to the concepts of *mokśa* and *dharma*, provided the general context for their creation. The recognition of this principle offers an avenue of interpretation that has not been explored previously but that I suggest may be central to our understanding of the images. Although it is possible to document the case for the theory I propose here through references to the art works themselves and extensive citations to literary, inscriptive, and other textual sources, I intend this essay rather as a general theory and as food for thought. Clearly, the ideas I outline here can be significantly amplified and developed to determine their potential applicability in different periods of Indic history and in different regional, sectarian, and other contexts.

This essay is gender and rank specific. It is concerned with male, not female, deities and with kings, not queens. It does not explore the general issue of the relationships between humans and divinities except incidentally; therefore, while other humans might also be encoded into dual images that remain to be discovered, the present essay explores the rank of king and, to some extent, the role of kings in Indic society and art. It is possible that some dual images and dual references regarding females occur as well, but while this might be a fruitful area of future research, it is not a consideration here. Further, while it is likely that many works of art have not only two but three or more levels of principal interpretation, this essay concentrates only on those two levels of a work that refer to the god and to the king.

The images of concern are Hindu figurative representations that may be shown to have dual meanings. On one level, each is a depiction of a Hindu god performing one of his characteristically heroic feats; on another level, each can also be demonstrated to refer to a historical human king and the valorous deeds he performed in carrying out the duties of his office. In each case, the identity of the deity is clear and may be corroborated by descriptions of the god in literary materials and correspondence to other imagery relating to the deity. The royal level is more difficult to establish since the Indian images do not bear attributes or other identifying elements distinctive to kings, nor are they naturalistic portraits of them. However, that the images also refer to kings may be determined by several means, including associated inscriptions, written texts, and historical information external to the works themselves.

An excellent example of such a dual image is the representation of Śiva as Garigādhara in *Lalitärikura*’s cave at Tiruchirāppalli (frontispiece). As suggested by previous scholars, including Padma Kaimal in her *Ars Orientalis* article, this image of Śiva Garigādhamārtti is likely to be a dual image, representing both Śiva as bearer of the Gariga River and the Pallava king Mahendravarman I, based on the evidence of punning in the accompanying inscription. Through the use of *double entendre* in the verses, King Mahendra is compared with the god Śiva. In particular, there is a play on the word *Kāvīrī*, which refers to the Kāvīrī River that ran through the Pallava king’s territory and was in full view from the cave temple, for the word refers both to the river and to a courtesan. The inscription describes the Kāvīrī as the beloved of King Mahendra, just as the (personified goddess and river) Gariga was the beloved of Śiva, thus creating a
parallelism between Śiva and Mahendra and between Gaṅgā and Kāvīrī in their dual roles as rivers and lovers.7

Another verse in the epigraph makes it virtually certain that the image is intended to refer to the king, for it describes the merit of the king's act of creating this temple: "By the stone-chisel, a material body of Satyasandha [that is, Mahendra]... was executed, and by the same an eternal body of his fame was produced." In other words, the stone chisel has created a material body of the king (as well as one of the god).

The Tiruchirāppalī inscription makes it very clear that the image incorporates the "material body" of the king. But it does not—nor do any other inscriptions that I am aware of—explicitly state that the image is a dual representation of the king and a god. Yet this lack should not be seen as an automatic argument against interpreting dual meanings for them. Sanskrit literary works were frequently written in a mode of double entendre that is implicit and did not require specific authorial announcement of the intent to include multiple levels in the text.8 In one very famous instance, the Rāmacaritam—coincidentally, a story that refers both to a god and to a king—however, a surviving commentary makes it absolutely clear that the text was intended to be read on one level as the story of Rāma, the seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu, and on the other as a narrative about King Rāmapāla of the Pāla dynasty.9 Without this commentary, a reader might be left to wonder whether the parallel story lines were indeed intentional or the result of an extraordinary but magnificent coincidence.

Such commentaries have rarely survived from ancient India, sometimes leaving readers to ponder the writers' design. But the puzzlement of the reader is not evidence of authorial intent. Similarly, although no known explanatory labels or other types of commentaries exist for the dual sculptures, this absence is not an argument against the intent of their creators. In a culture where richness of layered meaning was fostered by the literary language of Sanskrit, where multiple levels of meaning were not only possible but unavoidable, and where literary idioms and styles were designed to augment these possibilities, it is not surprising that signposts announcing such multiple meanings were not deemed mandatory.

Here I will not recount the images that I or others have identified as dual images of kings and gods, nor add to that corpus with new examples. The single example I have provided above shall represent the type. Padma Kaimal has summarized some of the work on dual images, and the reader can refer to the writings of other authors for detailed presentation of the arguments regarding specific images.10 In addition to the previously identified images, it is also likely that many other images, some of which are not so clearly identifiable, also convey these notions. How widespread the practice was we can only guess.

My focus is on the broader issues these images raise as a phenomenon. While many specific images have been discussed, the larger conceptual aspects of such images have not been explored. This discussion is intended to serve as a starting point for future scholars and does not take into account the different periods, regions, religious sects, and other localized beliefs about the nature of both divinity and kingship.

Several assumptions prevail in the writings about such images. The first is that the reference to the king represents a secular rather than religious emphasis in the art. This secular emphasis is presumed to be secondary to and separate from the religious meaning of the image. The discovery of what might be a secular level of meaning might not seem surprising in many cultural contexts, but, in the case of India, where Western interpretations for the last two centuries have been dominated by the belief in an overwhelming religiosity in the culture, secularism would represent an important new dimension to the understanding of the art.

From the modern Western perspective, distinctions between the secular and religious aspects of life seem perfectly reasonable. In the United States children are virtually weaned on the principle of separation of church and state. The notion is considered to be theoretically valid, and, for the most part, applicable to the conduct of daily life. In other societies, past and present, this is not the case. The issue is not simply a blurring of lines between the sacred and the secular but rather the existence of a cultural framework that does not recognize the two categories at all. It subsumes them into one. Ancient Hindu culture is such a society, and, therefore, an explanation other than pure secularism in the modern Western sense must be found for the references to the king in these images.

A second assumption in the writings of some who discuss the dual images is that the references to the king had an essentially, perhaps even predominantly, political motivation and may have
been incorporated into the imagery in order to serve propagandistic ends on his behalf.\(^2\) If this is true, and it probably is on at least one level, what are we to infer? After all, in Indian society kings did not run for election or reelection and were not members of political parties that were jockeying to augment their power against opposing parties. Further, kings did not have to campaign to win the loyalty of their subjects. There is every evidence that the authority of the institution of kingship was unquestioned in Indian society. What might have been at issue was whether the king was successfully fulfilling his duties—his dharma—thereby insuring prosperity and well-being within his realm. Any conclusions drawn about the propagandistic roles of the dual images would have to take this factor into account.

A third assumption about these dual images is that the second meaning,\(^3\) that pertaining to the king, is covert rather than overt. This assumption is pervasive, perhaps even universal, in the writings of previous authors. However, while none of the images identified thus far is labeled specifically as a dual image representing both a god and a specific king, it should not be inferred that the duality of the image was meant to be hidden from its viewers. Nor, I suggest, was it intended to be ambiguous—that is, strongly suggested but falling just short of a declaration that the image is intended to refer to the king. As mentioned above, it is likely that Sanskritic culture was very well attuned to multiplicities of meanings, and it was probably unnecessary to announce each time a multivalency was intended. The richness of meanings that modern interpreters of ancient Indic culture must ferret out with such difficulty was probably taken for granted within the culture or became part of the information that was transmitted through means other than explicit announcement.\(^4\) The assumption that the reference to the king is covert, then, should not rest on the lack of explicitness but must be based on other presuppositions about the artistic intent. Given the broader Hindu context I shall suggest below, I doubt that the images were intended to be covert at all.

A fourth assumption in the writings of some but not all authors concerns whether the dual images document a case for a cult of a deified king, or "god-king,"\(^5\) in India and, based at least in part upon the Indic practice, in Southeast Asia as well. This is perhaps the most tantalizing and controversial of the assumptions and has stimulated some debate, particularly where this presumed Indic\(^6\) practice is concerned. There are many problems relating to the issue of the "god-king," but I will explore only those questions that pertain to the arguments I am presenting here. The primary issue is whether a human king is claiming status as a divinity. Some interpreters claim that the relationship between the king and the god is solely metaphorical or allegorical, and therefore that the king is not making a claim to his own divinity but merely strongly suggesting an analogy. Others see the images as positive evidence of a cult of the deified king in ancient India. In other words, is the king subtly or perhaps not so subtly not only encoding himself within an image of a god but by doing so making a claim that he is divine?

The important question, it seems, is: What would it mean if a Hindu king made claims to divinity? The differences between human kings and gods are not difficult to imagine. One may refer to the frequently cited statistics about the life span of only one god, Brahmā. According to Indic thought, the world is constantly passing through a cycle of four stages: the Kṛta Yuga, which lasts for 1,728,000 years; the Tretā Yuga, which lasts for 1,296,000 years; the Dvāpara Yuga, which lasts for 864,000 years; and the Kali Yuga, which lasts for 432,000 years. Each cycle of four yugas is called a mahāyuga (Great Yuga) and lasts for 4,320,000 years.\(^7\) One thousand mahāyugas (that is, 4,320,000,000 years) equals one day in the life of the god Brahmā, a period of time known as a kalpa. A Brahmā day and a Brahmā night are equal to 8,640,000,000 years. Brahmā lives for one hundred Brahmā years of Brahmā days and nights, that is, 4,320,000,000 x 2 x 365 x 100, or 315,360,000,000 years.\(^8\) After each Brahmā life is a period of rest for one hundred Brahmā years, and then the cycle repeats itself endlessly. Yet Brahmā is not even considered to represent the totality of the Universal; one can barely hope to imagine the vastness that Śiva and Viśṇu, the two principal Hindu gods, represent. Indeed, they encompass all that is, has been, and will be. From this perspective, it is difficult to argue that a human king could ever be considered divine in the commonly imagined sense. The human king is never, as far as I know, said to have all of the powers of a god. If the king is considered equivalent to the god, then what does this mean in actuality? My suggestions below may help clarify this issue.

Underlying the above four assumptions is the notion that these images are overwhelmingly
religious, that is, depictions of gods, with an additional layer of meaning referring to the political realm in the guise of the king. While it may be true that the godly reference is dominant, I propose that the kingly reference is not merely additional or supplemental to the imagery. I suggest that both meanings are essential to the interpretation of the images in the broader Hindu context. Recognition of this inseparability leads to an understanding of the images beyond the summation of their individual components. For beyond being references to individual gods and kings, the duality implicit in the godly and kingly realms reflects the duality of existence that is fundamental to the Hindu world view: As references to god and king, the images are visual representations of the dual worlds that define all of existence: mokṣa and dharma.¹⁹

Mokṣa, which means release or liberation, is the ultimate goal in Hinduism and represents transcendence beyond the world of form. The divinities of Hinduism are the supreme manifestations of mokṣa. Many religious practices in India are aimed toward the attainment of mokṣa, that is, release from the physical world and union with the divine. The well-established tradition of religious asceticism in India is peopled by individuals who devote their lives to the attainment of liberation by ignoring and overcoming the concerns of the limited physical world. What mokṣa really means can barely be imagined by individuals living in the physical world, for, as the Universal, it transcends all comprehensible measures of time and space.

Dharma, in contrast, is proper social behavior and social duty and is concerned solely with the physical, temporal realm in which we all dwell—that is, the world of form. Along with artha, which means power and wealth, and kāma, the satisfaction of desires, it is one of the three legitimate goals of human life. Indeed, it is generally considered to be the most all-encompassing of the three, subsuming both artha and kāma. According to the most important Indian texts on dharma, the Dharmaśāstras, all aspects of human life must be governed by proper dharma.

Thus, Hinduism takes into account the quest for understanding the world beyond the immediate but also emphasizes the importance of the world we inhabit. The contrasts between the worlds of mokṣa and dharma are enormous; indeed, the two seem paradoxical, for, on the one hand, the world of dharma stresses the upholding, preservation, perpetuation, and refinement of the physical world and all of its beauty and glory, and, on the other hand, mokṣa stresses renunciation and asceticism. In spite of the paradox, these two strands of Hinduism have a symbiotic, though sometimes delicately balanced, relationship, and Hindus do not find it necessary to denounce one strand in favor of the other. It is assumed that each of us will eventually abandon the concerns of the world of dharma to pursue the highest and final goal of Hinduism, mokṣa.

In the Bhagavad Gītā, the term dharmarefers to the orderliness of human society and to each person's duty to uphold that order through every action. Each person, regardless of how seemingly insignificant in the scheme of society, has a fundamental obligation to perform his or her ascribed social duty for the welfare of society as a whole. A person's first obligation is to others—one's family, caste, and kingdom. Most important in this scheme is the king's role in upholding dharma in order to create an ideal, orderly world. Indeed, the king is at the pinnacle of the world of dharma in all of its material glory.

The king's role in statecraft, called Rajadharma (King's Dharma), has been articulated in the ancient Indian law books, the Dharmaśāstras, and other texts, which provided the guidelines for kingship throughout the centuries. To suggest that the reference to the king in the images is equal to that of the god would not simply require the elevation of a human being to the status of an immortal with all related powers and privileges, but it would demand that the very nature of kingship in India be redefined. For the king is not simply a lesser god in the realm of mokṣa; he is supreme in his own world of dharma.

In light of the basic Hindu conceptions about dharma and mokṣa, the four assumptions enumerated above take on a different hue. The first assumption, that the reference to the king represents a secular emphasis in the art, needs recasting in light of the recognition of these principles. On one level, the dual image depicts the exploits (through metaphor and allegory, perhaps) of a human king and thus extols his activities in the temporal world. But modern scholars, I believe, have been led astray by their characterization of the temporal world as secular. While the notion of secularity in the modern Western sense tends to validate the importance of the physical world, the world of dharma is not considered to be "real" in the Hindu scheme. In Hindu thought, the
temporal realm is viewed as a kind of colossal misunderstanding of the eternal. Because of the pervasiveness of māyā (illusion), which fosters the false acceptance of the world of dharma as the real world, humans and other living beings mistake the “reality” of the physical world for reality itself, when, in fact, true reality is the world beyond form, the world of the eternal, the world of mokṣa. Thus, the concept of dharma can only be understood in relation to that of mokṣa. In other words, the inclusion of a reference to the world of dharma adds another dimension to the understanding of the religiosity of the image if one speaks in the strictest terms but does not imply secularity.

The second assumption, that the reference to the king was political and possibly even propagandistic, also needs amendment in light of the principles of dharma and mokṣa. It is likely that Hindu kings struggled with many of the same things that kings elsewhere in the world have struggled with and that their motives were no more and no less selfless and magnanimous than those of their counterparts elsewhere. Thus, on one level the images may have served highly political, even propagandistic, goals, as has been suggested by previous writers. However, if, indeed, the dual images served propagandistic purposes, it is likely that they would have been intended to reinforce the idea of the effectiveness of the king—as provider of material well-being, as controller of the benevolent forces of nature such as abundant water and rainfall, as protector from malevolent forces, as defender of enemies who threatened the integrity of the kingdom, and so on, rather than to ensure his continued existence in his role as ruler. The type of imagery found in the dual images—which emphasizes heroic deeds of rescue and displays of power, often in response to dangers and threats—suggests that this is the case and further helps remove such imagery from the purely mundane realm and place it within the larger Hindu conceptual framework in which the king is the upholder and pinnacle of dharma.26

Thus, in spite of what might have been the specific political aims of an individual king whose glories were incorporated into a dual image, on a more abstract plane his actions on behalf of his kingdom reflected his greater role in the cosmic order. While the specific deeds he carried out might have served a political function in the technical sense, in the larger context his actions reflected nothing less than the fulfillment of his dharmic obligations.

The third assumption, that the reference to the king is covert rather than overt, would seem puzzling, if true, if it is assumed that the realm of dharma and the king’s role in this grand scheme is intentionally being incorporated into the imagery. Rather than representing a veiled expression of egoism on the part of the monarch or some other message that might be hidden, the inclusion of the royal reference would be part of the overall meaning of the image, which refers to both the realms of dharma and mokṣa. As a reinforcement of the notion of the king’s role in protecting and preserving society, it would not only be unnecessary to hide this level of meaning, but there would be every reason to desire that it be made manifest.

Examining these dual images in their own cultural context, rather than based on assumptions that arise from modern secularized and related viewpoints, clarifies their message. Each of the three assumptions discussed above may be true when images are considered on a case-by-case basis, but in the broader Hindu context they transcend their historicity and serve as expressions of dharma and mokṣa, thereby reinforcing the essential notions that lie at the core of Hinduism.

In general, interpretations of Indian art since the beginning of modern scholarship have emphasized what might be called the mokṣa aspect of Indic art. Here I propose that the concept of dharma, which is so pivotal in the Hindu conception of the world, may also be deeply embedded in the artistic traditions. The world of dharma, I believe, is specifically alluded to in dual images of gods and kings, and references to it are likely to exist elsewhere—possibly quite extensively—with in the artistic remains. Perhaps some of the so-called historical sculptures and paintings found on temples also refer to the world of dharma, which is so inextricably linked with the concept of mokṣa. The popularity of figures like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa may partially be explained because such beings represent a synthesis between the worlds of dharma and mokṣa.

The fourth assumption—that the images might reflect a cult of the deified king—cannot be fully explained simply by understanding the roles of dharma and mokṣa in Hindu thought. However, it is this assumption that provides a clue to what may be the ultimate religious meaning of the dual
images. If they are intended to communicate that the
king is god, and therefore to indicate an
equation between the king and the god, that is,
god=king and king=god, then is this merely a
form of supreme egoism and thereby antithetical
to the very essence of Hinduism? Quite the oppo-
site, for the equation lies at the core of the Hindu
religion. Rather than an expression of egoism, a
claim by a king that he is equivalent to the divine
is nothing more than a reiteration of the supreme
realization of Hinduism, the famed and funda-
mental Ātman=ātman equation. First expressed in
the Upaniṣads more than 2500 years ago, this
ultimate expression of the Hindu religious goal is
the essence of the final understanding of Hindu-
isms and the attainment of mokṣa. For mokṣa is
nothing more—and nothing less—than the real-
ization of one’s own divinity. Ātman, the Univer-
sal, is equivalent to ātman, the individual:
god=king; king=god. That thou art. The aim of
Hinduism is to transcend the world of dharma by
overcoming one’s individualistic, egoistic ten-
dencies and the false notion of one’s own individu-
ality (ātman). By doing so, one merges with the
Universal (Ātman) and realizes one’s own divinity.
If the king is divine, then this is simply an
explanation of the truth that each of us must also
realize about ourselves.
As is well known, Hindu culture stresses—in-
deed, is predicated upon—the destruction of the
self-centered world view, the egoistic world, the
materialistic world, as its primary goal. While on
one level the images might be identifiable as
references to the glories of an individual king
(who has not yet transcended the egoism of the
world of dharma), as a class of artistic expressions
the images transcend that focus. While they high-
light the heroism of a human king, and by doing
so might risk fostering the egoism that is meant to
be avoided, they are not by definition expressions
of egoism, secularism, and other worldly things.

In light of this recasting of the four assump-
tions, the image of Śiva as Gaṅgādharamūrti at
Tiruchirāppalli lends itself to an additional layer
of interpretation (frontispiece). I suggest that,
although the representation makes clear refer-
ce to the human king, this allusion does not
secularize the image but, rather, situates the
ruler, King Mahendravarman I, within the realm
of dharma. The king’s role as the supreme up-
holder of dharma and provider of material well-
being for the inhabitants of his kingdom is
couched in terms of a romantic liaison between
Mahendravarman and Kāvīrī. Like a lover, the
king woos the beneficent forces of nature—here,
the abundant but controlled sources of purifying
and life-enriching water—to his kingdom. If the
image is intended to serve political and propa-
gandistic ends, it does so by reinforcing the basic
Hindu notions of the king’s essential role in
upholding dharma. That the image shows the
king fulfilling his dharmic role rather than ex-
pressing egoistic aims negates any necessity to
shroud the reference to the monarch. While the
image does not bear individual characteristics
unique to the king but is in every respect a
standard representation of the god, this indistin-
guishability does not arise from an attempt to
conceal the allusion to the king. Instead, it is a
virtual announcement of the relationship be-
tween the king and the god. Unlike the well-
known composite deities of Hinduism, such as
Ardhanārīśvara and Hari Hara, in which the
deity’s body is recognizably divided into halves
that are distinctive of the two joined divinities,
the dual representations of gods and kings do not
convey even a hint of parity. The king’s identity is
totally subsumed by that of the god. And herein
lies the key to the Ātman=ātman equation: The
god is unchanging. It is the human king whose
temporal form must be transformed to become
indistinguishably merged with that of the eternal
in order for them to be identical.

Rather than representing covert attempts of a
king to appropriate the characteristics of the
deity in a purely materialistic and political sense,
the dual images reconcile the basic paradoxes of
the worlds of dharma and mokṣa. In the complete
union between the temporal and the eternal
expressed by the dual images, they are visual
expressions of the Ātman=ātman equation. Thus,
the images express the highest—not the lowest—
aspirations of all living beings according to the
Hindu world view—the realization of one’s own
divinity. More than simply veiled expressions of
egoistic demigodism or political propaganda, they
display most poignantly the Hindu view of the
human being’s dual predicament: while we yearn
for comprehension of the Universal and absorp-
tion in the realm of mokṣa, we, like the Hindu
king, must—for the duration of our temporal
existences—uphold, preserve, perpetuate, and
refine the world of dharma in which we are
imprisoned.
Notes

I am grateful to Janice M. Glowiski for her helpful suggestions regarding this essay.


2. To my knowledge, dual images of kings and deities have not been identified in Indian Buddhist art. However, I have suggested that the Mâravijaya image in Pâla art serves as a metaphor for the kings of the Pâla Dynasty. See Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pâla India (8th–12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy (Dayton and Seattle: Dayton Art Institute and University of Washington Press, 1990), 104-5. Although kingship is an important part of Buddhist thought and imagery, for example in relationship to the cakravartin concept and in the bodhisattva ideal, the Buddhist ideas do not precisely parallel what is suggested in this article. Because lay Buddhist kings are sometimes considered bodhisattvas in the sense of "Buddhas-to-be" while Hindu kings are not in the same way gods-to-be, there may be significant differences. I do not know enough about Jain art and religion to be able to assess whether the ideas presented here would be applicable in that context.

3. Indic religious compositions (including Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain) have meanings that are to be read on more than one level, sometimes an exoteric one and an esoteric one. The incorporation of both exoteric and esoteric ideas into single images enabled works of art to communicate to individuals at different stages of their religious evolution. To some, the exoteric, obvious meaning of a story was all that could be understood; for those initiated into more advanced levels of practice, the esoteric meaning superseded the mundane. In actuality, any given image or narrative may have numerous levels of meaning—it is difficult to say how many. Given the Indic predilection for complexity, however, it is probably safe to say that multiplicity is an expected norm.

4. Throughout this essay I have assumed that the king would normally have been the patron of the image, or, if not the actual patron, would have played some role in sanctioning the creation of the image or the image type. Very little is known about the actual patronage of the specific works of art under discussion, but it is likely that the major lich monuments of the various phases of Indian art had at least some royal associations. The theories I present here regarding the interpretation of the images would be valid even if the images were not patronized by the monarch.

5. In Southeast Asia, particularly in Khmer art, where an outgrowth of the phenomenon under discussion seems to occur, perhaps mixed with indigenous Southeast Asian concepts regarding kingship, many images do appear to be highly naturalistic. It has been suggested that some of these images are royal portraits in the literal sense. In Khmer art, such figures are often "humanized"—for example, showing figures with two arms rather than the four or more arms seen so frequently in Indian images. In other ways, including the stylistic features, the works are humanized and made more naturalistic.


7. Lockwood, Siromoney, and Dayanandan, Mahâbalipûram Studies, 36-39.


12. For example, Asher, "Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art."

13. I have used the word secondary rather than secondary, since I do not think that secondary is precisely the right term. That the king is second, rather than first, is clear from the fact that the image is always recognizable as the god and corresponds to other images of that god that do not necessarily have a royal level of meaning. In other words, every image of Varâha is an image of Varâha but is not necessarily an image of a king. Therefore, the Varâha iconography must be the first. Because I contend that the second, or kingy, meaning is essential to these images, I have avoided the term secondary since it implies lesser importance.

14. For example, oral traditions may have conveyed information that supplements what is available to us otherwise. In Buddhism the oral transmission from teacher to disciple was an essential component in monastic education; such oral commentaries have been lost or are inaccessible to those who have not taken the appropriate initiations. Without them, the multiple meanings of the texts and images of esoteric Buddhism are difficult to interpret; yet this does not mean the meanings are not there. Similarly, oral traditions are likely to have played an important role in Hindu society.

15. I have purposely not used the highly controversial term devârâja, which has been translated variously as "god-king" and "king of gods." In its translation as "god-king," the term has been used to describe and suggest a variety of phenomena relating to the possible deification of kings in India and Southeast Asia. In some cases, authors have innocently used the term devârâja in the sense of its most obvious literal translation—"god-king." However, in Southeast Asia the term has been taken to mean other things.

16. Some proponents of the concept of the god-king in Southeast Asia have argued that it grew out of indigenous, rather than Indic, cultural practices.


19. Although the concepts of dharma and mokṣa are pervasive in Hinduism and are discussed frequently in analyses of the Hindu religious system, the concepts and their interrelationships are most clearly explained in relation to Hindu culture in two sources: John B. Carman, "Axes of Sacred Value in Hindu Society," in Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society, ed. John B. Carman and Frédérique Apfel Marglin, International Studies in Sociology and Social Anthropology 43 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), 109–20; and Kinsley's Hinduism, 82–91. Indeed, it was while reading these sources that the idea first occurred to me that traditional interpretations of Hindu art invariably emphasize the mokṣa world of Hinduism but, if dharma is so important, might it not also be somehow introduced into the art? I am, therefore, indebted to the work of Carman and Kinsley for the germ of the idea presented here. My summary explanations of mokṣa and dharma are based on the explanations Kinsley provides and in some cases are closely paraphrased from that source.

20. Many of the dual images thus far identified include representations of various forms of Viṣṇu, whose function among the Hindu gods as supreme protector provides a model for earthly kingship. Dual images of Viṣṇu as Varâha and as Trivikrama have been noted. Emphasis on Kṛṣṇa and Râma, both also incarnations of Viṣṇu, inherently carry with them the notion of a singly embodied human protector and god, although Kṛṣṇa is not technically a king. Images of Śiva have also been identified as dual images, such as the Gaṅgâdhara sculpture from Tiruchirâppalli illustrated here. While not so obviously related to the concept of protection, images of Śiva may also convey notions of the king's dharmic obligations.

21. Kinsley, Hinduism, 82, uses these words with regard to the human role in the realm of dharma. I have also used Kinsley's wording on p. 34 above.
"TWIRLING THEIR LONG SLEEVES, THEY DANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN..."! JADE PLAQUE SLEEVE DANCERS OF THE WESTERN HAN DYNASTY

BY SUSAN N. ERICKSON

Small, plaque-like dancers made of jade number among the furnishings of princely tombs of the Western Han dynasty that document lavish preparation for burial. The recent exhibition of jades from the tomb of the King of Nanyue 南越, Xianggang 象岗, in Guangzhou drew attention to this type of jade, but jade dancers have been excavated from other sites in China and are also found in museum collections. My review of archaeological reports reveals that no excavated examples of this type of jade can be dated to Warring States-period tombs. The earliest of these jade dancers are found in tombs dating to the Western Han period and are clustered in the eastern part of China: Guangdong (two sites), Hebei (two), Henan (one), Jiangsu (three), and Shandong (three), for a total of more than thirty examples. Many of these sites have princely associations: in Hebei, 1) the tomb of Dou Wan 賈館, the consort of Liu Sheng 劉勝, Prince Jing of Zhongshan 中山, at Mancheng 滿城; and 2) the tomb of the consort of the Prince of Guangyang 廣陽 (Yan 燕) at Dabaotai 大葆台; in Guangdong, 3) the tomb of Zhao Mo 趙眛, the King of Nanyue; in Jiangsu, 4) the tomb of a prince of Chu 趙, perhaps Liu Zhu 劉注 and his consort, at Tongshan 通山, Xiaoguishan 小龜山; 5) the tomb of a prince of Chu and his consort at Shiqiao 石橋; and 6) the tomb of a concubine connected to the family of Liu Di 劉彘, prince of Guangling 滎陵, at Yangzhou 福州. Only two examples survive from tombs of the Eastern Han period: one from Hebei and one from Henan (fig. 1). In addition to these jade figures, one fashioned of ivory was excavated at Nanchang 南昌, Jiangxi (fig. 2). Jade plaque figures from the tomb of the King of Nanyue, reconstructed as components of pectorals, have been designated as decorative pieces by the authors of the exhibition catalogue (fig. 6). I propose a different interpretation of these jade figures of ancient China based on excavation reports documenting tomb holdings, other images of dancers from the period, and contemporary literary evidence.

Typology of the Jade Plaque Sleeve Dancers

The jade plaques range in size from 2.5 to 9.7 cm; most are about 4 cm in height. They are .2-.5 cm thick and have a flat or slightly convex profile. Both sides are carved, but most often

Fig. 1. Jade plaque figure. Huaiyang, Henan. After Han Weilong, Li Quanli, and Shi Lei, "Henan Huaiyang Beiguan," fig. 17, no. 1.

Fig. 2. Ivory plaque figure. Nanchang, Jiangxi. After Chen Wenhua, "Nanchang dongjiao," pl. 6, no. 2.
frontal views have been delineated on each side (fig. 1). The only excavated exceptions are jade plaques found in two tombs in Guangdong—one at Jiuduan 機路段 and one at Xianggang, which is the tomb of the King of Nanyue (figs. 3 and 6). These figures have facial features on the obverse side and a rear view on the reverse similar to the famous Freer jade figures that are thought to have come from the Jincun 金村 area near Luoyang 洛陽 (figs. 4 and 5). The relatively large size of both Freer figures, 9.7 and 8 cm, along with details of coiffure and garment design of the dancer who holds her right arm across her waist (fig. 5), correspond directly to the Jiuduan figure (fig. 3). The tomb of the King of Nanyue contained one jade plaque with distinct front and rear views, as well as three additional plaques that shared the more common configuration of facial features on both sides (figs. 6-9). This tomb also held a figurine of a dancer depicted in the round...
TWIRLING THEIR LONG SLEEVES, THEY DANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN . . .

Fig. 6. Left: Pectoral Set B of the “Concubine of the Right.” Eastern Annex Chamber, tomb of the King of Nanyue, Guangzhou, Guangdong. Middle: Detail of obverse. Right: Detail of reverse. After Jades from the Tomb of the King of Nanyue, pls. 141-42 and fig. 10.

Fig. 7. Obverse and reverse of jade plaque figure. Eastern Annex Chamber, tomb of the King of Nanyue. After Jades from the Tomb of the King of Nanyue, pl. 152; and Xi Han Nanyue wang mu, xia, pl. 154, no. 3.

Fig. 8. Obverse and reverse of jade plaque figure. Western Side Chamber, tomb of the King of Nanyue. After Jades from the Tomb of the King of Nanyue, pls. 231-32.

Fig. 9. Pectoral Set E (bottom) and detail of dancer (top) of an unidentified concubine. Eastern Annex Chamber, tomb of the King of Nanyue. After Xi Han Nanyue wang mu, shang, figs. 165, nos. 2 and 166.
This three-dimensional figure was found with other objects collected in the Western Side Chamber, which was used for storage. Mai Yinghao considers it "part of the personal collections of Zhao Mo [the King of Nanyue] as clay seal impressions of 'Seal of the Emperor' and 'Mo' had been found, indicating that these items were probably sealed up personally by the emperor during his lifetime." This exquisitely carved dancer, 3.5 cm tall and 1 cm thick, is rare, perhaps even unique. The only roughly corresponding figure, in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (fig. 11), also has distinct back and front views, and her sleeves have been rendered in relief. The body is .75 cm in thickness, but the lateral sides have been given little attention. A swath of fabric sprouts mysteriously from her right side. I will limit my discussion in this article to the more numerous jade plaques.

The costume and pose of the plaque dancer are standardized. The figure wears a floor-length garment that flares at the bottom. The sleeves are long enough to conceal the hands. Some figures are conceived as a mere silhouette. Others have incised interior detail, such as a sash at the waist, the overlapping lapels of the garment, and the flowing folds of the sleeves. As the figure raises one arm over the head, the billowing sleeve drapes fluidly downward. The other arm may be held across the waist of the figure so that this sleeve falls to the opposite side, or the arm may be positioned close to the body so that the fabric follows the direction of the sleeve overhead. The result is an exciting composition of curves and countercurves, which is characteristic of all figures. The positioning of the arms and the brilliant swaths of floating fabric suggest the appearance of dancing even though little else in the anatomy of the figure conveys the potential for motion. Realism is not important. Facial features are often extremely simplified and geometrized. In addition, the sleeves or entire figure may be embellished with cusp-like flourishes that are related to the quasi-ornamental nature of Han dynasty art (fig. 12). Some figures have been so extremely abstracted that only the face can be clearly recognized amid the swirling pattern of lines, but there is still an allusion to a figure with flying sleeves (figs. 13–14).

A variation of the subject is a pair of dancers, as exemplified in the Freer Gallery collection (fig. 15). The dancers are rendered as mirror
"TWIRLING THEIR LONG SLEEVES, THEY DANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN . . ."

Fig. 13. Jade plaque figure. Shiqiao, Jiangsu. After Wang Kai and Li Yinde, "Xuzhou Shiqiao Han mu qingli baogao," fig. 47, no. 4.

Fig. 14. Jade plaque figures. Wulian, Shandong. After Cao Yuanqi and Wang Xueliang, "Shandong Wulian Zhangjiazhong gu Han mu," fig. 23.

Fig. 15. Pair of jade figures and reconstruction of pectoral. Smithsonian Institution.Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art.
images with the same attributes as the single dancer. The reverse side has a rear view comparable to the solo dancers from Jiuduan and in the Freer collection (figs. 3–5). The only excavated example of a pair of dancers is from the western side chamber of the tomb of the King of Nanyue (fig. 16). They have been simply and crudely carved, but the excavators were able to distinguish facial features on one side and a rear view on the other side. There is a marked difference in the level of finish given to the plaques discussed above. Some figures appear simplified as well as crudely rendered, in stark contrast to exquisitely cut and detailed examples. This range in quality suggests that these jades were not appreciated solely as beautifully carved objects; rather, the medium or iconography may be more significant.

Many of these figures have small holes drilled at the center of the upper and lower edges. These plaque figures are often found with other types of carved jades, such as huang crescents or bi disks, which may have similar perforations. The holes were used to string the jades together as an ensemble, as in the tomb of the King of Nanyue, where twelve pectorals belonging to the king, his concubines, and slaves have been reconstructed. The king’s pectoral, 60 cm in length, featured male kneeling figures, while two of those of his concubines had jade dancers as components (figs. 6 and 9). On the surface of one of these figures from the pectoral of the “Concubine of the Right,” a carved strand of ornaments hanging from the dancer’s belt reveals how these jade ensembles were worn (fig. 6). A bi disk and a huang crescent suspended on a cord are delineated. Similar details were incised on the ivory figure from Nanchang (fig. 2). In some cases, however, the complexity and length of the pectoral suggest that they may not have been worn in life. The tomb of the Nanyue King had the greatest number of pectorals preserved. However, jade plaques that were excavated at Mancheng or reportedly unearthed at Jincun have also been reconstructed to form pectorals (figs. 15 and 17).

At Mancheng, the pectoral was composed of the jade plaque figure along with two jade cica-das, a bottle-shaped jade as well as oval and round beads of rock crystal, agate, and felsite (fig. 17). The pectoral was found inside the jade body suit of the occupant of the tomb, Dou Wang, the consort of Prince Liu Sheng. In Tomb 2 at Dabaotai, the tomb of the consort of the Prince of Guangyang (Yan), a plaque dancer was found near the head of the deceased (fig. 18). This tomb suffered fire damage and pillaging, but the arrangement of jades upon excavation still may be significant. In addition to the jade dancer near the head of the deceased, other types of jade were positioned in the cardinal directions around the corpse and throughout the burial chamber. Despite the fact that the Dabaotai jade dancer has holes drilled at the upper and lower edges, in this case it does not seem to have been utilized as part of a pectoral but rather as an amulet. The location of some jade plaque figures inside a jade suit or near the body and the standardization of the sinuous, dancing pose in every example suggest that these dancers are not merely decorative but must have had another function.

Fig. 16. Pair of jade figures. Western Side Chamber, tomb of the King of Nanyue. After Xi Han Nanyue wang mu, shang, fig. 81, no. 3.

Fig. 17. Jade plaque figure and reconstruction of pectoral. Tomb 2, Mancheng, Hebei. After Mancheng Han mu fajue baogao, Shang, fig. 200, no. 2; and Sun Ji, Handai wushi wenhua ziliao tu shuo, fig. 98, no. 9.
"TWIRLING THEIR LONG SLEEVES, THEY DANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN . . ."

Other Representations of Sleeve Dancers in Pre-Han and Han Dynasty Art

The dancer with elegant gestures exaggerated by long sleeves is popular in other media, such as tomb sculpture and pictorial tiles. Although both the sculpture and the tiles are from a funerary context, Chinese tombs were not filled with imagery of death. These artifacts prompt memories of the nights of entertainment experienced by the deceased during his lifetime and embody the hope that such nights would continue in the afterlife. The dancer’s role in this activity is often clarified and enhanced by the presence of other figures. One of the best-known examples dated to the Eastern Han period is a tomb relief unearthed in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, which depicts people listening to music and watching a dance performance (fig. 19). The drummer and se zither player accompany the broad, languid movements of the long-sleeved dancer, who strikes a pose similar to the jade figures. In contrast, hollow bricks dated to the late Western Han period feature depictions of a dancer in more vigorous motion so that the sleeve streams over her head or is whisked into a looping form.

Fig. 18. Jade plaque figure with pei and xi ornaments. Tomb 2, Dabaotai, Hebei. After Beijing Dabaotai Han mu, fig. 69, no. 2.

Fig. 19. Rubbing of earthenware tomb relief. Chengdu, Sichuan. Sichuan University Museum.
In the first hollow brick, the designer has created an evocative allusion as the fabric glides through the air paralleling the wings of the bird overhead. Single dancers are most often seen, but couples can also be represented. For example, on a tile from Pengxian 彭縣, Sichuan Province, a male dancer wears trousers, and a female is garbed in the typical long robe (fig. 21). Evidently, the performance of the sleeve dance was not limited to females, although they are most often depicted.

Other dancers who leap upon a series of low drums or who trail long scarves are sometimes part of the scene, or the sleeve dancer may also be surrounded by acrobats and jugglers. A sculptural rendering of a variety of performers, including two dancers in colorful, patterned robes, was excavated at Wuyingshan 無影山, Jinan 濟南, Shandong and is dated to the Western Han dynasty (fig. 22). The lively nature of the performance is evident in this miniature tableau. In addition, larger, individual tomb figures of dancers from the same period have also been excavated at such sites as Tongshan in Jiangsu (fig. 23). The sleeve dancer is bent slightly forward and holds her right arm close to her face so that the long sleeve falls as a vertical cascade of fabric. The viewer senses that the dancer has been caught during a slow, solemn passage of the music. The Metropolitan Museum of Art houses a sculpted figure of similar size (fig. 24). She too leans forward as she drops one sleeve to her side and casts the other over her shoulder. Related imagery has been explored in a wooden bas-relief

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Fig. 20. Rubbings of hollow tomb tiles. Zhengzhou, Henan. After Tang Xinghuang, "Zhengzhou Xintongqiao Handai huaxiang kongxinzhan mu," fig. 13, nos. 5 and 11.
TWIRLING THEIR LONG SLEEVES, THEY DANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN . . .

Fig. 21. Rubbing of earthenware tomb relief. Pengxian, Sichuan. Sichuan Provincial Museum.

Fig. 22. Earthenware tableau. Wuyingshan, Shandong. After Zhongguo dianosu shi tu, juan 1, p. 317.

Fig. 23 (left). Earthenware dancing figure. Tongshan, Jiangsu. After Zhongguo bowuguan congshu: #4. Nanjing bowuguan, pl. 55.

excavated from a late Western Han tomb at Xuyi, Jiangsu (fig. 25). Male and female dancers, as well as an acrobat and a musician, appear in the upper register of the panel, while animals in combat are paired with acrobats in the lower register. Other reliefs from the same site depict immortals and dragons amid the constellations. The simple perpetuation of earthly delights in the afterlife in this case has been broadened to position the deceased within a cosmologically oriented context, as also exemplified in the ceiling paintings of the sun, the moon, and the stars in Western Han Tomb 61 at Luoyang (fig. 26).30

This cosmological setting is used in a Western Han-period silk painting from Jinqueshan 金雀山, Shandong, in which the dancer participates in a ritual involving the journey of the soul after death. In the upper part of the central section of this painting from Tomb 9, musicians accompany a sleeve dancer identified by the authors of the excavation report as female (fig. 27).31 The dancer flings both sleeves into the air as she turns her back to the viewer. Above this scene, a large female figure, the deceased, is attended by several servants. The sun and the moon are located at the top of the banner. Below the dancing scene are three rows of figures. One person seems to be reeling silk, and some of the others may be involved in a performance. In the lowest section are ascending dragons. A fuller understanding of the Jinqueshan painting may be gained by comparing it to another Western Han painting on silk from Tomb 1 at Mawangdui 马王堆 (fig. 28).32

Compositionally, both paintings feature a series

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**Fig. 25.** Wooden relief panels. Xuyi, Jiangsu. After Zou Houben, “Jiangsu Xuyi Dongyang Han mu,” pl. 3, nos. 1-2; pl. 4, no. 4.

**Fig. 26.** Painted ceiling. Tomb 61, Luoyang, Henan. After Xia Nai, “Luoyang Xi Han bihu mu zhang de xing xiangtu,” fig. 1.
TWIRLING THEIR LONG SLEEVES, THEY DANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN...

Fig. 27. Painting on silk. Jinqueshan, Shandong. After Liu Jiaji and Liu Bingsen, "Jinqueshan Xi Han bohua linmo hou gan," frontispiece.

Fig. 28. Painting on silk. Tomb 1, Mawangdui, Hunan. After Changsha Mawangdui yihao Han mu, shang, fig. 38.
of space cells stacked in a vertical format. Although the iconography of the Mawangdui painting is not identical to the Jinqueshan painting, it is definitely related. The Mawangdui painting, or fei yi 衣, does not include a dancer, but a ritual for the deceased is depicted in the lower mid-section of the painting. Figures surround the corpse draped in silk, and offerings of food have been laid out as an enticement to draw the soul safely away from dark, watery regions, such as those represented at the bottom of both paintings. In the upper part of this middle zone, the deceased appears with her attendants. She is standing rather than seated as in the Jinqueshan painting. The sun and moon dominate the top of both paintings. Within this context, the sleeve dancer in the Jinqueshan painting is not just the skilled and beautiful performer well known from Eastern and Western Han-period depictions, such as the Wuyingshan miniatures or the Chengdu relief; rather, she enacts her role in a space between the bright celestial regions, where the sun and moon are eternal, and the darkness of the underworld. She is part of the vertical axis by which the soul travels to the heavens.

In a few pre-Han bronzes the sleeve dancer is part of a ritual that may symbolically connect the terrestrial with the otherworld. A bronze oval bowl in the collection of the Shanghai Museum of Art and a bronze lian 鑲 excavated from a tomb in Luilige 琉璃阁, Huixian 淮nex, in Henan Province have representations of sleeve dancers (figs. 29 and 30). They dance amid musicians who strike drums and bells, as in Western Han examples. All of the dancers wear long flared skirts. One pair flings both sleeves into the air (fig. 29), while the other pair hold their arms such that the sleeves drop perpendicular to the ground (fig. 30). In both vessels, the dancers perform in an outdoor setting: trees stand next to the dancers in the Shanghai bowl, and hunters chase animals in the area nearby the dancers of the Liulige lian. The latter depicts no ordinary hunt since an animal stands upright holding a bow and arrow, and a fantastic creature with two bodies occupies the center area. Kiyohiko Munakata has suggested that this scene may represent “the theme of the ‘summons of the soul,’” as part of a funeral ritual. Indeed, the subject is related to a theme embellished on the dark ground coffin from

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Fig. 29. Detail of bronze oval bowl. Shanghai Museum. After Ma Chengyuan, "Mantian Zhan Guo qingtongqi shang de huaxiang," fig. 1.

Fig. 30. Detail of bronze lian. Liulige, Henan. After Guo Baojun, Shanhuaxheng yu Liulige, fig. 29.
TWIRLING THEIR LONG SLEEVES, THEY DANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN . . .

Tomb 1 at Mawangdui (fig. 31). In the upper section of the head panel of the coffin, a fantastic animal is hunting a bird, and a figure wearing a long-sleeved garment dances with a creature standing upright on his hind legs. Music is supplied by composite figures who hold clappers and strum the qin琴. This panel as well as the paintings on the entire coffin can be interpreted as an unearthly region where clouds gather, where strange creatures gambol, and where the souls of the dead travel in their journey to eternity.

Linguistic and Literary Evidence

Contemporary literary descriptions of the dance scene and the role played by the dancer inform an investigation of the sleeve dancer in art. The Elegies of Chu (Chu ci楚辞) associated with Qu Yuan屈原(340?-278 B.C.) is a major source of parallel imagery. In a scene from “The Great Unity, God of the Eastern Sky (Dong huang tai yi東皇太一),” one of the poems collected in the “Nine Songs (Jiu ge九歌),” offerings including flowers, food, and wine are made to a deity. David Hawkes has translated the passage concerning the performance:

Flourish the drumsticks, beat the drums!
The singing begins softly to a slow, solemn measure:
Then, as pipes and zithers join in, the sound grows shriller.
Now the priestesses come, splendid in their gorgeous apparel,
And the hall is filled with a penetrating fragrance.
The five notes mingle in a rich harmony;
And the god is merry and takes his pleasure.

Communication with the deity was encouraged through aromatic gifts, beautiful music, and the presence of women. The character translated as priestesses by David Hawkes is ling靈. The earliest Chinese etymological dictionary, the Shuowen jiezi說文解字, which was compiled by Xu Shen許慎, ca. A.D. 100, indicates that ling has the same meaning as tui巫, commonly translated
"shamaness." Although the Shuowen jiezi post-dates the jade plaques, Xu studied words in Han and pre-Han texts. Xu explains the etymology of the character ling: "As the wu jade to worship gods, so the character is made with a root jade (yu 玉) and the phonetic ling 莉, yielding ling 莉. Xu also notes that ling sometimes "is written ling 莉 with wu 去 as its root." In these two forms of ling with the root either jade (yu) or shamaness (wu), Xu uncovers a reference to her vocation. As for wu, Xu says that "wu is a zhu 祝 (invoker or priest), a woman who is able to render [herself] invisible, and with dance to invoke gods to come down. The character symbolizes the appearance of a person dancing with two sleeves." Thus the form of the characters wu and ling renders a pictographic equivalent of a person dressed in a garment with sleeves hanging symmetrically.

As for the movement of the ling or shamaness in the poem above, the characters yan jian 喻鑿 describe her actions. This compound is frequently used in the Chu ci and connotes resplendence as rendered by Hawkes above. Yet a literal translation of the phrase would be "the ling bends down (yan) and pulls up (jian)." L. C. Hopkins translates the phrase "bends and bows," referring to the serpentine form of a dancer. This posture correlates with that of the jade plaque figures under discussion. The association of dancing and the shamaness is documented in many pre-Han texts. Edward Schafer writes: "In Shang times the words wu 去 'shaman,' wu 舞 'dance,' and wu 紹 'luxuriant growth,' now distinguished graphically and semantically, were identical graphically and phonetically." After analyzing the various graphic forms of wu, Schafer sees "a cluster of concepts 'feminine,' 'dance,' 'shaman,' 'fertility' and 'rain-making' about the word wu."

Yan jian delineates the elegant, arching postures of the woman, but jian has another meaning: slow, lame movement. Indeed, the radical of this character is 足, leg or foot. This interpretation of the character apparently conflicts with the assumed grace of a trained dancer, but in this context the character lends a meaningful texture to the image. Jian may refer to the best-known shamanistic dance, the Yu bu 禹步, or Step of Yu. Yu, founder of the Xia dynasty, was given the arduous task of draining the waters that threatened the kingdom. After his success in quelling the floods, half of his body was paralyzed, and he moved with a limping gait. His lameness became a sign of his power to communicate with animate nature, perhaps in the same way that the dancer, through her movements, could bring down the spirits. Yu's step is best known from the description in the fourth-century A.D. text Bao pu zhi 袍補子 by Ge Hong 葛洪, but knowledge of Yu bu during the Western Han period has been documented in one of the texts excavated from Tomb 9 at Mawangdui, the Recipes for 52 Ailments (Wushe bing jiang 五十二病方), translated by Donald J. Harper. Seven recipes include the Yu bu as a method for curing ailments in an exorcistic manner. Complementing this description of the dancer, jian is an attribute of a woman who acts as a go-between for a poet seeking a goddess in another work from the Chu ci, "On Encountering Sorrow (Li sao 離騷)," The poet orders "Lame Beauty (Jian Xiù 雛佚)" to help him locate Fu Fei 妇疥, guardian of the River Luo. Apparently, she was successful since the poet was able to meet the goddess, Jian Xiù's lameness, an atypical feature of a beauty, links her to Yu the Great and indicates her special ability. The dancing shamaness follows in the footsteps of Lame Beauty (Jian Xiù) and Yu in endeavoring to connect humans with the spirits. Rather than coming forth splendidly, as in the Hawkes translation of "The Great Unity, God of the Eastern Sky," the ling may be moving ritually.

Other dance movements with supernatural associations are also included in poems from the Chu ci. In "The Lord within the Clouds (Yunzhong jün 雲中君)," another poem from the "Nine Songs," the ling or shamaness is described as having an interlinked, coiled movement, lian guan 连環. The character guan and other characters with the same radical, chong 从, frequently describe the winding movement of dragons who pull celestial chariots or the dancing movements of water spirits. The interlinked lian pattern of motion is especially significant in light of a monographic text excavated in 1975 from a tomb at Shuihudi 畏虎地, Hubei, dated to ca. 217 B.C. Several prophylactic postures are described in the text; that is, shamanistic poses having an exorcistic function. One of them is the lian xing 连行, or interlinked motion. Donald Harper has translated the passage where the phrase appears: "What demons detest are namely reclining in a crouch, sitting like a winnowing basket, interlinked motion, and the leaning stand." If indeed many of these dances were used in a funerary context, postures that could draw down spirits might be combined with movements that demons would find repulsive.

In reference to the form of the jade plaque figures found in tombs, their standardized poses can be best understood as an attempt to capture...
the posture of the shamaness as described in
poetry of the Han and pre-Han periods. These
literary images of the dancers also seem to have
influenced Xu Shen, author of the Shuowen, as he
rationalized the etymology of the character 筒. L.
C. Hopkins concludes: "We may surmise as the
probable explanation of Xu's statement, that he
has read into his Seal figure his own recollection
of the costume and actions of some Shaman
cancer. The resonance of the pictograph for
筒, the etymological elucidation of the charac-
ter, and the rendering of the jade plaque figure
as a simplified form with exaggerated sleeves and
with a posture that can only be read as suggestive
of dance, lend a talismanic quality to the artifact.
The uniform representation of the figure from
site to site, despite the level of finish, and in some
instances the placement of the artifact near or on
the body of the deceased, reinforce its potent,
magical import. The dancer as invoker who com-
unicated with spirits was the vehicle through
which the soul could find safe passage to immor-
tality. The jade plaque figures found in Western
Han-period tombs may be reminders of the ritu-
ral dance performed for the deceased, and they
continued to offer protection and guidance for
the soul. In examples where the dancing girl is
part of a jade pectoral, the other components,
such as dragons, clouds, and cicadas, are all
familiar images in the journey to immortality
(figs. 6, 9, 15, 17, and 18).

Related attributes of this dancer who acts as
eccstatic medium may be cited from other works in
the Chu ci. In "Summons of the Soul (Zhao hun
鬼魂)," the soul is drawn from harm by various
enticements. In a banquet scene bells, drums,
and singing are heard. Beautiful women drink
the wine and grow flirtatious. The dance of
Zheng 燈 commences:

Bells clash in their swaying frames; the catalpa-wood
zither's strings are swept.
Their sleeves rise like crossed bamboo stems, then
slowly shimmer downwards.
Pipes and zithers rise in wild harmonies, the sounding
drums thunderously roll;
And the courts of the palace quake and tremble as they
throw themselves into the Whirling Chu.

In wine they attain the heights of pleasure and give
delight to the dear departed.
O soul, come back! Return to your old abode.

A similar depiction of the dancer/priestess is
found in the "Lord of the East (Dongjun 東君),"
part of the "Nine Songs:" See the priestesses (靈), how skilled and lovely,
Whirling and dipping like birds in flight
Unfolding the words in time to the dancing,
Pitch and beat all in perfect accord!
The spirits, descending, darken the sun.

The images are vivid, and the music reverberates
in the room. As the tempo quickens, the long
sleeves amplify the visual impact of the dancer's
gestures. The floating fabric transends the pull
of gravity and resembles bamboo arching effort-
lessly in the wind or birds gliding through the air.
The analogy to a flying bird that can easily ascend
to the heavens is also present in representations
such as the tile from Zhengzhou (fig. 20). The
curvilinear forms of the floating sleeves became
a regular feature and often suggest flight. In rhaps-
dodies composed during the Eastern Han dynas-
ty, long-sleeved dancers described in terms of
natural imagery become standard. Zhang Heng 張衡
(a.d. 78–139) was especially fond of captur-
ing their beauty and elegance with words. Al-
though the fu 詩 is a literary genre, it incorporates
themes and imagery of ritual. An excerpt from his
"Western Metropolis Rhapsody (Xijing fu
西京賦) translated by David Knechtges follows:

At first they advanced slowly, with figures so thin,
They seemed unable to support their gossamer silks.
Singing the "Pure Shang," they suddenly whirled;
Ever more charming and graceful, they arched their
backs.
All together, bodies relaxed, they quickened the tempo,
And returned just like a flock of startled cranes.
Their vermilion slippers danced between plates and
goblets,
And they waved their long, dangling sleeves.
With curvaceous, cultivated bearing,
Their lovely dresses fluttered like flowers in the wind.
Their eyes cast darting glances;
One look could overthrow a city.

Linking the arching movements of the dancers
with those of the cranes reiterates the motif of
flight, but this particular bird also has associa-
tions with immortality. In Explanations on the Spring
and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露),
Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–104 B.C.) cites
contemporary beliefs regarding the crane's lon-
gevity: "The reason why the crane lives for a long
time is that is does not have any breath of death." Like a bird, the dancer's movements are fluid and
elegant, but she is also alluring. She has the
power to enchant both the viewer and the deity.
The dancer in these texts is not merely a woman
but takes on the qualities of the goddess. This
relationship is made clear in “Sir Fantasy (Zixufu 子虚赋) ” by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 B.C.).

And thereupon the Zheng maidens and comely consorts appear,
Robed in thin silks and fine fabrics,
Trailing garments of grass cloth and white silk,
Wearing blends of delicate gauze,
Draped in misty gossamer.
Their pleats and folds, crisp and crinkled,
Ruffled and rumpled, creased and curled,
Twist and turn like gorges and valleys.
Long and trailing, full and flowing,
Lifted hems of perfect tailoring,
Flying aprons and dangling sashes,
Flap and flutter, swirl and sway,
Surge and billow, rustle and swish,
Grazing thoroughwort and basil below,
Brushing feathered canopies above,
Entwining with the luscious hure of halcyon plumes,
Tangling jade-studded streamers.

Vaguely visualized, dimly described,
Apparitions, it seems, of goddesses.

As is typical of the fu genre, Sima Xiangru evokes a vision of the dancer using an abundance of descriptive phrases with an incantatory affect. The woman emerges as if from the mist in a filmy gown with fabric floating as she moves. Sima Xiangru focuses on her garment, recreating the drapery as if it were an undulating, gente landscape punctuated by surging waters. Her thinly veiled sexuality is a reminder of the ancient role of the shamaness as the insurer of nature’s fertility, especially since she could invoke rain. If this cluster of concepts surrounding the literary image—the shamaness type, fertility, the power of the dance movements, and linkage with the spiritual world—is applicable to the jade plaques, they would have been especially appropriate in the tombs of women.

Jade Plaque Figures and The Jade Maiden

Finally, all but one of the excavated dancers, as well as all of the examples I have observed in museum collections, are carved of jade. Jade was often used to fashion ornaments worn by the aristocracy. But more importantly, in the funerary context its use is well documented in China since neolithic times in the form of bi disks and cong 筒 tubular prisms. Indeed, bi disks were still used during Han times, as witness Mancheng and several other sites where the jade dancers were excavated. The manufacture of complete suits of jade to house the body is yet another indication of its importance during the Han dynasty. Jade suits or scattered pieces of jade that were once suits have been found at several sites under consideration, such as Mancheng, Dabaotai, Xianggang, and Shiqiao. In addition, contemporary texts detail the use of jade in sacrifices. The Classic of Mountains and Waterways (Shan hai jing 山海经) notes numerous instances of these sacrifices, as well as locations where jade may be found in nature. For instance, in the central lands on Mt. Kui 魁 山, a cow, goat, and pig are sacrificed, and then the wu and zhu (invoker) dance together. Finally, a jade bi disk is offered. In the “Feng shan 封禅” chapter of the Shi ji 史记, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–90 B.C.) notes that jade and silk sacrifices were part of rituals performed at sacred mountains and rivers, and more specifically that Han Wudi offered jade in honor of the Great Unity at Yunyang 白阳 and also for the feng sacrifice at the foot of Tai shan 泰山. Shamans and invocators are often associated with the sacrifices mentioned in the Shi ji. During the Western Han period, jade was an appropriate material for sacrifice and for use in the tomb since it seemed to facilitate linkage with the spirits.

The attributes of jade may help to explain the appearance of “The Jade Maiden (Yu nu 五女)” in literature of this period. There is not enough evidence to suggest that the jade plaque figure represents the Jade Maiden, but both are indicative of Western Han concerns. Beyond the fact that both are female and are associated with the medium of jade, the roles of the Jade Maiden and the jade plaque figure may be related. One of the earliest texts where the Jade Maiden appears, “The Great Man Rhapsody (Da ren fu 大人赋)” composed for Han Wudi by Sima Xiangru (179–117 B.C.), places her in the heavens. Sima describes the fantastic journey of the emperor, who is led to the gates of heaven. The travelers “enter the palace of the Celestial Emperor, / And invite the goddess Jade Maiden to return in their chariots.” In the Chunqiu fanlu (second century B.C.), Dong Zhongshu mentions the Jade Maiden as the keeper of a drug of immortality (shiying 艳英), made from a fungus. Slightly later, Yang Xiong 杨雄 (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) also refers to the Jade Maiden in “The Sweet Springs Palace (Gan quan fu 甘泉赋).” Yang Xiong writes that the emperor performs rites to the gods, and “He recalls Queen Mother of the West, and joyfully salutes her longevity. / He rejects Jade Maiden, expels Consort
Fu. In this case the Jade Maiden is mentioned just after the Queen Mother of the West and is linked with Consort Fu. Consort Fu is the goddess Fu Fei who was found by Lame Beauty in Li sào, mentioned above. In the "Rhapsody on Looking for Immortals (Wang xian fu 宋仙賦)," by Huan Tan 時澤 (43 B.C.-A.D. 28), the author records a fu that was written on a wall of the palace built by Wudi at the foot of Mt. Hua 華 in the hope of gathering immortals. Huan begins the tale with the appearance of two famous immortals, Wang Ziqiao 王子喬 and Chisong zi 赤松子, whose movements are described as bending and stretching (dao yin 道引). These are not ordinary movements of advance but relate to qi 氣-preserving postures. These immortals are accompanied by the Jade Maiden. Wang Ziqiao and Chisong zi fly to Tai shan, where they "breathe in the juice of jade (yu yi 玉液) and "rinse their mouths with jade liquid (yu jiang 玉漿)." It is evident in these first encounters with the Jade Maiden that she is a secondary figure and that her role is rather vague, but at the same time she has definite associations with immortality either by her proximity to others such as the Queen Mother of the West or by her own possession of drugs capable of creating the state of deathlessness. Gradually, she emerged as a more distinct type. For instance, Zhang Heng mentions the Jade Maiden of Mt. Tai Hua in "The Rhapsody of Pondering the Mystery (Si xuan fu 思玄賦)." Tai Hua 太華 is located in the west and is one of the five sacred mountains. The author describes the fantastic journey during which he rides a whirlwind to a cavern and then embarks on a subterranean trip that leads him to Xi Wangmu 西王母. The Queen Mother of the West is the holder of the elixir of immortality and is attended by the Jade Maiden and Fu Fei. At this point, the Jade Maiden resides at one of the sacred Marchmounts, her companion is the goddess Fu Fei, and she serves Xi Wangmu.

The Jade Maiden in Post-Han Literature

During the Six Dynasties period, the Jade Maiden character becomes more prevalent in poetry and in Daoist texts. She is not a specific deity but rather is a composite figure with varying attributes, including those of a dancer, a shamaness, an immortal, and sometimes a goddess. In Bao pu zi, Ge Hong notes the Jade Maiden or Jade Maudens several times. For example in juan 4, "Gold and Cinnabar (Jin dan 金丹)," the merits of cinnabar elixirs are described. If one takes the Divine Cinnabar (Shen dan 神丹) for one hundred days, immortals (xian ren 仙人) and jade maidens (yu nu), "as well as the ghosts and gods of the streams and mountains, will come in the guise of human beings to serve you." Ge also mentions the Secret Instructions of the Jade Maiden scroll (Yu nu yin wei 玉女隱微) while discussing potent Daoist books in juan 19, "Looking Farther Afield (Xia lan 遠閱)." He states: "By its methods people can change into flying birds or stalking animals. Clouds are raised and rain brought for an area a hundred miles square by means of metal, wood, jade, or rock. . . . They fly high on the winds; pass in and out of barriers; exhale breath of seven colors. . . . The book does indeed teach a great art." The state brought about by following the instructions of the Jade Maiden in the text is clearly related to attributes of the females who have been the subject of this article. The "breath of seven colors" exhaled by the adept may be a reference to a rainbow that provides access to heaven as it arcs upward. Many Daoist texts note the Jade Maiden and her promise of immortality. For example, Max Kaltenmark discusses the therapeutic value of music and also the Jade Maiden as noted in the Tai ping jing 太平經 (A.D. second century or later): "Thus the note jue 角 delights the genies of the east and assures the good health of the liver. It evokes the arrival of Jade Maidens dressed in green, who bring excellent medical recipes."

The Jade Maiden also appears in poetry of the period. For instance, Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), in his "Cantos on the Pheuma Emerging (Qi chu chang 氣出唱)," describes a journey during which he goes to Tai shan and encounters Immortals and Jade Maidens who drink of a jade broth (yu jiang) and then present some to the poet. In this example, she is associated with another sacred Marchmount, Tai shan, but she still presents the jade broth elixir. In another work of the same title by Cao Cao, the poet made a journey to the West, where he saw Jade Maidens rising to dance to the music of wind and string instruments just like a shamaness of the Chu c. Finally, in the famous fu by Cao Zhi 曹植 (155–220), "The Goddess of the Luo (Luo shen fu 洛神賦)," the poet seeks the goddess Fu Fei, but she is related to the Jade Maiden and the shamaness. Her appearance is described in terms appropriate to any of the dancers from the Chu c. The poet pledges his jade girdle to her as a sign of his sincerity. He is tantalized by her elegant movements and compares her posture to that of a crane. Realizing that
they must part, “She makes a shield of her long sleeve, pausing in hesitation” and continues her dance.

Her movements have no constant pattern,
Now unsteady, now sedate;
Hard to predict are her starts and hesitations,
Now advancing, now turning back.
Her roving glance flashes fire;
A radiant warmth shines from her jade-like face.

... She makes me forget my hunger!

She has obviously captivated the poet to the point of ecstasy, but her uneven movements conjure up images of the shamaness retracing the paces of Yu. Jade Maidens continued to appear in poems of the Tang dynasty. Li Bo 李白 (701–62) met the Jade Maidens as he ascended Mt. Tai in “Wandering on Mount Tai, no. 1 (You Tai shan 遊太山)”.86

Jade maidens, four or five persons,
Gliding and whirling descend from the Nine Peripheries.
Suppressing smiles, they led me forward by immaculate hands,
And let fall to me a cup of fluid aurora (liu xia bei 流霞杯)!

As an embellished version of the ritual dancers depicted in the Chu ci, these maidens move in curvilinear patterns as they traverse the heavens, but rather than acting as a vehicle to immortality, they often present the elixir directly to the poet. The Jade Maiden of Western Han-period literature is a mere shade in comparison to these more robust females of Eastern Han and Six Dynasties literature. The attributes and role of the Jade Maiden cluster to create a well-rounded personage from which the more elusive Western Han plaque dancers may be approached.

Conclusions

The jade plaque figures fit within the religious milieu of the Western Han dynasty. During this period, the shamaness and also the fangshi 方士 who offered recipes to seekers of immortality were sought by many, including Emperor Wu, one of the longest reigning and most significant emperors of the Han dynasty. The emperor’s many and varied attempts to realize the advice of fangshi, often involving sacrifices at sacred mountains, was documented by Sima Qian in the “Feng shan” chapter of his Shi ji. The belief in mountains as conduits to eternity was made manifest in the boshanlu 博山爐, the numinous mountain censer, which like the jade plaque figure, was introduced during this period.87 Pectorals composed of jade pieces are found prior to the Han period, but the jade dancer has been excavated only from Han tombs, many having princely associations and several undoubtedly from the tombs of women.88 Similarly, boshanlu were found in some of the most luxurious tombs of the Western Han period, such as those of Liu Sheng and his consort at Mancheng. The boshanlu and the jade plaques were objects of status, but they also had meaning to those who included them in their tombs. The mountain functioned as an axis mundi—as the smoke rose from the censer, the fervent desires of the deceased were carried to heaven—and the jade figures recreated the same link. The attributes and postures of the shamaness, already codified in the words of the Chu ci, most likely served as the model to which artisans looked when they attempted to give visual expression to their jade dancers. Since the jade plaques are not mentioned in any Han text, it is difficult to prove definitively that the jade dancers are representations of either a shamaness or a Jade Maiden (Yu mi). At the very least, I believe these small plaques may be seen as potent talismans rather than merely beautiful ornaments. The selection of jade as the sculpting material must have been meaningful because of contemporary views regarding the capacity of jade to preserve the body and facilitate immortality. This aspect links the plaques to the Jade Maiden and her role as the bearer of an elixir that could bring immortality. The dancing posture of the jade figures relates them to the shamaness whose movements were endowed with power, and literary descriptions of the environment in which the dancer functioned reveal her as an invoker of spirits. A significant attribute of both artistic and literary images of the dancer is the long sleeves that floated as she moved. It was possible to bridge the terrestrial and the celestial as long as the music could be heard, and the dancer responded to its rhythms.
Notes

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2. Beijing Dabaotai Han mu (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), 71, fig. 69, no. 2, and pl. 74, no. 1 (height 5.5 cm).

3. The jade plaques found in the tomb of the King of Nanyue are illustrated in Jades from the Tomb of the King of Nanyue (Nanyue wang mu yuqi) (Guangzhou: The Museum of the Tomb of the King of Nanyue, 1991), pls. 141-42 (H. 4.8, part of Set B pectoral of the "Concubine of the Right" in the Eastern Annex Chamber); pl. 149 (H. 4.1, part of pectoral Set E of an unidentified concubine in the Eastern Annex Chamber); and pls. 231-32 (H. 3.5, found in the Western Side Chamber, the main storage area); hereafter Jades. The tomb as a whole is considered in Xi Han Nanyue wang mu 2 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991).

4. [Guangdong, Ji wu dian] Archaeological Finds from Han Tombs at Guangzhou and Hong Kong (Guangzhou: The Guangzhou Museum, 1983), 184-85, fig. A (H. 6.8); Mancheng Han mu fajue baogao (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1980), shang, fig. 200, no. 2, and xia, pl. 214 (H. 2.5); Beijing Dabaotai Han mu (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), 71, fig. 69, no. 2, and pl. 74, no. 1 (H. 5.5); Hu Jun, "Important Archaeological finds in China (1985-1986)," Orientations 8, 12 (December 1987), 48-53 (From Henan, Yongcheng 永城, H. 5.8); "Tongshan Xiaoguanshan Xi Han yadong mu," Wenwu 1973.4.21-35, six jade figures (H. 3.5, 3.4, and 4.8); Wang Kai and Li Yin, "Xuzhou Shi qiao Han mu qingli baogao," Wenwu 1984.11.22-40, two jades (M2.45, H. 3.8; and M2.9, H. 4.4); Zhou Zhangyuan, Xu Liangyu, and Wu Wei, "Yangzhou Xi Han 'Qie Mo Shu' muguo mu," Wenwu 1980.12.1-6, three figures (H. 5 and H. 3.2); Wang Mingfang (Shandong), "Laixian Dongjiazhuang Xi Han mu," Wenwu ziliao congkan 9 (1985): 185-87, and 196, pl. 11, no. 3; Ji Tao, "Shandongsheng pucha wenwu zhanlan jianjie," Wenwu 1959.11.29-33 (Jimo County, H. 4.2); and Cao Yuanqi and Wang Xueliang, "Shandong Wulian Zhangjiazhong gu Han mu," Wenwu 1987.9.76-83, seven figures (M3.24, H. 4.1; M1.25, H. 4.1; and M1.26, H. 4.3). Jade plaque figures have also been found outside a Han Chinese context in a Xiaogong burial. Sophia-Karin Psarras writes that the burial is dated by the presence of these jades and inscribed pottery; see "Redating Xiaogong Culture," Zhongguo gudai bei fang minzi kaogu wenhua (Huhehaote: Neimenggu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, 1992). Also see Tian Guangjin and Guo Suxin, "Xigouban Handai Xiaogong mudi," E'erdousishi qingtongqi (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1986), p. 384, fig. 6, nos. 4 and 6. Five figures were found at this site (M4.21.1, H. 5.8; and M4.21.4, H. 6).

5. The identity of the occupant of the tomb at Dabaotai is still contested; it is either Liu Jian 劉建 or Liu Dan 劉旦.

7. Han Weilong, Li Quanli, and Shi Lei, “Henan Huaiyang Beiguan yihao Han mu fajue jianbao,” Wenwu 1991.4.34–46, fig. 17, no. 1 (H. 4.9). This was the tomb of a feudal prince or appointed marquis. Scattered pieces of jade found in the tomb would once have formed the suit of jade shrouding the corpse. Also see “Hebei Dingxian 43 hao Han mu fajue jianbao,” Wenwu 1978.11.18–20, pl. 4, no. 2. Two dancers (H. 5) were in the central chamber of this tomb, probably that of Liu Chang 釣RB, a.d. 174. Jade and white stone pieces were once suits for the deceased male and female, respectively. A jade standing screen with images of Xi Wangmu attended by two females and also of Dong Wanggong was found in this tomb.


10. Archaeological Finds from Han Tombs at Guangzhou and Hong Kong, 184–85, fig. A.

11. Lawton, 135–36, figs. 78–79. In addition to the plaque dancing figures, the tomb of the King of Nanyue contained other jades comparable to those in the Freer collection, which were reportedly found at Jincun. For instance, a double-headed dragon pendant reconstructed as part of pectoral Set A (Jades, pl. 133) is stylistically related to a dragon pendant in the Freer collection that has been reconstructed with the pair of dancers (Lawton, pl. 77). In addition, a pair of tiger plaques in the Freer collection (32.43 and 32.44, Lawton, pl. 96), also reportedly unearthed at Jincun, may be compared with a plaque that is part of the pectoral of the King of Nanyue (Jades, pl. 52). The authors of the Jades text identify it as a rhinoceros. A related tiger plaque, identified as a rhinoceros, was also unearthed in the Luoyang area at Mengjia in 1982. See Luoyang chutu wenwu jicui—Ancient Treasures of Luoyang (Beijing: Morning Glory Publications, 1990), pl. 32. It is identified as a Warring States-period jade, which is also the traditional dating of the Jincun finds, yet the date of Jincun is far from cut-clear.

The Jincun site was not scientifically excavated, and the principal reports of objects unearthed at the site were published by individuals who were not present at the excavation. The situation of the unearthing and some objects reportedly from the site were published by William Charles White, Tombs of Old Lo-yang (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Limited, 1934). Sueji Umehara also published some of the objects reportedly from Jincun in Rakuyō Kinbun kōbo shui (Kyoto, 1937). But there seem to be many problems with the group of objects associated with Jincun. For instance, a jade plaque dancer published by Umehara (pl. 87, no. 11, turned sideways) now in the Grenville L. Winthrop Collection, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University (1943.50.334, H. 4.3), is very different in style from the pair of jade dancers published by White (pl. 310) now in the Freer. A critique of both publications was written by Bernard Karlgren, “Notes on a Kin-s’t’un Album,” Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 10 (1938): 65–81.

In contrast, the tomb of the King of Nanyue is safely dated. However, its holdings are eclectic: some objects reflect northern Han style, others relate to local southern style (for example, a bronze cylinder with handles, Xi Han Nanyue wengmu, xia, colorplate 25), and still others suggest international trade (a silver pyxis, Xi Han Nanyue wengmu, xia, colorplate 23, no. 1). For more on the pyxis see Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, “Workshops, Patronage and Princey Collections during the Han Period,” in Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Chinese Art History (Taipei, 1991), 422–23. It is therefore difficult to establish definitively where artifacts found in the tomb of the King of Nanyue were produced. A jade object could have been imported from the north or made by local southern artisans in a northern style, or perhaps archaistic taste played a role, as may be indicated by the tiger/rhinoceros jades. At the least, the excavation of the jade plaque dancers from the tomb of the King of Nanyue with distinct front and rear views and the similar figure excavated at Jiwuduan allow us to establish a relative date of at least the Western Han period for the Freer plaque dancers reportedly from Jincun, even though a clear-cut provenance is not indicated.

12. For detailed views of these figures see Xi Han Nanyue wengmu, shang, fig. 165, nos. 2 and 3, and xia, pl. 154, nos. 3 and 4.


16. Lawton, 132–33, fig. 77 (F30.27). Other twin figures, not specifically in dancing poses, are found in Salmony, Carved Jade, pl. 51, no. 5, formerly in the collection of C. T. Loo but missing since 1934;

17. *Jades*, 292, pl. 230 (H. 2.6).

18. *Jades*, pl. 52 (pectoral of the king from the Main Coffin Chamber); pls. 133 and 138 (pectorals Set A and Set B of the “Concubine of the Right,” according to the nearby seal, in the northwestern part of the Eastern Annex Chamber); pl. 143 (pectoral Set C found in association with the seal of the “Concubine of the Left” in the south-central part of the Eastern Annex Chamber); pl. 146 (pectoral Set D found near seal of the “Grand Concubine” near the doorway in the central part of the Eastern Annex Chamber); pl. 149 (pectoral Set E found near a gilt seal of an unidentified concubine in the north-central part of the Eastern Annex Chamber); pls. 150-51 (pectoral Sets F and G found close to Sets A and B); pl. 156 (pectoral RXI of the slave from the Western Annex Chamber); pl. 157 (pectoral RVII found near the left hip and thigh of slave in the Western Annex Chamber); pl. 165 (pectoral RXII found near a slave in the Front Chamber adjacent to a gilt bronze seal of “Officer of the Jingxiang (Imperial Household Eunuch),” see p. 278; and pl. 169 (pectoral RXIII found near a slave in the Eastern Side Chamber).


21. According to numismatic evidence, her death occurred between the years 140 and 70 B.C.

22. *Beijing Dabao tai Han mu*, 70-72.


29. Zou Houben, “Jiangsu Xuyi Dongyang Han mu,” *Kaogu* 1979.5.412–26, pls. 3 and 4. Also see Martin J. Powers, “A Late Western Han Tomb near Yangzhou and Related Problems,” *Oriental Art* 29, 2 (Summer 1983): 275-90. The story of Qin Shihuangdi searching the river for the *ding* is also represented at the site.


32. Changsha Mawangdui yihao Han mu (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1973), shang, fig. 38.


34. See Mary H. Fong, “The Origin of Chinese Pictorial Representation of the Human Figure,” *Artibus Asiae* 49, 1-2 (1988-89): 5-37, figs. 6a and 7. A fragment of a vessel in the collection of the Seattle Art Museum likewise suggests the ritualistic aspect of the dance. To either side of the sleeve dancers are motionless figures who do not wear the horned headdress of the dancer but bow their bodies in reverence toward the gesticulating dancers. See Michael Knight, *Early Chinese Metalwork in the Collection of the Seattle Art Museum* (Seattle Art Museum, 1989), pl. 13 (Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection 51.43). The vessel is dated to the late Spring and Autumn or early Warring States period.


37. Munakata, *Sacred Mountains*, 27, interprets this scene as a realm of wilderness existing at the lowest level of Mt. Kunlun. (It is a transitional zone between the earth and the heavens.) Related images
are used as decor on a textile from a mid to late Warring States–period Chu tomb at Mashan, Jiangling, Hubei. The textile was the outermost brocade wrapping around a female corpse. Motifs on the fabric include representations of a dragon, a phoenix, a qilin (麒麟), and a dancer with long sleeves. See *Jiangling Mashan yhao Chumu* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), fig. 36, no. 3 and pls. 14–17.


43. Chow Tse-tsung, “The Childbirth Myth,” 69. The brackets and parentheses are Chow’s.

44. For example, see “On Encountering Trouble (Li sao),” Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 74, 1. 235: “I gazed upon the jade tower’s glittering splendour (wang yao tai zhi yan jian xi 華耀臺之鏡寒兮) . . . . "Li sao" is attributed to Qu Yuan, but its exact date is unclear.

45. Bernard Karlgren, “Grammata Serica Recensa,” 58 (1430) and 80–81 (253g).


50. 魯不違 吕氏春秋, juan 20, refers to his walk as “bu bu xiang guo 步不相過.” Yu is described in similar terms in Zhuang zi, juan 5, chap. 29, as “pian ku 偏枯”; and in Lie zi, juan 7, “Yangzhu 善朱” as “yi ti pian ku 一部分偏枯” and “shenti pian ku 身體偏枯.”


52. Harper, “52 Ailments,” 98. Also see Recipe 276, where a shamaness mistress (wu fu 巫婦) is mentioned. Harper states, “the incantation calls upon the shamaness mistress to apprehend the child sprite,” p. 613. For a discussion of the shaman as physician see Harper, “52 Ailments,” 42 ff., or Chow, “The Childbirth Myth,” 70 ff.


54. For a discussion of the character xiu see Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 84. According to Wang Yi, second-century A.D. editor and annotator of the Chu ci, Fu Fei was the daughter of the serpent-tailed Fu Xi 伏羲. See Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 91. Fu Fei is mentioned in another work collected in the Chu ci, “Grieved by This Fate (Min ming 悔命),” in “Nine Laments (Jiu tan 九怨),” by Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 B.C.). See Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 296, I. 14, where she is called “Mi fei 美妃.”


of Hong Kong, 1982), 170. In "Far-off Journey (Yuan you 远遊)" from the Chu ci and dated to the second half of the second century B.C., the dance of water spirits is described as the undulating movement of a snake; Hawkes, Songs of the South, 191 and 198. Hawkes translates: "How their bodies coiled and writhed in undulating motion (xing liuqu er wei she 形蟠蛇而逶蛇)." Participating in this scene is the rainbow woman who "made circles round them." Her arching or "bowing" gesture imitates the form of a rainbow, which is seen as a device leading one to heaven. The rainbow becomes an attribute of celestial women of the Six Dynasties period. Schafer discusses the characters for dragon, rainbow, and bow as members of the same archaic word family in The Divine Women: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens in T'ang Literature (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 13 ff.


60. Hawkes, Songs of the South, 228–29. Hawkes attributes "Zhao hun" to Song Yu 宋玉 and suggests that it was composed for King Xiang at the Chu court between 277 and 248 B.C. The dances of Zheng and their "lascivious" nature are discussed by Wolfram Eberhard, The Local Cultures of South and East China (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 36.

61. Hawkes, Songs of the South, 113.


They are like
White cranes gliding by;
A cocoon unwinding its threads.
Their long sleeves, twirling and twisting, fill the hall;
Gauze-stockinged feet, taking mincing steps, move with slow and easy gait.
They hover about long and continuously as if stopped in mid-air;
Dazed, one thinks they are about to fall, but they raise themselves up again.
Bounding lightly, they step back,
And make whirling pirouettes.

Also see the "Dancers of Huai-nan," trans. Arthur Waley in Chinese Poems (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1976), 70–71. Their long sleeves are mentioned in the "Dance Fu (Wu fu)" by Fu Yi 傅毅 (fl. A.D. 70) (see Wen xuan, juan 17), and also in the "Song of the Goddess (Shen nu 神女赋)," attributed to Song Yu (see E. Erkes, "Shen-nü-fu The Song of the Goddess," T'oung Pao 25, 5 (1928): 392.

68. Chunqiu fanlu, jian 16, cited in Catherine Despeux, "Gymnastics: The Ancient Tradition," in Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques, 239. Despeux also notes the "Crane Dance Rhapsody (Wu he fu 舞鶴賦)" by Bao Zhao 鳥照 (ca. 412–66) in Wen xuan, juan 14. Despeux has translated Bao's description of the history of the text, Scripture on the Observation of Cranes (Xiangje jing), given to the immortal, Wang Ziqiao: "Later the art of becoming immortal by means of the crane dance as described in the text was put to good use by Cuiwenzi who hid the text in a grotto on Mount Song. Here the eight Venerables, visitors to the count of Liu An, Prince of Huainan found it, when they were searching for herbs. It was through them that the book became finally known to the world." Also see Edward H. Schafer, "The Cranes of Mao Shan," Mêanges chinois et bouddhiques 21 (1983): 372.

64. Knechtges, Wen xuan, 2:65. Knechtges translates Zi xu fu as "Sir Vacuous." Also see "Zhao hun" from the Chu ci, Hawkes, Songs of the South, 228–29, for similar senuous imagery.

65. The curves and countercurves of her drapery, as well as the bending and stretching movements of the shamaness in general, seem related to fourth-century A.D. Shangqing scriptures regarding visualization of the curved structures of the heavens, talismans, and human internal organs. See Robinet, "Visualization and Ecstatic Flight," 184 ff. I believe Western Han motifs such as the clouds on the dark ground coffin from Tomb 1 at Mawangdui (fig. 22) must also depend on the concepts behind circuitus patterns of movement.


67. For instance, in a poem from the Chu ci entitled "Crossing the River (She jiang 沙江)" from the "Nine Pieces (Jiu zhang 九章)," dated by Hawkes to ca. second century B.C., the narrator mentions the "precious jade at my girdle" just before he mounts a chariot with a team of azure dragons to ride with Chong Hua 重華, better known as the sage-king Shun 禹. See Hawkes, Songs of the South, 160 and 184. In the "Song of the Goddess (Shen nu fu)," attributed to Song Yu, the goddess "shook the
girdle-ornaments, made her jade she-phenix resound" (Erkes, trans., "Shen-nu-fu: The Song of the Goddess," 398). Jade ornaments are dropped into rivers as symbols of promises made. Suzanne Cahill notes in her analysis of poems from the Cantos of the Tang and Five Dynasties that the belt ornaments worn by the goddess are "pledge gifts signifying an agreement to make a divine marriage. Removing belt pendants implies disobeying before making love. When she undresses, she gives them to her human lover, for whom they become potent talismans." See Cahill, "Sex and the Supernatural in Medieval China," 201.

68. See nn. 3 and 4 above.


70. Watson, Records of the Grand Historian of China, 2:24-25, 28, 33, 53, and 58 (Shi ji, juan 28, "Feng shan shu").

71. Watson, Records of the Grand Historian of China, 2:334 (Shi ji, juan 117, the Biography of Sima Xiangru). Similarly, in "Sorrow for the Truth Betrayed (Xi shi 陰陽)," from the Chu ci, the poet carries Jade Maidens at the back of his chariot as he travels in the heavens. The Green Dragon is on the left, and the White Tiger is on the right. See Hawkes, Songs of the South, 240, ll. 10-16. Hawkes dates this work to the second half of the second century B.C.

72. Dong Zhongshu, Chunqiu fanlu, juan 17, chap. 78.

73. Knechtges, Wen xuan, 2:33 and 35, ll. 159-60. Knechtges interprets the Jade Maiden and Consort Fu as concubines of the emperor.

74. Timoteus Pokora, Hsin-lun, 232.

75. Daojīn are Daoist gymnastics that have their earliest representation in the silk painting excavated from tomb 3 at Mawangdui, the Daojìnyù 崗引圖. See Despeux, "Gymnastics," 387-40, and fig. 1. Despeux states: "All in all, one can most clearly trace daojīn back to ancient techniques of ecstasy—to shamanism," p. 237.

76. Timoteus Pokora, Hsin-lun, 232.


78. A sleeve dancer in the company of Xi Wangmu is represented on the branch of a bronze money tree unearthed from Guanghan County; see Lucy Lim et al., Stories from China's Past: Han Dynasty Pictorial Tomb Reliefs and Archaeological Objects from Sichuan Province, People's Republic of China (San Francisco: Chinese Culture Center, 1987), 160, pl. 58 (detail). Martin J. Powers considers a relief from Tongshan, Miaoshan, to be a representation of the court of the Queen of Immortals. A nine-tailed fox, a sun crow, musicians, officials, supplicants, and a sleeve dancer are present. See Art and Political Expression in Early China (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), fig. 35.

79. Ware, trans., Alchemy, Medicine and Religion, 77. In juan 11, "The Genie's Pharmacopoeia (Xian yao 仙藥)," Ren Zijì 任季子 ate truffles for eighteen years. Thereafter immortals and Jade Maidens consorted with him, and "he could make himself invisible or visible." Ware, trans., Alchemy, Medicine and Religion, 197.

80. Ware, trans., Alchemy, Medicine and Religion, 316-17.

81. See n. 56 above for citations regarding the Rainbow Woman.

82. Max Kaltenmark, "The Ideology of the T'ai-p'ing ching," in Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 44. Kaltenmark cites Wang Ming, Tai p'ing jing heijiao (Beijing, 1960), 113:386 ff; cf. 631 ff. Also see James R. Ware, "The Wei Shu and Sui Shu on Taoism," Journal of the American Oriental Society 55 (1933): 228 and 231, in which the Jade Maiden and other immortals gather on a mountain top. She also teaches recipes for breath-control and callisthenics. In "Secret Instructions for Ascending to Realization (Dengzhen yin jue 登真隠訣)" from the Daosang (Harvard-
Twirling their long sleeves, they dance again and again.

Yenching, #421, 11:8418b). Jade Maidens transfer messages to the Jade Emperor. And in "Technique of the Mystic Realized One (Xuan zhen fa 天真法)," from the "Secret Teachings from the Canon of the Mystic Realized One in the Luminous Hall of Highest Clarity (Shangqing mingtang yuan zhen jing jue 上清明堂元真経)", in the Dao zang (Harvard-Yenching, #424), the Jade Woman exhales a pheuma that "gushes into the adept's mouth." See translation and discussion by Edward Schafer, "The Jade Woman of Greatest Mystery," History of Religions 17, 3 and 4 (February-May 1978): 387-98, esp. 393. For more examples see Edward H. Schafer, Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 132-35.


84. Von den Steinen, "Poems of Ts'ao Ts'ao," 171.


88. Guo Baojun, Shanbiaozhen yu Liulige, fig. 118, no. 1.
EARLY TANG IMPERIAL PATRONAGE AT LONGMEN

BY AMY McNAIR

The patronage of emperors, empresses, imperial family members, and intimates of the throne accounts for a substantial proportion of the largest rock-cut shrines at Longmen 龙门, the Buddhist cave site in Henan Province (fig. 1). Virtually all of the large-scale sculpture there can be attributed to imperial sponsors of the Northern Wei (386–535) and Tang (618–907) dynasties, thanks in part to the hundreds of dedicatory inscriptions engraved there. The evolution of patronage at Longmen was similar to what took place at other Buddhist cave sites in northern China, beginning during the Northern Wei. At Yungang 云冈 (Shanxi), Gongxian 濮縣 (Henan), and Maijishan 摩崖山 (Gansu), for example, the initial large-scale excavations were made under imperial sponsorship, in cooperation with high-ranking clerics of the metropolitan Buddhist establishment. Smaller niche figures with dedicatory inscriptions were then added to the caves by government officials, both local and metropolitan, and by local Buddhist monks and nuns, religious societies of laypersons, and individuals seeking religious merit. What sets Longmen apart is the magnitude of imperial sponsorship and the volume of inscriptions. Longmen may have been the focus of so much imperial patronage largely because of its proximity to Luoyang, which served as a capital city during the Northern Wei and the Tang.

Northern Wei imperial patronage at Longmen has already been studied by scholars in Japan and the West. Art-historical and archaeological analysis of the complete range of sculpture at Longmen, from the Northern Wei through the Tang, has been carried out by scholars in mainland China in the last decade. Yet the question of patronage during the Tang dynasty, when over half the sculpture at Longmen came into being, has received rather less attention. This essay will offer a review of recent scholarship on the Tang dynasty sculpture at Longmen and my own theory concerning imperial patronage under the reign of Emperor Taizong (r. 626–49) and the Yonghui and Xianqing eras (650–61) of Emperor Gaozong (r. 649–83). I will argue that the northern group of caves at Longmen (the Qianxisi 清熙寺, the Binyang trio, and the Jingshanshi 锦山寺) constitute a discrete unit, not only in terms of their location, plan, and iconography but also in terms of their patronage. My argument will review the stylistic and iconographic relationships among the sculptures in the northern group of caves, in light of the contents of the relevant inscriptions, and compare them to other sculpture sponsored by the children of Emperor Taizong, in order to identify them as the patrons of the northern group. Further, I will try to show that the children of Emperor Taizong consciously exploited art-historical style in their projects at Longmen to claim the authority of the past for their politically motivated demonstrations of filial piety.

History of Patronage at Longmen from Northern Wei through Tang

The earliest dated inscriptions at Longmen are found on the highest of the three tiers of statury niches on the walls of the Guyang 古阳 cave. The earliest of these is dated to 495, just a year after the Northern Wei capital moved to Luoyang. Longmen is situated twelve kilometers south of Luoyang, and the history of patronage at Longmen is closely connected to the history of the imperial presence in Luoyang. The inscription of 495 accompanies a Maitreya bodhisattva niche figure dedicated by the widow of Qiumuling Liang 丘穆陵亮, a high-ranking retainer to Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–500) of the Northern Wei, for the spiritual salvation of her late son. In another important early inscription in the Guyang cave, the Duke of Shiping 始平公, inscription of 498, a Buddhist monk dedicated a Śākyamuni Buddha figure for the salvation of his late father, a member of the Northern Wei imperial clan. The presence in the Guyang cave of several inscriptions dedicated by members or retainers of the Northern Wei imperial clan strongly suggests that the carving of the principal figures, a 6.2-meter seated Śākyamuni Buddha flanked by two 3.7-meter standing bodhisattvas, was imperially sponsored. According to Alexander Soper's widely accepted argument, the Binyang Central 古阳中 and Binyang North 古阳北 caves were sponsored by the Northern Wei Emperor Xuanwu (r. 500–516). The Wei shu 魏書 states that in the
Fig. 1. Plan of Longmen. After Gong Dazhong, *Longmen shiku yishu*, frontispiece.
Jingming era (500-503), Emperor Xuanwu ordered the carving of two shrines at Longmen on behalf of his late parents, Emperor Xiaowen and the Dowager Empress Wenzhao, to be modeled on the rock-cut caves at Yungang. It is generally believed that the Binyang Central cave was dedicated to Emperor Xiaowen. The main assembly on the back wall is an 8.42-meter seated Śākyamuni Buddha flanked by standing disciples and bodhisattvas, with a standing Buddha and bodhisattva triad on both side walls. The Binyang Central cave was finished during the Northern Wei, in the reign of Emperor Xiaoming (r. 516–28). The Binyang North cave, left unfinished at the end of Northern Wei, is supposed to have been dedicated to the Dowager Empress. The Binyang South cave, also left unfinished, was begun during the Yuanping period (508–12) by the eunuch governor of Luoyang, Liu Teng, in honor of Emperor Xuanwu.

As these examples illustrate, much of the statuary at Longmen, no matter what the class or gender of the donor, is dedicated to deceased parents or to symbolic parent figures like the emperor. Expression of filial piety serves as a motive for the dedication of Buddhist sculpture at Longmen from the very beginning. This motive, however, is by no means exclusive to the projects at Longmen. Dedications to parents, usually deceased, are encountered with considerable frequency in the inscriptions at Gongxian, for example. Some of the earliest extant free-standing sculptures also demonstrate this sentiment; for instance, a seated Maitreya dated to 442 is dedicated to the donor’s late mother. The expression of filial piety is so unrelenting in Chinese Buddhist art that at times Buddhism seems merely its vehicle.

Several medium- and small-sized caves were also excavated during the Northern Wei, including the Cixiangyao, Lianhua, Shiniuxi, Shiwan, Putai, Zhao Keshi, Weizi, Yaofang, Huoshao, and Shikushi caves. The walls of these caves are covered with niche figures and inscriptions dating from the Northern Wei through the Tang. The inscriptions do not indicate imperial sponsorship. An inscription of 520 in the Cixiangyu, for example, states that the Buddhist nun Gi-xiang and Huizheng financed the carving of the shrine. The principal assemblies of these Northern Wei caves are predominantly a Śākyamuni Buddha figure flanked by the disciples Kāśyapa and Ānanda, bodhisattvas, and guardians. Niche figures include the seated Śākyamuni, cross-ankled Maitreya, the Seven Buddhas, Prabhūtaratna, Prabhūtaratna seated with Śākyamuni, the fifty-three Buddhas, Dīpankara, and Avalokiteśvara.

Following the murder of Emperor Xiaoming in 528, the Northern Wei throne had four different occupants in just seven years, until 535, when the state was split into the Eastern and Western Wei. Patronage at Longmen during this period was probably limited to the addition of niches to existing caves. Inscriptions dated to the Eastern and Western Wei are located in the Wang Xiang cave (538), the Tangzi cave (541), and the Lu cave (539). These three caves may have been excavated during the Eastern and Western Wei, but since the donors cited in these inscriptions were local monks and laypersons without titles of office or nobility, it is more likely the caves were originally sponsored by wealthier patrons during the Northern Wei.

Nearly two dozen niche figures with inscriptions dated in the Northern Qi dynasty (550–78) are scattered among the Lianhua, Danyang, Lu, Weizi, Putai, Guyang, and Yaofang caves. Most of these were donated by monks and local religious societies. Over one hundred inscriptions dated to the Northern Qi are also engraved on the walls of the Yaofang cave—hence its name, medicinal Receipt Cave.” The presence of these inscriptions and the ambiguous stylistic qualities of the large-scale figures on the back wall of the Yaofang cave (a 3.27-meter seated Buddha and pairs of standing disciples, bodhisattvas, guardians, and lions) have prompted some scholars to suggest they are works of the Northern Qi. No dated inscriptions from the Northern Zhou dynasty (557–81) have been found at Longmen, due perhaps to Emperor Wu’s suppression of Buddhism and Taoism.

Patronage of Buddhist rock-cut shrines under the strongly Buddhist Sui dynasty (581–618) was concentrated at sites in modern Shandong Province, such as Longdong, Yunmengshan, Yuhuashan, and Tuoshan. Longmen has only three Sui-dated niche images, with inscriptions of 595 and 616, all of which are in or around the Binyang South cave. One donor was a low-ranking official, one a widow, and one a filial son. The large-scale pentad assembly (9.5-meter seated Amitābha Buddha and standing
pairs of disciples and bodhisattvas) in the Binyang South cave has been attributed to the Sui by various scholars. The main images in the Yanshansi caves have also been attributed to the Sui.

No sculpture dated to the reign of Emperor Gaozu of the Tang dynasty (r. 618–26) has yet been discovered at Longmen, although the emperor's opposition to Buddhism may not be the explanation, since the Qianfotang 寺佛堂 at Xuanwushan 焚山 (Hebei) was carved in 623. During the reign of Emperor Taizong (r. 626–49) and the Yonghui 永徽 and Xianqing 順慶 eras of Emperor Gaozong's reign (650–61), hundreds of small dated niche images were carved at Longmen. The Laolong 老龍 cave may have been excavated in early Tang, since its earliest inscription is dated to 639. The walls of the Laolong cave have been left partly natural, and the cave is filled with niches but no large-scale figures. The increase in pendant-legged Maitreya Buddha and standing Avalokiteśvara figures and the decrease in Śākyamuni Buddha and cross-ankled Maitreya bodhisattva figures in these small niche images reflect the growing popularity of Pure Land doctrine during the early Tang period. In the Qianxisi, Binyang South, Binyang North, and Jingshansi shrines, the main seated Buddha is an Amitābha figure, and the attendant bodhisattvas are identifiable as Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, further revealing the influence of Pure Land doctrine. These four caves will be discussed in greater detail below.

The most prodigious imperial patron at Longmen was Empress Wu 武后 (ca. 627–705). For more than forty years after her accession in 655, Longmen was the site of a succession of projects sponsored by the empress, by her family members, and dedicated to her by her religious and palace officials. As early as 662, Empress Wu commissioned the creation of the colossal array of figures that dominates the site of Longmen: a 17-meter seated Vairocana Buddha figure, with attendant disciples, bodhisattvas, loka-pālas, and guardians. This cave, completed in 676, is known as the Fengxiansi 奉獻寺, from the name of the wooden architecture temple that was built to the south. Other large caves near the Fengxiansi, such as the Huijian 惠簡 and Wanfo 萬佛 caves, were dedicated to the royal family by their sponsors. The Huijian cave was carved in 673, sponsored by Abbot Huijian of the Fahai 法海 temple in Chang'an. Abbot Huijian was one of the two clerics in charge of the creation of the Fengxiansi. The Wanfo cave, which is dated to 680, was sponsored by two women: Yao Shenbiao 姚神表, a director in the palace women's bureaucracy, and Zhiyun 智運, a Buddhist nun. Empress Wu also commissioned several caves on the eastern cliffs, across the river, such as the Dawanufu 大萬佛 and Kanjingsi 延慶寺, which contain imagery of the Tantric and Chan sects. Left unfinished at her death was the Moya sanfo 摩崖三佛, a long shallow niche containing three large-scale seated Maitreya figures. Once the empress had effectively reworked Longmen after her own design, large-scale excavation came to an end at Longmen, with only a scattering of sculptures and inscriptions added during the remaining two hundred years of the Tang.

The Northern Cave Group at Longmen

From north to south, this group consists of the Qianxisi, Binyang North, Binyang Central, Binyang South, and Jingshansi caves (fig. 2). With the exception of the Binyang Central cave, which was completed during the Northern Wei, these caves have in common a round-cornered squarish plan, arched vault with lotus-blossom carving, and large- or medium-scale figural assemblies involving a seated Amitābha Buddha against the back wall, flanked by disciples, bodhisattvas, and loka-pālas. I will argue that they also share the sponsorship of a member of the imperial family during the early Tang.

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**Fig. 2. Plans of northern cave group at Longmen. After Mizuno and Nagahiro,**

*Ryūmon sekkyū no kenkyū, vol. 1.*
The Qianxisi contains no dated inscriptions, and the surface of the walls appears to be unfinished. Against the back wall is a 7.38-meter seated Amitābha Buddha figure, and ranged around the curving side walls are opposed pairs of 7.38-meter disciple and bodhisattva figures and 5.47-meter lokapālas. The early twentieth-century Japanese investigators of Longmen dated the Qianxisi to 641 because they believed the Qianxisi was described in an inscription called the Yique Buddha Niche Stele 伊闍佛龛之碑, which is dated to 641. The inscription was sponsored by Li Tai 李泰 (617–45), a son of Emperor Taizong, to dedicate an unspecified sculptural project on behalf of his deceased mother, Empress Wende 文德皇后 (d. 636). The inscription was engraved, however, on a simulated stele on the face of the cliff right between the Binyang Central and Binyang South caves, nearly thirty meters away from the Qianxisi. Logically, the inscription should describe the Binyang caves, but Tadashi Sekino’s original opinion was later seconded by Mizuno and Nagahiro, Jin Weinuo, Wen Tingkuan, and other Chinese scholars in the 1950s.

Those who have ruled out any relationship between the Yique Buddha Niche Stele and the Qianxisi, such as Wang Qufei and Gong Dazhong, have dated the Qianxisi to the 650s. Zhang Ruoyu has argued that it was carved in the 670s. Wang Qufei, in fact, would advance the entire traditional chronology of Longmen, arguing on the basis of stylistic analysis rather than inscriptive evidence:

Early Tang sculpture through the Zhenguan 賽觀 era [627–50] preserves the style of the late Northern Dynasties. What we think of as Tang style only really began in the Xianqin era [656–61] and the mature Tang style was realized from the Yufeng 余風 era through the reign of Empress Wu Zetian [676–705]. This is a new understanding, which is in line with the recently excavated pottery figures from Xi’an. With this understanding, we suspect that the Yaofang cave (originally considered Northern Qi or Sui) could have a date as late as early Tang, while the Qianxisi (originally considered Zhenguan-era) could be from the early period of Emperor Gaozong.

The Binyang North cave also contains no dated inscriptions, although a number of statuary niches were added to the side walls. The cave itself was probably excavated and left unfinished during the Northern Wei, but it is generally believed that the principal sculptures were completed under the Tang. The layout of figures is similar to the Qianxisi, with the 9.6-meter seated Amitābha Buddha figure against the back wall, flanked by 6.77-meter disciple and bodhisattva figures. The arched vault and the faintly etched lotus-flower ceiling are the same as in the Qianxisi, and the half-finished appearance of the walls is similar. Probably based on this correspondence, Mizuno and Nagahiro dated the Binyang North cave to 641. Chinese scholars have dated it variously to 648, ca. 649, or after 650.

Some two dozen statuary niches with dated dedicatory inscriptions were added to the walls of the Binyang Central cave between 640 and 661. Most of these donors were Buddhist laywomen and men, but this cave also contains an undated inscription by the Huainan Princess 淮南公主, a sister of Emperor Taizong. The center of the ceiling is carved with a large lotus blossom, surrounded by celestial worshippers and deva-musicians. The ceiling of the Binyang South cave is decorated in the same manner and may have been carved during the Northern Wei.

The main assembly of figures on the back wall of the Binyang South cave also echoes that of the Binyang Central cave, with a 9.5-meter seated Buddha flanked by standing pairs of disciples, bodhisattvas, and lions. The difference iconographically is that the Binyang South Buddha is Amitābha, not Śākyamuni, and the two bodhisattvas represent Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta specifically. The side walls of the Binyang South cave do not display large-scale standing Buddha triads but are honeycombed with niche figures.

The areas in and around the Binyang South cave contain several inscriptions indicating the sponsorship of statuary by the family and retainers of Emperor Taizong and Empress Wende. The most prominent of these is the Yique Buddha Niche Stele inscription, engraved on a simulated stele between the Binyang South and Binyang Central caves. It was inscribed at the behest of Li Tai, prince of Wei, in 641. Li Tai was one of the three sons of Emperor Taizong and Empress Wende, and the inscription dedicates his sculptural project to his late mother. The author and the calligrapher of the inscription were Cen Wenben 岑文本 (595–645) and Chu Suiliang 趨遂良 (596–658), both high-ranking ministers to Emperor Taizong.

Inside the Binyang South cave are several statuary niche inscriptions also dated to 641. Two were dedicated by the Yuzhong Princess 瑤章公主, a daughter of Emperor Taizong, and one each by
Emperor Taizong’s official, Cen Wenben, and the Prince of Wei’s official, a certain Director Lu. The cave also contains a 2.7-meter guardian figure with an inscription dated to 660, dedicated by Emperor Taizong’s son-in-law, Liu Xuanyi, the husband of the Nanping Princess, and also inscribed by Wang Xuanzong, the husband of Emperor Taizong’s celebrated envoy to India.24

The Jingshansi, though much smaller than the other four caves in the northern group, shares the same type of organization and sponsorship. The main seated Buddha figure against the back wall is an Amitābha image. Beside the Buddha are a small pair of standing bodhisattvas, and on the sides are standing disciple, worshipper, bodhisattva, and lokapala figures. Unhappily, the heads of the Amitābha and the bodhisattva figures have been ruined by cement repairs. Inscribed between these figures are bas-relief branches of a lotus plant, with a small bodhisattva figure sitting or standing on each blossom. The arched vault is carved with a lotus flower surrounded by celestial worshippers.

Outside the cave entrance, on the northern side, is engraved the undated “Eulogy with Preface for the Stone Images in the Jingshansi 僧寺石像銘并序,” written by the official Li Xiaolun 李孝侖. The contents of the inscription make clear that the sponsor of the statuary in the Jingshansi, was Lady Wei, the mother of the Prince of Ji, a member of the Wei family. Lady Wei was a consort of Emperor Taizong. Her son Li Shen 李慎 (d. 687) was enfeoffed as Prince of Ji in 636, so the Jingshansi statues probably do not date from before 636. Another inscription, dated to 658, in the Laolong cave, mentions the Jingshansi by name, so we may accept that date as a terminus ad quern.25 Gong Dazhong has a theory that Lady Wei may have commissioned the Jingshansi for her daughter-in-law. The text of a tomb epitaph for Lady Lu 陸氏, the consort of Li Shen, notes that Lady Wei was very distressed when she heard of the death of her daughter-in-law in 665.26 However, Lady Lu is not mentioned in Li Xiaolun’s inscription. A smaller shrine just to the north of the Jingshansi, called the Han Shi 韓氏 cave after its sponsor Lady Han, contains a seated Amitābha figure that is extremely close in style to the Jingshansi Amitābha, and it is dated by inscription to 661.27

To sum up, the northern group of caves constitute a discrete unit at Longmen in terms of their location, plan, and iconography. In terms of patronage, the Binyang Central cave was probably sponsored by Emperor Xuanwu of the Northern Wei, and the Jingshansi by Emperor Taizong’s consort, Lady Wei, before 658. To speculate on the patronage of the Binyang South, Binyang North, and Qianxisi caves, I will review the stylistic and iconographic relationships among the individual caves of the northern group in light of the contents of the relevant inscriptions, the sculpture sponsored by the children of Emperor Taizong at Shentongsi 神通寺 (Shandong), and the use of Buddhist building projects as demonstrations of filial piety in the struggle for the nomination to become Emperor Taizong’s heir apparent.

The Date and Patron of the Binyang South Cave

The key to the date and the patron of the large-scale figures in the Binyang South cave is found in the Yique Buddha Niche Stele inscription. As noted above, the text was composed by Cen Wenben, written out by Chu Suiliang, and engraved into an existing Northern Wei simulated stele on the cliff face in 641.28 The text is quite long and consists of four sections. The first section extols the Buddhist dharma; the second praises Empress Wende, the late principal consort of Emperor Taizong; the third narrates the circumstances of the carving of the statuary in the same year, while glorifying the filial piety of Li Tai; and the fourth is the eulogy.29

Following is the section of the text that describes the creation of the statuary:

The prince then emptied his heart to exercise his love of charity,
and opened his treasury to distribute tortoise shell and cowries.

On the celestial surface of the distant sheer wall, wonderful niches are ranged like stars;
Beyond the moon of the carved [blank] stone, the venerable visage rises like the full moon.

What remains of the old has gained in solemnity;
what is new has reached the extreme of ingenuity.

Light flows from his urna, covering us with his lotus wisdom;
Sunshine spreads from his purple hair, dividing his companions in the temple.

Thus it is that looking up at this precious likeness at close range, it is as majestic as the golden body [of Buddha]; and seeing its devo-light from a far distance, it is as clear as that of Flowing Water [Sākyamuni].

It puts to shame the poor quality of jade engraving, and causes disdain for the inadequate skill of sandalwood carving.

Brighter than the sun as it crosses the resplendent length of the sky, Loftier than the golden mountain as it bestrides the shining breadth of the valley.

Gijjhas are there to be seen, Nāgas can be envisaged.

Precious flowers send down good fortune, covering the colors of the five clouds, Heavenly musicians play and sing, contending with the sounds of the myriad pipes.

According to Zhang Ruoyu, this description matches the sculptures in the Binyang South and Central caves but not those in the Qianxisi, as Sekino, Mizuno, and Nagahiro had believed. The phrase “wonderful niches ranged like stars” refers to the niches carved in the Binyang South cave in 641 by Li Tai’s sister, the Yuzhang Princess, and other elites of Emperor Taizong’s era; it may include in its grandiose sweep the niches that were already there, engraved during the Sui. By contrast, the Qianxisi has no niches.

The phrases “precious flowers send down good fortune” and “heavenly musicians play and sing” refer to the large lotus flowers surrounded by celestial worshippers and devo-musician figures that are carved in the ceilings of the Binyang South and Central caves. “Gijjhas” and “nāgas” indicate the supernatural vultures and dragons entwined with the ten spirit king figures carved in relief near the entrances to both the Binyang South and Central caves. The Qianxisi has neither celestial worshippers and devo-musicians on the ceiling nor vulture and dragon images on the walls.

Clearly, Li Tai’s inscription refers to the Binyang South and Central caves, but does it prove he was the patron of the large-scale assembly in the Binyang South cave? As Gong Dazhong has pointed out, the crucial question is: What exactly is meant by “old” and “new” in the phrase “what remains of the old has gained in solemnity; what is new has reached the extreme of ingenuity”? According to Gong Dazhong, the “old” must refer to the Northern Wei Binyang Central cave, whose statuary had probably lost its paint and gilt over the years. Simply repainting and regilding the images could have effected a tremendous change in appearance. But what of the “new”? Was a year enough time for the carving of the five 9-meter figures in the Binyang South cave, even if they were merely finished from roughed-out blocks abandoned since the Northern Wei? Or does the bombast in the inscription come down to nothing more than a few niches added to the walls, plus a fresh coat of paint on existing Sui-dynasty principal figures?

In the imperial Li family, sponsorship of Buddhist building projects had as much to do with faith in Buddhism as with public demonstrations of filial piety. Emperor Taizong founded a Buddhist monastery, the Hongfusi 弘福寺 in Chang’an, in memory of his mother, despite his political favoring of Taoism over Buddhism. Similarly, the children of Emperor Taizong and Empress Wende sponsored a number of Buddhist monuments to their memory, though their father was not a believer in Buddhism. In addition to the sculpture at Longmen sponsored by Li Tai, the Yuzhang Princess, and Imperial Son-in-law Liu Xuanyi, these include the figures sponsored by the Nanping Princess, Liu Xuanyi, and Li Fu at Shentongsi, the Daciensi 大慈恩寺 monastery in Chang’an, sponsored by Li Zhi 李治 (628-83), and a large niche sponsored by Li Shen 李 Shen at Xuanwushan.

In 641, when the Yique Buddha Niche Stele inscription was engraved, Li Tai was engaged in a struggle with his brother Li Chengqian 李承乾 (618-52) for the position of heir apparent. Li Chengqian had been designated heir evident in 626, but in the 630s he began to manifest disturbing behavior, affecting Turkish manners and dress and privately disparaging his father. Li Tai was encouraged by certain favors from the emperor to believe he could replace his brother, and he began to lobby openly to that end. One aspect of his campaign was to honor the memory of Empress Wende with the completion of the Binyang South cave and the refurbishment of the Binyang Central cave. Emperor Taizong went on a hunting expedition to Yique late in 641. No doubt he was invited by his son to visit what was now a matched pair of royal caves.
The bodhisattva figures in the Binyang South cave are clearly matched to their counterparts in the Binyang Central cave (figs. 3-4). The costumes are virtually identical: dhoti with gathered folds at the top tied with a sash with a single loop falling to the left and the ends trailing nearly to the feet, double strands of jewels over a sash that falls to the knees, a necklace over the chest with hanging medallion, a robe over the shoulders that reaches the feet, and a tall, intricately detailed cylindrical crown. The gestures of the hands are the same, as is the unwavering vertical pose. The widely spaced stance of the massive feet results in an overall form that is essentially triangular. The Binyang South cave bodhisattvas, however, do not have Northern Wei-style heads, with their arched brows and archaic smiles, but share the same impassive expression and large-featured, square head as their Amitabha Buddha. Moreover, the hems of their robes do not display the undulating, symmetrical, ribbon-like line seen on the Binyang Central bodhisattvas' robes, which is in evidence on all the Northern Wei sculpture at Longmen. The heads and the drapery reveal the Tang sculptor, even as he attempted to copy the appearance of the Northern Wei figures next door.

Various scholars have considered the principal figures in the Binyang South cave to be in the style of the Sui dynasty. Sui sculpture typically emphasizes tubular body forms, strong linear play over taut surfaces, and a narrow verticality. These features are clearly displayed by the main seated Buddha figure in Cave II at Tuoshan, Shandong, for example, which has been dated to ca. 606 (fig. 5). The Binyang South cave Amitabha, by contrast, has a wide torso and defined shoulders, broad facial features that are integrated into the head, and drapery that attempts to assist the description of more naturalistic anatomical forms (fig. 6).

At the Qianfoya 千佛崖 at Shentongsi are Buddhist niche figures that share aspects of style and patronage with the Binyang South, Binyang North, and Qianxisi main Buddhas. At the northern end of the site is a double niche containing two seated Buddha figures (fig. 7). On the back
Fig. 5. Buddha, Cave II, Tuoshan, ca. 606. From O. Sirén, *Chinese Sculpture* (London, 1928), pl. 334.

Fig. 6. Amitābha, Binyang South cave. From *Longmen shiku* (1980), pl. 118.

Fig. 7. Amitābhas, Shentongsi, dated to 658. From Sirén, *Chinese Sculpture*, pl. 518.
Fig. 8. Sishun ward niche, Binyang South cave, north wall, dated 648. From Zhang Ruoyu, "Yique fokan zhi bei he Qianxisi, Binyang dong," fig. 2.

Fig. 9. Bodhisattva, Binyang North cave. From Longmen shiku diaoke, pl. 111.
The figures. A Amitābhas unrealisdc. Amitābha. sional as drapery wall the In graphically, these two Amitābha figures appear to be the same type as the Binyang South cave Amitābha. They wear the same one-shoulder robe, tied at the waist, over which is a mantle draped straight down from the shoulders, with the end of the mantle swagged and tied at the left shoulder. In terms of style, the two Shentongsi figures share the flat carving style and ridged description of drapery folds of the Binyang South cave Amitābha, as well as its squarish head and benign expression. They also have the same torso that is wide and squared-off but not massive in a three-dimensional fashion. Given these similarities, a date of 641 for the Binyang South cave Amitābha is not unrealistic. Certainly, the Binyang South cave Amitābha is closer in style to Li Fu’s Shentongsi Amitābhas of 658 than to other Shandong Buddha figures of the late Sui.

The dated niche figures on the north and west walls of the Binyang South cave sponsored by Cen Wenben, the Yuzhang Princess, and the Sishun ward of Luoyang also help to date the principal figures. The Cen Wenben and Yuzhang Princess niches are dated to 641, and the Sishun ward niche is dated to 648 (fig. 8). These Buddhas display the same flatly carved wide torso, weighty drapery, square head, and impassive expression as the main Amitābha figure. These similarities with the dated niches from 641 and 648 are further evidence that the large-scale pentad was commissioned by Li Tai in 641.

What is the ultimate significance of “what remains of the old has gained in solemnity; what is new has reached the extreme of ingenuity” in Li Tai’s inscription? “New” and “old” may refer to the Binyang South cave alone, the “new” consisting of nothing more than a few niches that Li Tai involved his sister and a few officials in adding to a cave that already contained a set of “old” Sui-dynasty figures, for which he then had a dedicatory stele inscription made. But if the “new” and “old” refer to the two caves between which the inscription stands, then Li Tai may well have refurbished the Northern Wei Binyang Central cave and had the roughed-out blocks in the Binyang South cave carved to match, thereby creating a royal pair of caves in an antique style to honor his mother and father. If that were the case, then Li Tai’s project was not simply another case of patronage for purposes of self-aggrandizement or expression of filial piety but an early instance in sculpture of the conscious use of an historical style to invest a political program with the authority of the past.

The Date and Patron of the Binyang North and Qianxisi Caves

The main assemblies in the Binyang North cave and the Qianxisi are even more closely matched than those in the Binyang Central and South caves—this in spite of the fact that the Binyang North cave was part of the Northern Wei Binyang trio, while the Qianxisi was excavated in the Tang and lies several meters to the north. Both caves contain a large-scale pentad composed of a seated Amitābha figure attended by standing figures of Ānanda, Kāśyapa, Avalokiteśvara, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The bodhisattva figures in the two caves are very similar and quite unlike the bodhisattvas in the Binyang South cave. Where the Binyang South cave bodhisattvas are carved as high relief, with the arms contracted against the figure, the Binyang North cave and Qianxisi bodhisattvas are carved away from the wall so far as to be almost free-standing, and the arms are separate from the torso (figs. 9–10). The center of gravity

Fig. 10. Bodhisattva, Qianxisi.
From Longmen shiku diaoke, pl. 106.
in the Binyang North cave and Qianxisi figures is at the shoulders, so the overall effect is more dynamic and three-dimensional than those in the Binyang South cave. In addition, the walls of the two caves also present a comparable appearance: the decoration on the ceilings and walls is very shallowly inscribed; dated niches are absent; and the surface of the walls is rough, as if unfinished.

The seated Amitabha figures are carved fully in the round, with broad swelling shoulders and deep chests, and their anatomy is more naturalistically articulated than any seen earlier at Longmen (figs. 11-12). The large, open facial features and broad forehead are fully integrated into the round head. The folds of the robe sag across the chest as if under their own weight, while the massiveness of the upper torso suggests the weight of the frame resisting the pull of gravity.

Other Buddha figures at Shentongsi correspond to the Binyang North cave and Qianxisi Amitabha figures. At the southern end of the Qianfoya is a seated Buddha figure, dated to 657, which an accompanying inscription reveals was sponsored by the Nanping Princess on behalf of her father, Emperor Taizong (fig. 13). Another seated Buddha figure nearby was sponsored in the same year by her husband, Liu Xuanyi, who
had previously commissioned a guardian figure outside the Binyang South cave in 650. The figure sponsored by the Nanping Princess is the same iconographic type as the Qianxisi Amitābha: both figures wear a one-shoulder robe tied at the waist, over which a simple mantle is drawn up over the figure’s left shoulder and down over the right. The anatomical forms are also much the same: both figures show a large, full-featured, rounded head and a prominent triple-ringed neck. The torso shows the same subtly articulated, three-dimensional treatment of the massive shoulders and swelling chest. These figures achieve their volumetric effects entirely without the reliance on linear description of Sui and early Tang sculpture.

Judging from the correspondence between the Buddha figure of 657 sponsored by the Nanping Princess at Shentongsi and the Amitābhas in the Binyang North cave and the Qianxisi, the latter appear to have been created in the 650s. Zhang Ruoyu has argued that the Qianxisi figures were carved during the 670s, but in comparing the Qianxisi Amitābha to the Vairocana of the Fengxiansi (fig. 14), which was completed in 676, I would argue that the Qianxisi figure is more evenly weighted in its balance between the description of the torso and the expression conveyed by the face. It lacks the emphasis on the penetrating facial expression exhibited by the Fengxiansi Vairocana and main Maitreya figure in the Huijian cave of 673 (fig. 15), which dates it earlier than the 670s.37

Who was the patron of the Binyang North cave and the Qianxisi? Given the stylistic and iconographic similarities between the two, they were probably sponsored by the same patron. The monumental size of the caves and their location in the northern group associated with Emperor Taizong point to an imperial sponsor in the generation of Emperor Taizong’s children. The similarities to the Shentongsi figures of the late 650s suggest the Binyang North cave and Qianxisi sculptures were created during that decade, and the unfinished walls and lack of later dated niche figures suggest abandonment soon after completion, if not shortly before.

The struggle for the position of heir apparent ended in 643 with the banishment of both Li Chengqian and Li Tai. Emperor Taizong then appointed Li Zhi, the future Emperor Gaozong, as heir apparent. Li Zhi was the remaining son of Empress Wende. Following the example of his older siblings, he commissioned the Daciensi
monastery in Chang'an in memory of his mother. It was formally dedicated at the end of 648, with a ceremony attended by Emperor Taizong and his high officials. On the emperor’s death in 649, Li Zhi ascended the throne at the age of twenty-one. In the first years of his reign, he was under the guidance of Emperor Taizong’s former ministers, until 655, when most were banished for opposing the elevation of Wu Zhao to empress. In 660, he suffered a debilitating stroke, after which he gradually lost control of the government and Buddhist patronage to Empress Wu.

Although she was the single greatest sponsor at Longmen, Empress Wu was probably not the patron of the Binyang North and Qianxisi caves. More likely, she would have wanted to distance her projects at Longmen from the northern group of caves. Proximity to caves sponsored by the children of Emperor Taizong would only serve to remind her audience that she had once been a concubine of Emperor Taizong, before her marriage to his son, and was technically guilty of incest. Moreover, Chu Suiliang and Zhangsun Wuji (ca. 600–659) had vehemently opposed her elevation to empress in 655. Chu Suiliang was the calligrapher of the Yique Buddha Niche Stele inscription, while Zhangsun Wuji was the elder brother of Empress Wende, to whom the work on the Binyang Central and South caves was dedicated. Empress Wu left behind the northern group of caves and their Pure Land iconography. She began anew, after 660, at what was then the southern end, and with the prodigious Huayan-school Vairocana assembly of the Fengxiansi, she redefined the center of Longmen.

In my view, the probable sponsor of the Binyang North cave and the Qianxisi was the young Emperor Gaozong. As their sponsor, he would duplicate Li Tai’s feat and create a new royal pair of caves from the “old” and the “new,” to honor his mother and father as Li Tai had. A date in the late 650s for these two caves would coincide with the active period of his reign, and abandonment around 660 would correspond with the start of his decline, when he turned away from Buddhist projects and returned to the Taoism of the Li family.

To sum up my argument, the northern group of caves at Longmen constitute a monument to the politics of filial piety by the family of Emperor Taizong and Empress Wende, based on the Binyang Central cave, which was itself sponsored as a filial act in the Northern Wei. The Binyang South cave was finished to match the Binyang Central cave by Li Tai in 641, the Jingshansi was sponsored by Lady Wei around 658, and the Binyang North cave was finished and the Qianxisi commissioned to match it by Emperor Gaozong in the late 650s.
Notes

This material was originally delivered in shorter form at the symposium to honor Professor Harrie A. Vanderstappen, on March 1, 1991, at the University of Chicago. This paper is offered in memory of that splendid day.


3. Some Chinese scholars have interpreted the missing character in the date of the Duke Shiping inscription in the Guyang cave as shi (ten) instead of nian (twenty), which would date it to 488 (not 498) and make it the earliest inscription at Longmen, predating the move of the capital to Luoyang. Jing Sanlin uses the 488 date, and other evidence, to argue that activity began at Longmen ten to twenty years before the move to Luoyang (Zhongguo shiku diaoke yishu shi [Beijing, 1988], 42–51). Yan Wenru takes the date of 483 at the head of the Guyang cave Sun Qusheng inscription, ignoring the date of 502 at the end, as proof that excavation at Longmen began in 483 (Zhongguo shiku yishu zonglun [Tianjin, 1987], 33). Unfortunately, these scholars offer no opinions on the possible identity of the Guyang cave patron.

4. The greatest activity at Longmen corresponded to the period when Luoyang served as the capital of the Northern Wei, from 494 to 535, and to the period from its designation as the Eastern Capital of the Tang in 657 until Empress Wu’s final departure in 701.

5. Soper, “Imperial Cave-Chapels,” 243.


7. See Gongxian shikutsu, ed. Henan sheng wenwu yanjiuso (Beijing, 1989), 277–95.

8. Seiichi Mizuno, Bronze and Stone Sculpture of China (Tokyo, 1960), 13.

9. Mizuno and Nagahiro, Ryūmon sekkutsu no kenkyū, 1:82; Gong Dazhong, Longmen shiku yishu, 87.


13. The date of the sculptures is generally given as 672–75. An inscription on the base of the Vairocana figure, dated to 722, states that Empress Wu donated a large sum of money for the project in 672. However, one of the Buddhist abbots cited as supervising the project (Shandao of the Shiji in
Chang'an) probably died in 662. This would indicate that the project was begun before 662. The inscription states it was completed on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month of the second year of the Shangyuan era, which is actually 676 in the Western calendar. See Li Yuki, "Longmen xukao," 31. If Shandao lived to 681, as some sources state, he could have supervised the project from 672 to 676 along with Huijian, who was alive in 673, as the Huijian cave inscription testifies. Shandao's well-known promotion of the cult of Amitābha may mean the colossal Buddha was originally an Amitābha figure, which was renamed a Vairocana in or before 722. See Julian Pas, "Dimensions in the Life and Thought of Shan-mlao (613-681)," in Buddhist and Taoist Practice in Medieval Society, ed. David W. Chappell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 78.

14. Wen Yucheng and Li Wensheng suggest the carving may have been abandoned in 695, with the death of Xue Huaiyi, the pseudo-monk who promoted Empress Wu's cult of Maitreya (Longmen shiku diaoke, nn. to pl. 123). Perhaps Xue Huaiyi 謝懷義 was the patron of the Moya sanfo, for as I argue below, I suspect Empress Wu had no desire to sponsor projects so close to the northern group of caves.

15. Tadashi Sekino, Shina bunka shiseki, quoted in Mizuno and Nagahiro, Ryúmon sekkutsu no kenkyu, 1:11.


17. See Gong Dazhong, Longmen shiku yishu, 38.


20. Mizuno and Nagahiro, Ryúmon sekkutsu no kenkyu, 1:141.

21. Longmen shiku (1958), 2; Longmen shiku diaoke, 20; Gong Dazhong, Longmen shiku yishu, 38.


23. Some historians doubt that Li Tai was the son of Empress Wende. Since Li Tai was born the year before Li Chengqian, he should have been heir apparent, unless his mother was a lesser consort. See The Cambridge History of China, vol. 3, Sui and Tang China, 589-906, Part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 236.


25. Mizuno and Nagahiro, Ryúmon sekkutsu no kenkyu, vol. 2, text 254. See also 1:29. The donor states in the inscription that his statues are located to the southwest of the Jingshansi. Although the Jingshansi is over two hundred meters from the Lao'long cave, it was cited as the closest landmark because the caves that now lie between the two, such as the Huijian, Wanfo, and Moya sanfo, did not exist in 658.


27. See Mizuno and Nagahiro, Ryúmon sekkutsu no kenkyu, 2:274 and pls. 38 and 47.

28. Wang Qfei has argued that the stele was carved in the Northern Wei, around the same time the three Binyang caves were excavated. Whether it was inscribed at that time or left blank is not known. See Wang Qfei, "Guanyu Longmen shiku de jizhong xin faxian ji qiyouguan wenti (New discoveries at the Longmen grottoes and the relevant problems)," Wenwu cankao ziliao 1955.2.127.


30. Weinstein, Buddhism under the T'ang, 22.


32. Yan Wenru, Zhongguo shiku yishu zonglun, 41.


34. Liu Xu et al., Chiu Tang shu (rpt. Beijing, 1975), chap. 3, p. 53.
35. See Rhie, "Late Sui Buddhist Sculpture," 30.


37. Could this mildness be an aspect of Pure Land doctrine? By comparison, Angela Falco Howard has suggested that the Huayan doctrine "which inspired the Feng-hsien-ssu [Fengxiansi] sculptures may also account for the Buddha's facial expression of severe justice and his remotely divine, rather than human, appearance" ("The Development of Chinese Buddhist Sculpture from the Wei to the T'ang Dynasty," in *Chinese Buddhist Sculpture from the Wei through the T'ang Dynasties* [Taibei, 1983], 20).


39. The entire northern cave group was only augmented with a few small dated niches from 660 onward, and the addition of dated niches to any area of Longmen not under excavation by Empress Wu or her officials virtually ceased after 669.

Chinese artists have long shown an interest in ancient culture. Before the twentieth century, one of the special characteristics of Chinese painting was its exploration of ways to convey a consciousness of antiquity, not so much in terms of the physical condition of the painting as in terms of its imagery or style. Song artists, for example, made references to old methods of painting,\(^1\) while Yuan artists tried to create an antique (or classical) ambience in their paintings.\(^2\)

Chinese consciousness of history also revealed itself early in the practice of art collecting. Sometimes paintings attributed to such artists as Hui Zong 徽宗, Ma Yuan 马远, and especially Xie Huan 谢焕, Chen Hongshou 陈洪绶, and other Ming painters, contain illustrations of ancient bronzes or paintings, presumably to reveal something of the sophistication and taste of the persons depicted. However, it is only from late Ming times onwards, and particularly in the late Qing, that artists not only introduced archaeological elements as motifs but sometimes made them their major theme. Under these circumstances Chinese archaeology came face to face with Chinese painting.

**Depictions of Ancient Bronzes**

The most common means used by Qing artists to inject archaeological themes into their paintings was to depict ancient bronze vessels. Early examples of archaeological subjects in Qing painting can be found in the work of Xiao Chen 蕭晨 (still alive in 1607) and Yu Zhiding 呂之鼎 (still alive in 1709). A fan painting by Xiao Chen, completed in 1671 (fig. 1),\(^3\) depicts the famous Song scholar Su Shi 蘇軾 (1036–1101) sitting on one side of a long table. Two of his friends sit on the other side of the same table and converse with him. According to the artist’s inscription, the fan painting is entitled Dongpo bogu tu 東坡博古圖, which means, literally, “Su Dongpo [i.e., Su Shi] examining his antiquities.” What is archaeologically significant about this painting is the set of bronze vessels placed on the table. From left to right, these vessels can be identified as an yi 爵 (receptacle), a gu 酒 (cup), a hu 坑 (jar), and a lei 耐 (vase). Judging from the decor, the first three are ritual wine vessels of the Shang dynasty,\(^4\) while the last is a type of wine vessel developed only under the Zhou dynasty.

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\(^1\) This is the main method of the so-called ‘classical painter’ tradition.

\(^2\) This is the method of the so-called ‘romantic painter’ tradition.

\(^3\) From the collection of the Taipei Palace Museum.

\(^4\) The Chinese word “lei” is sometimes used to refer to a type of wine vessel developed only under the Zhou dynasty.
An example of Yu Zhiding’s work invoking an archaeological theme is Nuyue tu 女樂圖 (Ladies’ chamber orchestra; fig. 2). Although this painting bears no signature or date, it is authenticated by an inscription executed by Yu Zhiding in 1676. In this particular handscroll Qiao Lai 季來 (1642–94) is shown sitting in the middle of his long chair, with his private female chamber orchestra to his right. To his left two other female assistants are moving a bronze vessel, which is tied with ropes and can be identified as a poa 酒 (jar), an infrequently used bronze wine vessel of the Shang dynasty. Two other bronze vessels are placed on the long table between Qiao Lai and the orchestra. The taller, which holds a red coral, is a gu, while the shorter is recognizably a ding 鼎 (tripod), although not drawn in perspective. The painting illustrates Qiao Lai’s refined appreciation for antiquities and music.

A third early example among Qing paintings representing archaeological materials is the Portrait of Buddhist Monk Yu Shi 譯石 (fig. 3). This work by the obscure artist Gu Zuntao 郭尊孝 depicts Yu Shi in a central position on his square ta 桌 (couch). A monastic assistant standing to his right is counterbalanced by a tall flower-pot stand on his left. On top of the flower-pot stand a bronze wine vessel, or gu, holds flowers. According to the artist’s own inscription at the far right of the work, this portrait was completed in 1684.

Based on the three examples cited above—the 1671 fan painting by Xiao Chen, the 1676 handscroll by Yu Zhiding, and the 1684 portrait by Gu Zuntao—it is clear that from the 1670s to the 1680s, artists often revealed their interest in archaeological motifs by depicting ancient bronzes, particularly ritual wine vessels of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Late seventeenth-century Qing artists’ interest in depicting ancient bronze vessels continued into the eighteenth century and was still more strongly developed in the nineteenth.

One work of this type datable to the eighteenth century is Pan Gongshou’s 潘恭壽 (1741–94) portrait of Zhang Xuan 張鉉 (fig. 4). Although information about Zhang Xuan is scant, he is known to have been an older cousin of the artist Zhang Jin 張金 (1761–1829). In this portrait Zhang Xuan is depicted sitting in a small boat. To the left of the figure are two bronze vessels: a taller yi against a small round ding. Here again, a man associated with the arts is represented as having both the knowledge and taste required to collect antique bronzes.

Other nineteenth-century Chinese paintings dealing with archaeological motifs include three executed by Ren Yi 任穎 (1840–96), commonly known by his alias Ren Bonian 任伯年. The first chronologically is Shuang you tu 雙友圖 (Two friends; fig. 5). According to the artist’s inscription, it was painted in the jiaxu 甲戌 year, which corresponds to 1874. In the painting, the bronze ding vessel is placed conspicuously on the table that occupies the space between the figures. The ding thus seems to be at least as important as the figures.

A second nineteenth-century example, entitled Ma Gu xianshou 麻姑獻壽 (The Daoist fairy Ma Gu offers a present to the Queen Mother of the West on her birthday) was executed in 1856 by Xie Bin 謝彬, a rather obscure artist active in Taiwan during the mid-nineteenth century. In this painting, Ma Gu is depicted as holding a tall square yi, which is understood to contain the
Fig. 3. Gu Zuntao, *Portrait of Buddhist Monk Yu Shi*, 1684. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Fig. 4. Pan Gongshou, *Portrait of Zhang Xuan*. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Fig. 5. Ren Bonian, *Shuang you tu* (Two friends), 1874. People’s Art Press, Tienjin.
elixir to be offered to the Queen Mother of the West (fig. 6).

In another painting by Ren Bonian, again entitled Ma Gu xianshou, Ma Gu is half hidden by an old tree trunk (fig. 7). In the wheeled basin is a peach, a Daoist symbol for longevity. The shape of the basin is not fully visible since some portions of it are hidden by the large leaves of the peach. However, during a 1957 archaeological expedition, a wheeled basin was unearthed in Yancheng County, Jiangsu Province (fig. 8). Typologically, it is a rather unusual form of pan 盤 (basin), which functioned as a ewer for water, first appearing in the Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.) in the fifth century B.C. Because the peach holder in Ren Bonian’s work is so typologically similar to the water ewer from Yancheng, it can be identified as the ancient bronze water ewer yì.

The last item by Ren Bonian is Jijin qinggong 吉金清供 (Using auspicious bronze vessels as offerings), dated to 1885 by the artist’s inscription (fig. 9). Unlike the works cited above, which combine archaeological themes with figure subjects, this particular painting has no

Fig. 6. Xie Bin, Ma Gu xianshou
(The Daoist fairy Ma Gu offers a present to the Queen Mother of the West). 1856.
Collection of Yang Wenfu, Taiwan.

Fig. 7. Ren Bonian, Ma Gu xianshou,
signed but without inscription or date.
Nanjing Museum, Nanjing.
Thus, the artist introduces one of the tools of Chinese archaeology (i.e., rubbings) into the composition. With this early use of mixed media the artist forces in the viewer an awareness of the artificial and artifactual nature of representation and at the same time confronts us with an ostensibly more "authentic" image, i.e., a rubbing taken directly from an ancient artifact. Such a painting not only reveals the artist's familiarity with the methods and lore of proto-archaeology as practiced in Qing China but also arouses a consciousness of the relativity of such knowledge, juxtaposed as it is with a free interpretation of cultural images by the artist who inscribes his name and date on the work.

The technique of taking rubbings of ancient bronze vessels to show their complete forms, called quan xing ta 全形拓, was probably first practiced by late Qing bronze collectors. It gained favor in the late nineteenth century with scholars such as Chen Jieqi 陈介祺 (1813–84) and artists such as Wu Changshuo 吴昌硕. In this 1885 painting by Ren Bonian, use of the quan xing rubbing refers directly to the late nineteenth-century scholastic interest in archaeology.

This painting was not the latest work in which Qing artists combined pictorial art with archaeological interests. Jixiang Guishou 吉祥富贵 (Good fortune, wealth, and longevity; fig. 10), a painting
by Wu Junqing 吳俊卿 (1844–1927, better known by his alias Wu Changshuo), depicts a bronze zun (container) as a flower pot for what appear to be the branches of a peach blossom. According to the artist’s own inscription, this painting was executed in the gengxu 戊戌 year, which corresponds to 1910, two years before the fall of the Qing dynasty.

To judge from the foregoing examples, Qing artists apparently first became interested in using archaeological elements in the 1670s, and the fashion for such subjects continued until 1910. The kinds of bronzes chosen for representation appear to have been mainly wine vessels and secondarily food vessels. The pan was the only piece selected from among the water vessels.

**Depictions of Archaic Jades**

Another way of lending an archaeological flavor to a painting was to depict archaic jades. Although they were far less frequently represented than bronze vessels, two examples of their use are noteworthy. The first, entitled *Nong zhang tu* 弄璋圖 (Playing with a disk segment), is again by Ren Bonian. Dated by the artist’s inscription to 1892, it depicts a lady sitting under a pine tree (fig. 11). The boy on her left is probably trying to get the rainbow-shaped object held by his mother. Archaeologically, the peculiarly shaped object in the mother’s hand can be identified as a huang 璯 (disk segment), one of the six ceremonial pieces used by the feudal lords for formal worship. 

A second example can be found in a painting by Ren Xiong 任熊 (1823–57), again entitled *Ma Gu xianshou.* Though bearing neither signature nor seal of the artist, this painting was authenticated as the work of Ren Xiong by Wu Hufan 吳湖帆 (1894–1968), an artist and art collector in Shanghai. The lady dressed in red is identified by Wu Hufan as the Daoist fairy Ma Gu (fig. 12). On the plate held by Ma Gu stands a tall cup. As in Xie Bin’s work of 1865 cited above, it is understood that the elixir of life in the cup has been prepared by Ma Gu to be presented to the Queen Mother of the West for her birthday. Hanging from Ma Gu’s red dress are two sets of jade pendants, meticulously rendered. The first set, attached to
her sleeve, consists of four groups. The first group centers on a ruby enclosed by some other gems, to which two jewelry tassels are attached; the second, squarish group is connected by rings to two jewelry tassels and is also arranged beside another jewelry tassel, which forms the last group of this pendant. The second set of jade pendants appears on the front of the red dress. Although this set is partially hidden by the dress, its lower portion is clearly visible. Compositionally, this portion is again organized into four groups of jewelry. The first is a large panel with pearled tassels that link up with the next group, which takes the form of a short horizontal board. The third group hangs down from the central point of the board and consists of rings, bell-shaped items, and other geometric pieces. The last group, also attached to the horizontal board, has two subgroups each of which displays a forked piece, one on each side of the central tassel, completed with a jade bell.

Archaeological studies indicate that jade pendants were arranged in standard ways. According to one system, tassels of jade pebbles would link up in five major groups (fig. 13). The first and third groups would consist of bi disks of different sizes, while the second and fourth were comprised of the rainbow-shaped heng disk segment, to which three jade pebbled tassels would be attached, ultimately linking up with the fifth group. The central tassel would typically terminate in a square zhong while the side tassels would both terminate in a horn-shaped ya, or tooth.

In reality, of course, the forms of these jade pendants could vary. For instance, in a set of pendants dating from the Warring States Period (i.e., around the third century B.C.), the squarish zhong in the fifth group is replaced by a disk, and the horned-shaped “teeth” are arranged so as to form a small dragon (fig. 14). A more radical change of form is seen in another set of jade pendants (fig. 15). In this set not only do short tubes replace the bi disk and heng disk segment, but well-perforated figures and dragons also substitute for the zhong and ya.

In 1965 a set of jade pendants of the mid-fourteenth century was excavated from a tomb of the late Yuan dynasty at Suzhou in Jiangsu Province. In this particular set, all jade pieces

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Fig. 14. Set of jade pendants, ca. third century B.C. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

Fig. 15. Set of jade pendants, unearthed at Jincun in Henan, Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.). Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
were deliberately cut into nearly even sizes in four regular shapes, namely, the triangle, arch, crescent, and shield (fig. 16). This set of jade pendants is the most recent in date yet discovered.

Examining the early set of jade pendants of the Warring States Period as well as the later set from the Ming dynasty makes it clear that Ren Xiong’s painted pendants do not resemble early pieces, either in composition or in the typology of individual pieces of jade. Clearly, we should not draw conclusions about early Chinese artifacts from Qing dynasty paintings because Qing painters had limited knowledge of archaic materials.

Depictions of Ancient Books

Depicting books as they were made in ancient times offered another means of injecting archaeological elements into a painting. Generally speaking, from the Spring and Autumn Period until the Jin dynasty (fifth century B.C. to fourth century A.D.), books were most commonly made of bamboo tablets. When a collection of tied bamboo tablets is rolled up, it forms a scroll or, if unrolled, a sheet (fig. 17). Thus, each individual tablet serves as a line of the text, whereas each individual sheet formed by the tablets serves as a paragraph of a page. Mounting later Chinese paintings or calligraphy in the form of a hand-scroll is, in fact, a vestige of the roll of bamboo tablets used in ancient China.

Given this brief introduction to the function of bamboo tablets, it is interesting to examine...
another painting by Ren Bonian, dated by inscription to 1870 (fig. 18). In this painting the bamboo tablets held by a seated lady clearly represent an archaic form of book. Use of the bamboo tablet gave Ren Bonian yet another way to direct our attention to archaeological materials in his painting.

Depictions of Ancient Stone Monuments

A fourth way in which Qing artists could incorporate archaeological themes was to depict ancient stone monuments. Among the artists who exhibited this interest, Huang Yi 黄易 (1744–1802) is very likely the most important. Although a native of Hangxian 杭县 in Zhejiang 浙江 Province, he was involved in a series of archaeological field projects in various areas of northern China. First, in 1786, while an official in Shandong 山东 Province, he supervised the rediscovery and excavation of the famous family offering shrines of the Wu clan, dating from the mid-second century of the Eastern Han dynasty. Although a stone stele from one of the shrines had been known to Song scholars in the twelfth century, the complete set of four stone shrines and other stones related to them remained unknown until the third decade of the eighteenth century, when Huang Yi excavated them, thus providing fresh information for the scholars of his time.

In addition, Huang Yi spent the fall of 1797 searching for ancient stone relics throughout a considerable area of Henan 河南 Province. His brief but descriptive report of his daily activities during that time, entitled Song Luo fangbei ri ji 崇洛方碑日记 (A diary of visiting stone stele in the Song and Luo areas), provides a vivid record of his route and working procedures. As he mentions at the end of his diary, this archaeological tour enabled him to make rubbings of over four hundred stone stele, dating from the Jin, Tang, and Song dynasties.

Moreover, Huang Yi established a special relationship between archaeology and painting. In 1797, the very year when he completed his field search for stone relics in the Song-Luo area, Huang produced an album of twenty-four small paintings entitled Song Luo fangbei tu ji 崇洛方碑图记 (An album of paintings from visits to stone stele in the Song and Luo areas), now in the Palace Museum in Beijing. In 1891, Wu Dacheng 吴大澂 (1835–1902) made a twenty-four-leaf copy of Huang Yi’s original album.

In this album, leaves 5, 7, and 8 form a series in which each painting takes the stone que 關 (entrance pillars) of the Eastern Han dynasty for its theme. For instance, in leaf 5, entitled Shaoshi shiqie 少室石阙 (The stone entrance pillars of the Small Chamber Mountain) by inscription, Huang Yi represents two short wall-like stone que (fig. 19), originally erected before a shrine to the Spirit of Mount Song that is now missing. One of the entrance pillars is dated by an engraved
inscription to the second year of the Yanguang era (A.D. 123). A twentieth-century photograph (fig. 20) shows that these entrance pillars also have bas-reliefs, such as birds, a dragon (fig. 21), a ram’s head, a hunting scene, and a hare chased by a dog—elements the artist did not illustrate. In leaf 5, the rocky mountain rising behind the pillars is the lofty Mount Song, and the flat area neighboring these pillars is what is described in Huang Yi’s diary as huangyuati, the desolate ground. Similarly, in leaf 7, Huang Yi depicts the Kai mu shique on one side of the Daoist monastery Zhungfu Gong (fig. 22). During the Han Dynasty, Kai was understood to be the name of the son of the Great Yu, who was believed to be one of the three Chinese emperors in archaic times. Thus, Kai mu shique means the “entrance pillars of the shrine built in memory of the mother of Kai (or the wife of the Great Yu).” Regrettably, though the pillars still exist, the shrine itself is missing. Like the inscription on one of the two pillars erected for Small Chamber Mountain, the inscription on one of the two pillars of the mother of Kai is also dated A.D. 123, but the inscription on the second pillar is dated to the fourth year of the Xiping era (A.D. 175). A twentieth-century photograph (fig. 23) demonstrates that, in addition to the inscription, these two pillars also bear bas-reliefs, including a dragon, two horses tied to a tree (fig. 24), a football player, and a knotted rope. However, in neither his diary nor his painting does Huang Yi attend to these motifs.

According to the title of leaf 8, the last in this series dealing with entrance pillars, its subject is the Zhongyue miao (Temple of the Central Sacred Mountain). Yet a pair of entrance pillars
Fig. 22. Wu Dacheng, *Kai mu shique* (The stone entrance pillars of the shrine built in memory of the mother of Kai), 1891. Leaf 7 of painted album. Copy of 1797 original by Huang Yi.

Fig. 23. *Kai mu shique* (The stone entrance pillars of the shrine built in memory of the mother of Kai), dated 123 by inscription on one of the pillars. Dengfeng, Henan Province. Twentieth-century photograph.

Fig. 24. Two horses tied to a tree, section of the bas-reliefs of *Kai mu shique*. 
is set conspicuously facing the temple (fig. 25). Like the entrance pillars of the mother of Kai and the Small Chamber Mountain, this pair also stands before the site of a vanished shrine to the Spirit of the Taishi (Great Chamber) Mountain. The inscription on one of the pillars is dated the fifth year of the Yuanchu era (A.D. 118). Once again, a twentieth-century photograph of this set of pillars (fig. 26) shows that Huang Yi has chosen to omit an entire set of bas-reliefs, including carvings of a dragon, a phoenix, a chariot, a ram’s head, and a leopard.

Huang Yi’s 1797 album also deals with large stone stele. For instance, in leaf 6, entitled Songyang Shuyuan (The Songyang Private School), the building that gives the painting its title seems of less interest than a gigantic stone monument (fig. 27). In Huang Yi’s diary, this stele is identified as a large stele of the Tang dynasty dating to the third year of the Tienbao era (A.D. 744). Other records indicate that it was erected by Li Lifu (d. 752), who served as prime minister during the early period of the Tienbao era, in memory of the

Fig. 25. Wu Dacheng, Zhongyue miao (Temple of the Central Sacred Mountain), 1891. Leaf 8 of painted album. Copy of 1797 original by Huang Yi.

Fig. 26. Taishi shique (The stone entrance pillars of the Great Chamber Mountain), dated 118 by inscription on the lefthand pillar. Dengfeng, Henan Province. Twentieth-century photograph.
alchemic activities that his majesty Emperor Xuan Zong 玄宗 (713-56) performed in the Songyang Guan 青陽觀 monastery. On this stele (fig. 28) the inscribed text of the eulogy is by Li Linfu, with calligraphy by Xu Hao 徐浩 (703-82).

In leaf 18, entitled Mang shan 慶山 (Mount Mang), Huang Yi represents the landscape of the famous Mount Mang near Luoyang 洛陽. In this painting, except for the mountains and three little figures that may include the artist himself, the most conspicuous object is a tall stele occupying the center of the picture plane (fig. 29). The height of this stele and the high position it occupies made it visible, according to Huang Yi’s diary, some twenty miles away. Erected in the first year of the Yuanyou 元祐 era (a.d. 1086), it displays calligraphy by Shi Zhongli 石中立.

Leaf 14, titled Yique 伊閰 (The defile along the...
Fig. 30. Wu Dacheng, *Yique* (The defile along the River Yi), 1891. Leaf 14 of painted album. Copy of 1797 original by Huang Yi.

Fig. 31. Wu Dacheng, *Fengxiansi* (The Fengxian Temple ruin), 1891. Leaf 15 of painted album. Copy of 1797 original by Huang Yi.

Fig. 32. Panoramic photograph of the Fengxian Temple ruin, 1961. Longmen, Luoyang, Henan Province.
River Yi), principally depicts the Guyang 古陽 cave at Longmen 龍門, near Luoyang (fig. 30). When Huang Yi supervised the making of rubbings inside this cave, he also observed the physical condition of the cliff on the other side of the River Yi. As he noted in his diary, this rocky cliff had been the subject of works by Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–74) and Wang Meng 王蒙 (1308–85), two landscape masters active during the transitional period of the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties. In fact, the horizontal textural strokes that Huang Yi applies to the cliff are quite similar to the so-called zhedai cun 折帶皴 (folding-belt textural strokes), which are known to have been Ni Zan’s favored brush strokes for rocks and mountains. For instance, in his well-known Rongxi zhai 容膝齋 (Rongxi studio), dated 1372 by the artist’s own inscription, the rocks along the riverside are stylistically reminiscent of the cliff along the River Yi represented by Huang Yi in his leaf 14.

Leaf 15 represents the Buddhist sculptures at the Fengxiansi 奉先寺 cave of Longmen (fig. 31). Again using a twentieth-century photographic view of this site (fig. 32) for comparison, we can identify the seated figure as the Vairocana Buddha, while the flanking figures include two of the Buddha’s disciples and two of his assistants. The site of the Longmen caves in modern times was first reported in 1899 by Leprince-Ringuet. The original information, photographs, and rubbings brought back by this French amateur scholar in 1902 enabled Professor Edouard Chavannes to publish the first academic paper on the subject. Huang Yi’s visit to Longmen, over a century earlier than Leprince-Ringuet’s, was significant not only because it was the earliest archaeological mission to this site but because his sketchy paintings also serve as the earliest pictorial record of its Buddhist art. The seated Vairocana Buddha was already armless (fig. 33) in 1907, when Professor Chavannes devoted 240 pages and 102 plates to his pioneering work on the Longmen caves. From the evidence of Huang Yi’s sketchy painting, it would appear that before the Vairocana Buddha’s arms were broken, he was raising his right hand to form the abhaya mudrā while his left hand formed the vara mudrā. As noted earlier, Huang Yi sometimes omitted features of an artifact from his paintings—for instance, bas-reliefs on Han Dynasty stelae. However, it seems unlikely
that such a careful scholar would have added features (such as arms) that were not there. Assuming that Huang’s rendition is reliable, this painting provides valuable information for reconstructing the iconography of this armless Buddha.

**Combining Paintings with Rubbings**

One final method by which late Qing artists could instill an awareness of archaeological themes was to combine a painting with a rubbing of a stone sculpture. Two examples illustrate this category. The first, the *Seated Buddha* by Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829–84), depicts a meditating Buddha atop an ink rubbing that dates to the second year of the Zhongdatong 中大通 era (530) of the Liang Dynasty (fig. 34). Art historically speaking, this period was close to the time when the famous Buddhist painter Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇 was active. According to the fourth line of the ink rubbing, the identity of the (original) Buddha image was Śākyamuni. But, judging from the large seal-script characters inscribed by Zhao Zhiqian, Zhao paid no attention to the inscription, identifying the Buddha image instead as Amitābha.

On the other hand, as far as the archaeological theme of this painting is concerned, identifying this Buddha as Amitābha or Śākyamuni was not the major concern of the artist and is not the major concern of this essay. What is especially noteworthy is that the Buddha image is juxtaposed with an ink rubbing taken from an engraved stone of the sixth century. According to the inscription written by Zhao Zhiqian in small characters, this particular painting was done in the twelfth month of the renxu 仁秀 era (1862). Thus, the artist forces in the viewer a keen awareness of history as both artifact and interpretation.

In a second example of the same type, a figure painting (fig. 35) by Lu Hui 陸輝 (1851–1920), a seated figure is represented a little above an ink rubbing dating to the fourth year of the Xinghe
Fig. 35. Lu Hui, Seated Figure, 1902.

According to Lu Hui’s inscription, the figure, executed in 1902, was meant (presumably like his calligraphy) to recall the style seen in stone offering shrines of the Han dynasty. To our eyes, Lu Hui’s figural style shares little with the style of Han engravings. However, by placing his figure above an ink rubbing of an inscription in a similar calligraphic style (i.e., “clerk script”), he evokes with his own dated, contemporary painting the ambience of a concrete relic of the past.

Since this discussion has focused on Qing artists’ interest in archaeological themes and motifs, it is appropriate to consider why this interest developed in the late Qing. Historically speaking, as early as the Song dynasty, Chinese artists sometimes placed antiques in paintings of rooms or gardens inhabited by men of learning in order to demonstrate not only these men’s appreciation for antiques but also their ability to discern and collect them. The display of ancient bronze vessels in the studios of scholars, like the display of painting and calligraphy, revealed the accomplishments of a learned man. To go one step further, from the seventeenth century onwards some Ming scholars, such as Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610), Tu Long 屠隆 (1542–1665), Wen Zhenheng 文震亨 (1585–1645?), Zhang Yingwen 張應文, and Gao Lian 高濂, began to use ancient bronze and antique Song ceramics in daily life. By late Qing times, the proliferation of antiques among the educated provided Qing artists many opportunities to study and depict such antiques in a realistic manner. More specifically, in the Nuyuetub by Yu Zhiding, the Portrait of the Buddhist Monk Yu Shi by Gu Zuntao, Ma Gu xianshou and Jijin qinggong both by Ren Bonian, and in other paintings examined above, we see further evidence of the tendency to inject antiquities into daily life.

In addition, jinshi xue 金石學, or the study of ancient artifacts (a branch of proto-archaeology in China), developed rapidly during Qing times, thus providing a new and more empirical approach to artifacts in Chinese painting. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some
scholars of the empirical studies movement—for instance, Weng Fanggang (1733–1818) and Ruan Yuan (1764–1849)—were active students of ancient culture and archaeological materials. It was only then that ancient artifacts began to appear in Chinese painting as major motifs. In other words, the ancient artifacts were no longer of interest merely because they were ancient, rare, and visually pleasing; rather, they were regarded more seriously as objects of study and knowledge.

Two good examples of literati-artists working in this tradition are noted above: Huang Yi in the eighteenth century and Zhao Zhiqian in the nineteenth. By painting albums of stone monuments, Huang Yi was in fact extending to art his strong academic interest in archaeology. Similarly, by portraying the meditating Buddha atop a rubbing of a carved stone, Zhao blended his empirical studies with more aesthetic concerns.

Thus, the rise of archaeological themes in Chinese painting during the Qing dynasty not only resulted from a more realistic artistic technique but also reflects the larger historical trend of increasingly empirical approaches to classical and archaeological materials. By inserting actual rubbings into their work, artists like Zhao Zhiqian and Ren Bonian found an effective way to advertise their love for empirical studies, just as a bamboo might assert a man’s commitment to Confucian themes.

Finally, the keen awareness of historicity evinced by Qing painters continues to occupy Chinese artists today. For instance, in 1972, Zheng Naiguang 鄭乃珖 painted a gui 瑋 ritual food vessel being used as a flower pot for peonies (fig. 36). This in itself is not particularly new. But, in addition, the tall object standing behind the gui is recognizable as the famous gilded incense burner unearthed in Mancheng 滿城, Hebei 河北 in 1968 (fig. 37). As one of the most exquisite archaeological finds of modern times, this piece cannot fail to call to mind both the great success of modern Chinese archaeology and the greatness of China’s past. Thus, the practice of utilizing archaeological themes in painting reveals not only the Chinese artist’s interest in antiquity but also something about the special humanistic view of the arts in late imperial Chinese culture.
Notes

1. For instance, Han Zhuo’s 蕭振 section on the mountain in his Shanshui cun quanji 山水純全集 states: “if one who paints does not request the old method ... one is surely a man who is ignorant of the characteristics and essence of the landscape.” This quotation explains the Song artists’ view of the significance of the old method (gufa 古法).

2. For instance, in the eighth year of the Dade 大德 era (1304) the early Yuan artist Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322) executed his Red-Robed Arhat, now owned by the Liaoning Provincial Museum. According to the colophon he added in 1320, "Roughly speaking, this scroll, which I executed 17 years ago, shows some old spirit." In fact, Zhao Mengfu first mentioned the term guyi 古意 (old spirit) in the fifth year of the Dade era (1301) in his colophon for another scroll: “The value in painting is to process the old spirit. If it has no old spirit, it is not useful even if it is deliberately executed.” This quotation represents Yuan opinion on the importance of the old spirit. For the Chinese text of this colophon, see Zhang Chou's 張正 (1577–1643) Qinghe shuhuafang 清和書畫舫 (Taibei, 1974), youji 蕭集, 52.

3. For an illustration of Xiao Chen’s Su Dongpo Examining His Antiquities, see Cungong bowuyuan cang Ming Qing shanmien shuhua ji 故宮博物院藏明清山巖書畫集 (Beijing, 1985), 1:pl. 67.

4. Among these four bronze vessels, the gu first appeared in the Middle Shang, but the other three—hu, lei, and yi, which all served as wine containers—only appeared in the Late Shang. For a detailed study, see Guo Baojun 郭寶君, Shang Zhou tongqi qun zonghe yanjiu 商周銅器群綜合研究 (A comprehensive study of the Shang and Zhou bronze vessel group) (Beijing, 1981), 12 and 33.

5. For an illustration of Yu Zhiding’s Nuyue tu, see Ming Qing renwu xiaoju xunhuan 明清人物肖著描 (Selected portraits of Ming and Qing dynasties), ed. People’s Art Press of Shanghai (Shanghai, 1982), pl. 34. The final section of this handscroll is also reproduced in Yiyuan duoying 耳應彩洪 (Gems of Chinese fine art) no. 5, ed. People’s Art Press of Shanghai (Shanghai, 1979), pl. 25. According to the caption for Ming Qing renwu xiaoju xunhuan, pl. 34, this handscroll bears an inscription dated to the year of bingchen 丙辰 (1676).

6. Pou is also one of the eight vessels that first appeared during the Middle Shang; see Guo, Shang Zhou tongqi qun zonghe yanjiu, 12.

7. For an illustration of the Portrait of Monk Yu Shi, see Ming Qing renwu xiaoju xunhuan, pl. 70.


9. For an illustration of the portrait of Zhang Xun, see Ming Qing renwu xiaoju xunhuan, pl. 28.

10. For an illustration of Shuangyou tu, see Ren Bonian, ed. People’s Art Press of Tienjin (Tienjin, 1988), pl. 7.

11. For an illustration of Xie Bin’s painting of Ma Gu, see Qingdai Tainan fucheng shuhua zhanlan zhuangzi 清代臺南府城展覽專集 (A volume on the specially exhibited Qing paintings and calligraphies of Taichung Prefecture), ed. Artist Magazine (Tainan, 1975), pl. 68; see also Ming Qing shidai Taiwan shuhua zuopin 明清時代臺南書畫作品 (Painting and calligraphy of Taiwan during the Ming and Qing dynasties), ed. Council for Culture Planning and Development of the Executive Yuan (Taipei, 1984), 386. This painting is now in the private collection of Mr. Yang Wenfu 雅文富 of Taiwan.

12. According to Zhang Geng’s 張庚 Guochao huazheng-ru 國朝畫媵録 (A record of pictorial art of this dynasty), preface by the author in the thirteenth year of the Yongzheng 康熙 era, 1735, juan 1, p. 8, Xie Bin, a native of Zhejiang, was a student of Zeng Jing 曾靜 (1568–1650) and is known as a portrait artist of the early Qing dynasty. This Zhejiang artist is of course not to be mistaken for the Taiwan artist Xie Bin. There is no biographical record of the Taiwanese Xie Bin, but according to his handwritten inscriptions on his painting illustrated in Qingdai Tainan fucheng shuhua zhanlan zhuangzi, pl. 68–71, this artist was active from the 1850s to the 1870s in the Tainan district of Taiwan.

13. For an illustration of Ma Gu xianshou, see Ren Bonian, pl. 28.

14. According to Taiping guangji 太平廣記 (The extensive record), ed. Li Fang 李昉 et al. from the second to the third year of the Taiping Xingguo 太平興國 era (977–78) (Beijing, 1961), juan 3, quoting the anonymous Hanwu nei shuan 漢武內侍, the peach offered by the Queen Mother of the West to Emperor Wudi 武帝 of the Han dynasty was so special as to bear fruit only every three thousand years. The peach serves as a symbol of Daoist immortality and longevity.
15. See Ne Chenkui 倪振連, Yancheng chutu de tongqi 淮城出土的銅器 (On the bronze vessels unearthed at Yancheng), Wenwu 1959.4.5–7. For an illustration of the wheeled water basin, see Xin Zhongguo de kaogu shouhua 新中國的考古收穫 (Archaeology in new China), ed. Institute of Archaeology of Academia Sinica (Beijing, 1962), pl. LVIII-2.


17. For an illustration of Jijin qinggong, see Ren Bonian, pl. 88.


19. See Rong Geng, Shang Zhou yiqi tongkao 商周彝器通考 (The bronze of Shang and Zhou) (Beijing, 1941), 1:179. The Quanxing rubbing was first initiated in the third year of the Qiaqing 嘉慶 era (1798) by Ma Qifeng 馬起鳳, a native of Jiaxing 慈興 in Zhejiang, Subsequently, Chen Jieqi, a scholar and bronze collector of the Weixian 煙臺 District in Shandong, produced the Quanxing rubbing for the famous tripod of Maofu.

20. For an illustration of Jixing gishou, see Wu Changshuo suopinji 吳昌碩作品集 (Wu Changshuo’s collected works): Huihuatil 符華堂 (The painting section), joint ed. Xiแพง Yingse 西冷印社 (The Xi平整 Seal Club) and People’s Art Press of Shanghai (Shanghai, 1984), pl. 52. This painting is now in the collection of Mr. Wang Geyi 王徳義 of Shanghai.

21. For an illustration of Nongzhang tu, see Ren Bonian, pl. 37.

22. In Zhou li 週禮 (The rite of the Zhou Dynasty), juan 5 (Zhungan Junbo 春官宗伯), huang functions as the ceremonial jade for worship of the North.

23. Chronologically, Ren Xiong is Ren Bonian’s senior so his work would normally be introduced earlier than Ren Bonian’s. However, because of the archaeological complications involved in Ren Xiong’s painting, it is purposely discussed after Ren Bonian’s work of 1892.

24. For Ren Xiong’s Ma Gu xianshou, see Gugong beiyunyan canghidan shinhucu xuanji 故宮博物院藏歷代仕女畫選集 (Selected paintings of female figures through the ages from the collection of the Palace Museum), ed. Beijing Palace Museum (Tienjin, 1981), pl. 45.

25. The conventional system for organizing the composition of the jade pendant was first reconstructed by Guo Baojun as pl. 6 in his article Guyu xinquis 古玉新論 (Notes on some old jade objects) in the Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica 20, pt. 2 (Nanjing, 1948).

26. For a well-preserved set of jade pendants dating from the sixth to the fourth century B.C., see Doris Dohrenwend, Chinese Jade in the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto, 1971), color pl. facing p. 40.

27. For another set of jade pendants dating from the fifth to the third century B.C., see The Freer Gallery of Art, vol. 1, China, ed. Freer Gallery of Art (n.p., n.d.), pl. 19, which calls this set of jade pendants a jade necklace.


30. Lao Gan 劳幹, Juay Han jianju 居延漢簡 (Wooden tablets of the Han dynasty unearthed at Juayuan) (rpt. Taibei, 1986), 6: “The tablets would form a ce 簿 (sheaf) when they are tied and a juan 卷 (scroll) if they were rolled up.”

31. For an illustration of Seated Lady Reading Bamboo Tablets, see Ren Bonian, pl. 4.

32. Huang Yi’s rediscovery of three slabs and stelae of the Wu family offering shrines is detailed in Xiu Wushi ciangjulie 休武氏祠堂列記 (A brief account of the restoration of the Wu family offering shrines). This report was written by Huang himself but, according to Weng Fanggang in an appendix to his Liang Han juanji 右漢金石記 (Records of the metallic and mineral relics of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties), Huang Yi’s account bears the date dingsui 前未 of the Qianlong period (1789), whereas Weng Fanggang’s record is datable to the fifty-first year of the same era (1786) by his own preface.

33. The Wuliang Bei 武梁碑, a stone stele erected for Wuliang in front of his offering shrine, was first recorded during the Song dynasty by Hong Kuo 洪逵 (1117–84) in his book entitled Li shi 聯釋 (Taibei, 1986) juan 6, pp. 14–15.

34. In 1820, some thirty years after Huang Yi’s
discovery of the Wu family offering shrines, Feng Yunpeng 翁雲鵬 included some crude woodcuts of the reliefs of the shrines in his Jinshi suo 金石索 (Index to mineral and metallic monuments).

35. Huang Yi's travel diary was first printed by Wu Chongyao 吳從耀 in the third year of the Xianfeng 咸豐 era (1859) in the Yueyuantongshu 無偏堂叢書. Subsequently, based on this edition, a punctuated modern edition was made available in the first series of Congshu jichengchubian 集古集成初編 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935).

36. For Huang Yi's painting of the stone entrance pillars of Mount Shaoshi, see Wu Dacheng's copy entitled Kezai lin Huang xiaosong sima Song Luo fanghei erhishi tu 譯齋臨黃小松司馬松洛方碑二十四圖 (Twenty-four pictures from Huang Yi's visit and reallocation of stone monuments in the Song-Luo district copied by Wu Dacheng), leaf 5. This album, reproduced in Shanghai in 1917, is now in the collection of Mr. Shi Yunwen 石允文 in Tainan, Taiwan. I would like to thank Mr. Shi for producing a set of slides taken from Wu Dacheng's copy for this essay.

37. For the twentieth-century photographs of the stone pillars of Shaoshi Shique, see Edouard Chavannes, Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale (Paris, 1913–15), pl. XVI–XXII.

38. The term huangyuan 黃巖 does not appear in Huang Yi's travel diary but only in his own inscription on leaf 5 of his album.

39. For Huang Yi's painting of the stone entrance pillars erected for the mother of Kai, see Wu Dacheng's copy, leaf 7.

40. The story that the son of the Great Yu was born of a rock when it cracked under the orders of Yu was first recorded in the Han dynasty by Liu An 劉安 in his Huanan xi 洪南子. For twentieth-century scholarship on Chinese mythology in relation to this story, see Yuan Ke 龔克, Zhongguogudai shenhua 中國古代神話 (Myths of ancient China), rev. ed. (Shanghai, 1957), 222–23.

41. For the twentieth-century photographs of Kai mu shique, see Chavannes, Mission archéologique, pl. IX–XVI.

42. For Huang Yi's painting of the Taishi shique 太史祠 entrance pillars set in front of the Temple of the Central Sacred Mountain, see Wu Dacheng's copy, leaf 7.

43. For the twentieth-century photographs of Taishi shique, see Chavannes, Mission archéologique, pl. I–VIII, and Victor Segalen, The Great Statuary of China, trans. from French into English by Eleaner Levieux (Chicago, 1978), pl. 7.

44. For Huang Yi's painting of the Songyang Private School, see Wu Dacheng's copy, leaf 6.

45. The date of this gigantic stele is given by Huang Yi in his handwritten inscription for this leaf.

46. This information is first provided by Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 of the Southern Song dynasty in his Jinshi tu 金石圖 (Record of the metallic and mineral relics) (Shanghai, 1985), juan 7, p. 125.

47. For Huang Yi's painting of the Mount of Mang, see Wu Dacheng's copy, leaf 17.

48. This information is given by Huang Yi in both his travel diary and his calligraphic inscription for this leaf.

49. For Huang Yi's painting of the Guyang cave but entitled the Yi Defile, see Wu Dacheng's copy, leaf 14.

50. This observation was made by Huang Yi in his handwritten inscription for this leaf.

51. For an illustration of Ni Zan's Rongxi zhai, now in the collection of the Palace Museum in Taiwan, see Yuan si dajia 元四大家 (The four great masters of the Yuan), ed. Taiwan Palace Museum (Taipei, 1976), pl. 314.

52. For an illustration of Huang Yi's painting of the site of the Fengxiansi at Longmen, see Wu Dacheng's copy, leaf 15.

53. For the twentieth-century photographs of the panoramic view of Fengxiansi, see Chavannes, Mission archéologique, pl. 283.


55. For an illustration of Zhao Zhiqian's painting of the seated Buddha atop the stone inscription dated the second year of the Zhongdantong era (530), see Beian shengmu 藝選釋 (Calligraphy of Zhao Zhiqian) (Beijing, 1918; rpt. Taipei, 1977), pl. 52.

56. That is just six years later than the Taiwanese artist Xie Bin painted his Ma Gu xianshoushu and nine years earlier than the Shanghai artist Ren Bonian completed his painting on the archaeological theme of a lady reading a bamboo tablet sheet.
57. For an illustration of Lu Hui’s painting of the seated figure together with the ink rubbing, dated the fourth year of the Xinghe era (542), see Zhonghua mingwu meishu fazhanshanlan 中华民国美术发展展览会 (Exhibition of artistic development in the Republic of China), ed. Taiwan Museum of Art (Taizhong, 1989), pl. 18-A.

58. The best example of the Song scholar’s ability to discern antiques is undoubtedly the Dongtian qinglu ji 龙天清楼集 by Zhao Xigu 赵亦县, who was active ca. 1230 in the Southern Song Dynasty. In this book, under the sub-title “Gu tongling yiqi bian 古铜鼎彝器辨” (Discernment of zhang, ding, and other ancient bronze ritual vessels), Zhao Xigu devoted twenty paragraphs to demonstrating his knowledge of ancient bronze vessels and his ability to distinguish fakes from authentic ones.

59. For evidence that Ming literati used ancient relics, particularly ancient bronze or ceramic vessels, in their daily lives, see:
A. Yuan Hongdiao’s Ping shi 此史 (A history of vases), Tu Long’s Wenfang qiju jian 文房器具集 (Notes on stationery and vessels in a scholar’s studio) in his Kaopan yushi 考槃餘事, and Zhang Yingwen’s Ping hua pu 藝花譜 (A treatise on flowers and flower pots) on treating as flower pots the bronze zun, lei, gu, and hu dating before the Han dynasty as well as the hu of the Han dynasty.
B. The writings of Yuan Hongdiao and Tu Long cited above and section 7 of Wen Zhenheng’s Chang wu zhi 衣物志 (Notes on a scholar’s belongings) on treating the bronze yi dating prior to the Han dynasty and the bronze zhong of the Han dynasty as furnishings of scholars’ studios.

60. As a leader of the new study of jinshi xue, Weng Fanggang edited Liang Han jinshiji (Records of metallic and mineral relics in Shantung provinces) (1797, 24 juan), then Liang Zhe jinshiji 兩浙金石記 (Records of metallic and mineral relics in Zhejiang province) (1825, 18 juan).

61. Based on ink rubbings taken from actual pieces of either bronze or stone relics, Huang Yi edited his Xiao Penglai jinshi wenzi 小蓬萊閣金石文字 (Ancient calligraphy on metallic and mineral relics in the collection of Small Penglai Pavilion) in the late Jiaqing era. It was reprinted in 1834.

62. Huanyu fangheilu 寰宇訪碑錄 (A record of visiting stele around the world) was first jointly edited by Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1738-1818) and Xing Shu 邢澍 (d. early nineteenth century) in 1802. Containing entries for more than 7,800 stone monuments from all dynasties earlier than Qing, it has been considered an informative catalogue for stone relics. However, in 1864, Zhao Zhiqian edited a supplement to Huanyu fangheilu in 5 juan that recorded more than 1,800 additional ancient stele. Unquestionably, Zhao Zhiqian made an effort to supply more firsthand information for the study of jinshi xue.

63. For an illustration of Zheng Naiguang’s painting of peonies and two bronze vessels, see Zheng Naiguang baihua huaji 郑乃珖百花畫集 (One hundred kinds of flowers painted by Zheng Naiguang) (Beijing, 1980), pl. 24.

64. In 1968, the royal tomb of Liu Sheng 刘勝, Prince Ching of the State of Zhongshan 中山 of the Western Han dynasty, was discovered at Mancheng in Hebei. For a detailed report of this discovery, see Mancheng Hanmu fajue baogao 河北漢墓發掘報告 (Excavation of the Han tomb at Mancheng), ed. Institute of Archaeology, Academia Sinica, 2 vols. (Beijing, 1980), which has a color illustration of the gilded bronze incense burner, 2:1, IX, as does Xin Zhongguo chutu wenshu 新中国出土文物 (Historical relics unearthed in new China) (Beijing, 1972), pl. 98.
THE MONUMENTAL PILLARS OF FİRÜZ ŞAH TUGHLUQ

BY WILLIAM JEFFREY MCKIBBEN

The Tughluq sultans of fourteenth-century Delhi ushered in a period of innovative architectural patronage. No monuments epitomize the spirit of this age more than a group of pillars, or lats (Hindi: lār), installed by Firuz Shâh Tughluq in important sites associated with his reign. The seventeenth-century historian Firisti credits Firuz Shâh with erecting ten pillars,¹ but only four are known today: two in his capital Firuzabâd (in modern-day Delhi) and two others, in the towns of Fatehâbâd and Hissâr, 209 and 164 kilometers from Delhi, today in the state of Haryana. In all four instances, Firuz Shâh appropriated pillars of ancient origin from their original sites and incorporated them into new sites he founded.

Although lats have been studied in their pre-Islamic context, they have received little attention as Islamic monuments. The well-known pillar standing in the Kôlâ Firuz Shâh in Delhi today has been included in most surveys of sultanate architecture, but its relation to three other lats associated with Firuz Shâh has been pointed out only recently. Some scholars have argued the significance of the lats as cosmogonic symbols,² others their role as devices of legitimation and symbolic appropriation,³ but, overall, opinions as to their purpose have been inconclusive. A reexamination of the role of the lat in Indo-Islamic architecture seems, therefore, to be called for. As a result of this reexamination, moreover, it seems possible to show that the lat functioned as a commemorative monument not only within Islamic tradition but in Indian tradition as well. Indeed, in the unique ethos of fourteenth-century India, the lat seems to have been an emblem of sovereignty, embracing ideas of kingship, cosmos, and Islam.

India’s Islamic architecture bears closest affinities to the building traditions of the eastern Iranian world, first under the Ghaznavid and Ghurid rulers of Sistan, Sind, and Afghanistan and later under the Seljuqs of Iran. Developing out of this environment, India evolved a distinct Indo-Islamic architecture, eclectic in forms, building methods, and decoration and indebted to indigenous technological ingenuity and aesthetic tastes. The Tughluq dynasty follows nearly a century and a half of Islamic rule and building in north India. Each of the Tughluq rulers was an architectural patron in his own right, but Firuz Shâh Tughluq (r. a.h. 752-90/a.d. 1351-88), the third of the line, was most prolific and is best remembered. His reign of nearly thirty-eight years witnessed an unprecedented level of patronage, although today only a few monuments, a fraction of the total of his projects, survive to attest his interest in and lavish patronage of building.

The most impressive remains from Firuz Shâh’s reign are found in Delhi, where a congregational mosque still stands next to his now ruined palace complex in the Kôlâ Firuz Shâh. The remains of the Madrasa-i Firuz Shâh overlook a large tank at Hauz Khâss, on the south side of Delhi. In the city of Hissâr, the well-preserved remains of a mosque and palace complex testify to the extent of the sultan’s patronage in provincial centers. All these monuments are characterized by rubble masonry, stucco, and occasional stone revetment—materials that Firuz Shâh preferred but whose ephemeral properties have contributed to the loss of so many of his buildings. Among Firuz Shâh’s notable projects are the restorations of the monuments of the earlier Delhi sultans, the best known being the repair and elevation of the Qub Minâr.⁴ The sultan’s determination to preserve the heritage of his predecessors is an important factor in understanding the kind of patronage he fostered. Undoubtedly, the most intriguing monuments of all those attributed to his patronage are the four pillars that he appropriated from ancient pre-Islamic sites and had installed in his new foundations in Fatehâbâd, Hissâr, and Firuzabâd.

Firuz Shâh’s preference for erecting pillars, or lats, is not explained by contemporary sources. In fact, he appears to have been the only Tughluq ruler to have erected them. According to the fourteenth-century historian Shams-i Siraj ‘Afif, his undertaking emulated the earlier Mu’izzî Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. a.h. 607-33/a.d. 1211-36), who placed an iron pillar of Gupta-period origin in the courtyard of Delhi’s first mosque, the Quwwat al-Islam.⁵ Among the inscriptions on the iron pillar is one identifying the Gupta king Samudragupta. Although the original context of the iron pillar is not known, it is believed to have been a dhvaja stambha (pillar standard) for a Vaishnav temple.
Two of the four surviving Tughluq lats are well documented by contemporary historians as having been erected by Firuz Shâh, but the other two are attributed to him only because of their association with sites he founded. The attributions are plausible since no other builder is known to have provided patronage on the scale required for such undertakings. The prominent historian of the period, Diyâ’ al-Dîn Barâni, does not comment on the sultan’s practice of erecting pillars, but he died in a.h. 759/a.d. 1357, a decade before the installation of two pillars in Firuzabad.

Several questions about the pillars remain unanswered. Why did Firuz Shâh appropriate ancient pillars rather than having new ones carved? Was he knowledgeable about their origins? For what purpose did he intend them? Why did he choose the lat—an architectural form foreign to traditional canons of Islamic architecture? The answers to these questions may provide insight into this unique phenomenon in Indo-Islamic architecture. The discussion that follows surveys the archaeological remains, then focuses on the role of the pillar in pre-Islamic Indian society, and finally examines the relation between the lat and the Islamic tower, or minâr, as it was understood and employed by the Delhi sultans.

The Archaeological Remains

The best-known pillar (fig. 1) is located in the citadel, the Kōtlâ Firuz Shâh, in the sultan’s capital Firuzabad in modern Delhi. Retrieved from the site of Topra in a northern province along the Jumna River, it was transported by boat to the walls of Kōtlâ and raised on a three-storied structure in front of the Jamî Masjid, or Friday mosque, on a.h. 4 Safar 769/a.d. 30 September 1367. The remarkable events surrounding its initial discovery at Topra and subsequent removal and installation in Firuzabad are recorded in an eyewitness account, the Sîrat-i Firuz Shâhi. The lat’s association with the mosque is made clear in the Sîrat and also by ‘Aflî, who states that it was set up as a minâr for the mosque of Firuzabad, which is close to Firuz Shâh’s palace and is believed to have been his state mosque.

The Topra-Firuzabad lat bears several pre-Islamic inscriptions identified in modern times as the edicts of the third-century B.C. Mauryan Emperor Aśoka. Topra is located north of Delhi along the Jumna River, within the region where Mauryan columns are known to have been erected. The original context of the Topra column is unknown, but local tradition held that it originally stood beside a temple.

The Topra-Firuzabad lat presently stands 12.98 meters above the roof level of the foundation structure, according to Cunningham’s calculation. An additional 1.25 meters are sunk into the foundation. The diameter is 64.3 centimeters at the top and 97.3 at its base. The surface of the upper portion of the pillar is polished, a characteristic of stonework of the Mauryan period. The lat is believed originally to have supported a
capital, but no mention of one is made by fourteenth-century historians. Firûz Shâh ordered a new capital for the pillar, a globe and crescent emblem, but it, too, is lost. 10

The lat was raised on top of a structure commonly referred to as the lat pyramid, constructed to provide a foundation for the lat and elevate it to a higher position. The structure, designed by the sultan himself according to the Siyâsât-i Firûz Shâh, has no precedent in Indo-Islamic architecture or Islamic architecture, nor was it copied at any later time. 11 Neither a pyramid nor a funerary monument, as its modern name implies, the building is a three-story structure with a solid core, vaulted corridors around its perimeter on each level, and stairs in corner chambers that permitted access to the upper levels. The original corner chambers have since disappeared, but an early drawing shows them on each of the levels. 12

The lat is situated to the north and in front of the mosque’s primary entrance (fig. 2) and was originally connected to it by a corridor (sabat). Both contemporary accounts relate that the lat was designated the mînâr-i zarrîn, or golden mînâr, serving the mosque to which it was appended. The combined evidence leaves little doubt that the mosque and the lat were conceived by Firûz Shâh as parts of one complex.

In the same year, a.h. 769/A.D. 1367, a second lat (fig. 3) was brought to Firûzâbâd. It, too, was discovered by the sultan in the northern province at the site of Meerut and transported to the capital with the same meticulous care as the Topra pillar. 13 It was installed on the ridge four miles to the north of the Kôtdâ next to the now ruined hunting palace, the kushk-i shikâr, also referred to as the Jahânmumâ (World Viewing) Palace. According to 'Afîf, the installation of the lat was an occasion for celebration, and its

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Fig. 2. Topra pillar, foundation structure and Jami’ Masjid, Kôtdâ Firûz Shâh (Firûzâbâd), Delhi. Photo: author.

Fig. 3. Meerut pillar, kushk-i shikâr (Firûzâbâd), Delhi. Photo courtesy of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Center for Art and Archaeology.
situation on the ridge led to the growth of a large town and the building of residences for nobles of the court. Although the kuskh-i shikār developed into an extensive complex that included a mosque, no evidence suggests that the lat was associated with it. Today only two architectural monuments, the Pir Ghāib (probably part of the kuskh) and the Charburj Masjid (originally a tomb), stand in the vicinity of the pillar. The archaeological remains have been obscured by modern urban development, leaving the original context of the site uncertain. The Meerut pillar is referred to in contemporary accounts as a pillar, not a mānār; it served as a lasting memorial of the sultan’s power.\textsuperscript{14}

Smaller than the Topra column and possessed of a polished surface, the Meerut pillar stands 9.88 meters above its foundation, its diameter 74.98 centimeters at the top and 90.98 at the base. Damaged by an explosion in the eighteenth century, it was reassembled in 1867 at its original site, where it remains standing today. The Meerut pillar also contains inscriptions of Asoka’s edicts,\textsuperscript{15} thus confirming its Mauryan origin.

The third lat (fig. 4) is located in the town of Fatehabād, or Fatehābād,\textsuperscript{16} Firūz Shāh’s earliest urban foundation, built in the first year of his reign, A.H. 752/A.D. 1351–52, and located on the road connecting the important sites of Delhi, Hansī, and Multān. The lat may date from this time, although no firm evidence supports this claim. Today it stands in the center of the courtyard of a modern ʿidgāh, but its original context is not known, and whether the pillar was free-standing or associated with a prior architectural structure remains a mystery. Fatehābād continued to be an important site into Mughal times, when a Humayun-period mosque was built on the site. Mughal patronage of the pillar is unlikely, and there is no evidence of any other builder at the site after the Tughluq period.\textsuperscript{17}

The Fatehābād lat consists of a single column of beige stone standing 3.1 meters above the foundation. This piece is surmounted by a drum of white stone and four sections of red stone. The column is crowned by a red stone āmalaka, a round fluted element of Indian origin,\textsuperscript{18} and a white stone cap raising the height of the column.
to 4.8 meters above the foundation. There is an estimated 1 to 1.5 meters below the ground. The diameter of the lat is 59 centimeters at its base and 52 centimeters at its top.

The most remarkable feature of the Fatehabad lat is its inscription (fig. 5), one of the longest Indo-Islamic epigraphs of the Delhi sultanate; it is historical in content and specific to the Tughluq dynasty. The date of the lat’s installation is not known or given in the epigraph, but specific historical events referred to in the epigraph support attribution to Firuz Shah. The bottom section of the lat appears to be part of an ancient pillar brought to the site during the Tughluq period. Although a Mauryan origin is unlikely, it is nevertheless reused. Citing similarities in stone type and column diameters, Cunningham believed that the pillar at Fatehabad and the pillar in nearby Hisar were originally parts of the same piece of stone. If his supposition is correct, then these columns were probably installed simultaneously.

The fourth pillar (fig. 6) is in the town of Hisar, or Hisar-i Firuza, Firuz Shah’s other northern outpost, 45 kilometers from Fatehabad and built shortly after it in A.H. 757/A.D. 1356. The lat is located in the court of the mosque (fig. 7), whose name, Lat-ki Masjid, is derived from it. The
Lât-ki Masjid is situated to the south of Firûz Shâh’s palace within the fortress walls of Hisâr-i Firûza. This hypostyle mosque, built with reused pillars on its interior, sits on a raised platform, which also contains a domed structure (variously identified as a gate or tomb) and a tank. The lat can easily be seen within the fort walls, but its top is barely visible from outside the fortress. It is thought to be contemporary with the mosque, but, in the absence of textual reference and inscription, this cannot be confirmed.

The column is constructed in four stages. The bottom one, of beige stone 3.3 meters in height, is believed to be a section of a pillar of ancient origin. Upper drums of red sandstone are separated by bands of white stone, bringing the height of the lat to 13.75 meters. The decorative bands are believed to have been cut for this monument. It has been observed that the band on the lowest section resembles the gallery of a minaret. The lat is crowned by an amalaka with an iron rod protruding from the top, perhaps to support a finial ornament. The Hisâr lat is now devoid of inscriptions, although Cunningham observed cryptic inscriptions on it, which he believed to be the names of pilgrims who visited its original site in the first century A.D.\(^2\)

These four lats constitute the only known surviving pillars of sultanate patronage belonging to the fourteenth century. A fifth column (fig. 8) was erected by a certain Ibrâhîm Nâ‘îb Bârbak beside the Jaunpur Fort Mosque in modern-day Uttar Pradesh. Jaunpur was founded by Firûz Shâh as an outpost for his campaign to Bengal. Ibrâhîm Nâ‘îb Bârbak, identified by Barani as Firûz Shâh’s brother, served as governor of the region and oversaw construction of the mosque ordered by Firûz Shâh. The pillar’s inscription commemorates the completion of the mosque and identifies the patron and date of installation, a.h. 761/ A.D. 1360.\(^3\) Although the Jaunpur Fort Mosque incorporates reused pillars, the lat does not appear to have been reused. It was probably cut simultaneously with the completion of the mosque. Its unique profile bears little resemblance to the lats in Firûzâbâd, Fatehâbâd, and Hisâr, and the lat is believed to be one of a pair. Whether the surviving pillar is reused or was cut from a preexisting column is unknown, but its location in the courtyard in front of the mosque is analogous to the other lats and could plausibly convey the “idea” of appropriation despite its contemporary rather than antique origin.

If Firishta’s attribution of ten monumental pillars to Firûz Shâh is accurate, then six (excluding the Jaunpur pillar) are unaccounted for. While Firishta does not locate any of the lats, the four that survive are all in sites closely associated with Firûz Shâh, lending credence to the assertion of his patronage despite the absence of any foundation inscriptions. Furthermore, attribution of both Firûzâbâd lats is corroborated by contemporary literary accounts.

**The Pillar in Pre-Islamic Indian Society**

The pillar has no precedent in Islamic architecture outside India. Its origins are to be found in Vedic society, where it served as the yupa, or sacrificial pillar. It is described in the Rg Veda as the instrument used by the Vedic god Indra to separate the parts of the universe and maintain cosmic order—an axis mundi, or world axis, whose nadir plummeted to the depths of cosmic waters and whose zenith reached the heavens.\(^4\) Pillar
cults were ubiquitous in northern India from the Vedic period (ca. 1500–800 B.C.) on, and by the third century B.C. the pillar had found monumental expression under the Mauryan rulers. Nearly forty pillars from the Mauryan period have been discovered in the Doab, the Gangetic basin. Although commonly attributed to the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka, not all were in fact erected by him. The pillars’ symbolic associations with the axis mundi are suggested by the methods of their installation: their shafts were sunk to considerable depths, often in water-logged subsoil, reflecting their conceptual origins in cosmic waters.

Some of the pillars were inscribed and crowned by emblems that identified them with particular sects. Both lats appropriated by Firuz Shah for Firuzabadd are inscribed with Ashoka’s edicts, which stress the importance of dharma, a code of ethics associated with Buddhism. Pillars thus became recognized as emblems of universal order and were referred to as pillars of law (dharma stambha). Because the king is viewed as the trustee of dharma, the pillar acquired significance as a royal emblem. During the Mauryan period, it came to symbolize the “divine role of Indian kingship.”

The association of pillars with ideas of Indian kingship may have had Indo-Aryan origins; by the Mauryan period, it was influenced by the Achaemenid Persian institution of kingship and the tradition of Persian monumental stone architecture. According to Indo-Aryan cosmology, the sovereign’s authority derives from his identification with the axis mundi and his role in maintaining universal order as trustee of dharma.

The cosmogonic function of the pillar seems to have survived or been revived by Firuz Shah, to judge from a passage in the Sirat-i Firuz Shahi describing the Topra column as originating from the “watery bowels of the earth, rising to the third mansion of the moon (the Pleiades).” Although the Topra lat installed by Firuz Shah does not appear to have any specific association with water, being removed a short distance from the baoli or stepwell in the Kotla, it is situated beside the Jumna River.

Both the Topra and Meerut pillars installed by Firuz Shah in his capital were believed to have had mythic origins. ‘Affil notes that they were associated with the Pandavas, whose exploits are told in the epic Mahabharata. The author confesses to coming by this knowledge by reading historical works, but he neglects to identify them. In addition, he relates that, according to local tradition, a talisman buried beneath the pillar at Topra possessed the power to bring misery to humankind if disturbed (a kind of Pandora’s box). In fact, Firuz Shah had a foundation stone discovered under the lat brought back to Firuzabadd and reinstalled beneath it—an act probably not dictated by practical considerations alone.

Firuz Shah’s successful removal of the Topra pillar undoubtedly enhanced his reputation among the local populace and attested to his divinely sanctioned sovereignty. According to ‘Affil, learned Hindus queried about the pillar at Topra informed the sultan’s advisors that its inscriptions foretold Firuz Shah’s actions. But, unlike the nagari script of Iltutmish’s iron pillar, the Brahmi characters of the Mauryan inscription on the Topra pillar were not decipherable in the fourteenth century, which may explain the apocryphal interpretation put forward by the learned men of the local community. Significantly, Firuz Shah was not the first ruler to attempt to remove the pillar. The Sirat reports that the Qaghatay Khan Duwa (ca. A.H. 690–706/ca. A.D. 1291–1306) and a second Mongol, Qulugh Khwaja, had both been unable to move it. The Qaghatay Khan Tarmashirin (A.H. 726–34/A.D. 1326–34) from Bukhara, who invaded India in 1328–29, had been equally unsuccessful.

The Lat and the Minar

In addition to its cosmological associations, the lat attached to the Firuzabadd mosque served as a minar. In fact, its designation as the minar-i zarin, or golden minar, and its proximity to the mosque underscored this role. The column at Hisar was also located next to the mosque, but whether the other two lats were associated with liturgical architecture is not known. As a form, lats belong to the classification of nonfunctional minars. By the fourteenth century, the Islamic minar was no longer exclusively used as a madhana, a tower for the call to prayer. In fact, many minars stood independent of any architectural structure, and they gradually acquired other functions and meanings. While initially prominent as an architectural form in India, the minar apparently appealed less to Tughluq builders. The detached minars favored by the earliest sultans of
Delhi, such as the Qutb Minār and the unfinished mīnār of ‘Ala’ al-Dīn Khaljī, were not copied by later sultans. Instead, the mīnār assumed mimetic form, embellishing the portal ṭwāns of several early mosques, such as those at the Khirki Masjid in Jahanpanah (Begampur) in Delhi and the Aḥfāʾrī-dīn-kā-jhōnprā Mosque in Ajmēr, where they essentially served an aesthetic role.

The declining popularity of the mīnār in India’s sultanate architecture may reflect its changing role in Indo-Islamic architecture after the thirteenth century A.D., evident in the epigraphical content of the monuments themselves. Where-as the epigraphy of early sultanate monuments of India was intended for the non-Muslim population, by the fourteenth century it was increasingly directed toward Muslims.55 In either case, epigraphy on public monuments served as a means of symbolic affirmation,56 regardless of its legibility or the level of literacy of the local population. In some instances, the form of the monument itself communicated the desired intention of the builder, the best known example being the Qutb Minār, whose towering profile reminded passersby of the Islamic presence. Yet none of Fīrūz Shāh’s lats attained the physical stature of the Qutb Minār, which is visible from great distances. Instead, they are situated within more confined contexts, which, however, did not detract from their role as instruments of communication or their recog-nition as symbolic affirmations of the Islamic presence.

By Fīrūz Shāh’s time, the lat had in all likelihood acquired a role conceptually equivalent to that of the mīnār. In the fourteenth century, its association with liturgical architecture was no more necessary than the mīnār’s association with the mosque; the call to prayer most likely was issued from the rooftop of the mosque. The form of the lat itself, devoid of any means of ascent, militates against such a function. Instead, stairs in the riwāq of the mosque (still extant in the Lāt-ki Masjid at Ḥiṣār) provide access to the roof, where the adhān could be announced. It is also probable that the upper story of the lat pyramid was itself used for the adhān in Fīrūzbād.57 In addition, Fīrūz Shāh ordered a clocktower (ṭās-i ghantāyāl) for the adhān to be built in the Kōṭlā, which would have rendered obsolete the mīnār’s function as a prayer tower.58

The Fatehābād lat stands apart from the other three Fīrūz Shāh lats because of its long inscription (figs. 4 and 5).59 The almost complete absence of historical epigraphy from the Tughluq period has caused serious problems for the historian. The scarcity of epigraphy on Tughluq architecture probably derives not from conscious avoidance but from the perishable media—stucco and paint—that were used.60 In fact, numerous fourteenth-century stone foundation inscriptions in outlying sites in Bihar indicate that historical epigraphy played a significant role on the sub-imperial level.61 This body of epigraphy must be seen as reflecting an analogous but now largely lost tradition of epigraphic decoration on monuments of the Tughluq sultans in Delhi.

The Fatehābād lat inscription, rendered in Persian naskhī script, is in fact one of the longest historical inscriptions found on sultanate architecture. Cut in concentric bands around the column, the text relates historical circumstances of the first three Tughluq sultans, focusing on events that brought them to power.62 Reflecting as it does a concern for the succession of the Tughluq sultans, and Fīrūz Shāh’s accession in particular, the inscription supports an attribution of both the epigraph and the installation of the lat to Fīrūz Shāh. Significantly, the lat was erected in the spot where a number of the events mentioned in the inscription actually took place and where the “undisputed sultanate of Fīrūz Shāh was firmly established.”63 The Fatehābād lat thus appears to have functioned primarily as a commemorative monument.

The practice of building commemorative monuments in India had Ghāznavid and Ghūrid precedents. The twelfth-century towers at Ghazna and Jām, which stood independently of any known religious or secular building, are believed to have served commemorative roles. These so-called victory towers at Ghazna, attributed to Māstud III (ca. A.D. 1114–15) and Bahrām Shāh (ca. A.D. 1117–53),64 are believed to have been erected to commemorate and give thanks for successful campaigns.65 Likewise, the tower at Jām in modern Afghanistan, the former Ghūrid capital Fīrūzkūh, is believed to have commemorated the victories of the Ghūrid ruler Ghiyāth al-Dīn (ca. A.D. 1153–1203).66 Inscriptions on all these towers support their interpretation as visible manifestations of fath-nāmas, or official communiques proclaiming successful foreign campaigns to the populace back home.67 Furthermore, the epigraphy on the Ghaznavid and Ghūrid towers doubtless affirmed the patron’s pious intentions as much as it celebrated his military achievements.68
intent of the tower as an instrument of propaganda, testifying to the power and prestige of the patron as well as expressing his personal piety, was transmitted to the subcontinent in the early twelfth century A.D. and is first encountered in India's earliest monuments, such as the Qutb Minār—whose commemorative function is further corroborated by its own inscriptions referring to it as a *jayastambha*, or victory tower.

The commemorative role of the tower continued in the fourteenth century A.D., when Fīrūz Shāh used it at Fatehābād to signify the dynastic pedigree of the Tughluq ruling house. The shift in the semiotics of the lat from an exclusively cosmological role to one that encompassed ideas of kingship and legitimation probably occurred under Ilutmish, who may have appropriated the iron pillar for the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque in part to glorify the achievements of past civilizations and affirm the ideological beginnings of Islamic rule in India by aligning himself with pre-Islamic sovereigns. The lats installed by Fīrūz Shāh in Fīrūzābād are known to have been erected in conscious imitation of this earlier sultan of Delhi. Moreover, the Fatehābād lat inscription, recognizing Tughluq ascendency, underscored the lat's commemorative role. Thus, the lat acquired a syncretic role, assimilating ideas of pre-Islamic origin with meanings conveyed by the Islamic *mīnār*.

Other factors more immediately rooted in Fīrūz Shāh's reign corroborate his motives for erecting commemorative, albeit propagandist, monuments. Both Barānī and Afīf commented at length on the disputed circumstances surrounding the sultan's accession: Muhammad bin Tughluq's untimely death precipitated a power struggle for the Tughluq throne. According to Barānī, Muhammad's designation of his nephew, Fīrūz Shāh, as his successor was challenged by rival claimants including his own son. Fīrūz Shāh ultimately succeeded in thwarting these claims and winning the approval of the *ṣulamā*. But he inherited from his uncle an empire considerably diminished in territory as well as political and economic strength. He was never to recover Tughluq territories in Bengal and the Deccan lost by his predecessor, but his campaigns to Bengal, Gujarat, and Sind, undertaken to suppress rebellions, strengthened his tenuous hold over these provinces and simultaneously replenished the state treasury. To his good fortune, Fīrūz Shāh's sovereignty was never seriously tested, for he lacked the military prowess and resources to defend his empire from any real threat. The proliferation of public buildings and engineering projects, as well as the erection of monumental lats, served to mask such weaknesses by providing visible expressions of Tughluq sovereignty. From the time of his earliest foundations, the sultan's motives for building must have included the practical need for public displays of his authority.

Fīrūz Shāh's earliest building project at Fatehābād, which he undertook while traveling home to the capital after the Sind campaign in which Muhammad died, marked the occasion of his accession to power as well as the birth of his first son. The Fatehābād lat, inscribed and erected immediately following his accession, put to rest any dispute about his claim to the throne. The emphasis on Tughluq lineage in its inscription reinforces its interpretation as an instrument of legitimation. Moreover, Fīrūz Shāh is known to have exploited other means of legitimation. In the early part of his reign, he sought investiture from the 'Abbāsid caliph, who resided in Egypt in the fourteenth century. From the caliph he received robes of investiture and a marble footprint of the Prophet (*qadam-i shānīf*), which he installed in the Tomb of Fath Khān in the Dargāh of Qadam Sharīf in Fīrūzābād.

The lats' formal affinities to the iron pillar installed by Ilutmish in the courtyard of the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque underscored their role as legitimation devices. Why Fīrūz Shāh imitated Ilutmish's iron pillar and chose not to build a monument such as the Qutb Minār is unclear. He certainly knew the Qutb Minār well: he was responsible for its repair after lightning struck it and for increasing its height by two stories. Perhaps the aborted *mīnār* of 'Ala' al-Dīn Khaljī nearby was a reminder of the unrealistic ambitions of some Delhi sultans, or possibly the rubble masonry materials preferred by Fīrūz Shāh precluded the construction of such a lofty structure. But more likely the appropriated form held a special appeal for the sultan. The pre-Islamic pillar, appropriated for Muslim purposes, became a public affirmation of the sultanate's beginnings in the Indian subcontinent. It represented the broader notion of Indian kingship, regardless of whether specific names or deeds were known. Recognition of the pre-Islamic Indian past (*jāhilīyya*) as an authoritative basis for rule and linkage to an uninterrupted line of Indian
sovereigns served to legitimize the sultan’s claim to power in a country where the Muslim population remained a minority. The lat thus represented an archetypal symbol of Indian sovereignty, embracing past generations of both pre-Islamic and Islamic rulers. The act of appropriating such a potent emblem of Indian sovereignty provided more than a temporal link. The lats also amplified the renewed role of the Muslim capital and provincial outposts by symbolically marking the expansion of the Dār al-Islām. The building of the capital Firuzābād, the fifth city of Delhi, was a politically expedient act on Firuz Shâh’s part. Following the ill-fated transfer of the capital to Daulatābād in the Deccan by his predecessor, Muhammad bin Tughluq, Firuz Shâh quickly reestablished his capital in Delhi. The return of the political center to the heart of the Tughluq state may have masked the tenuous hold of Tughluq sovereignty in the Deccan. But by returning to the site of the 150-year-old imperial center of Muslim India, Firuz Shâh reasserted his tie to the nucleus or omphalos of the Dār al-Islām. His motives are even more apparent in his resolve to repair the monuments of his predecessors and revitalize their institutions through lavish endowments (waqf).

Firuz Shâh located his new capital Firuzābād to the north of the earlier cities of the Delhi sultans. On the north end of Firuzābād, he built the citadel, or Kūltā, which contained his palace and state mosque, where public ceremonies involving the sultan took place. Such public ceremonies served as visible reminders of the sultan’s authority—a point underscored by the eventual placement of the lat, a visual emblem of authority, in front of the state mosque. On the south end of Firuzābād at Hajū Khāṣ, he built the Madrasa-i Firuz Shâhi, which grew into a major center of religious learning that boasted a community of scholars rivaling all others in the Islamic world. The location of the religious center between the old and new capitals unified these locales and revitalized the area. The Madrasa-i Firuz Shâhi appears to have held special significance for the sultan, for it is here that he had his own mortal remains interred.

At Hiṣṣār, the location of the lat in the courtyard of the congregational mosque adjacent to the sultan’s palace has analogies to the plan of the imperial mosque in Firuzābād. A few kilometers away at Fatehābād, the lat marked the place where his reign commenced and the site of his earliest building project. Collectively, the lats of Firuz Shâh acquired meaning as metaphors of the sultan’s power, emphasizing not only the revitalization of the Islamic empire in north India but its link to empires of India’s past. Although the mosque enhanced this symbolism, it was not a requisite part of it. Through the physical transfer of the lat from its antique site to the new Islamic capital, the empires of pre-Islamic India (Dār al-Fīrāb) were symbolically incorporated into the Dār al-Islām.

Firuz Shâh occupied an exalted position apart from other builders. Indeed, he is highly esteemed by later rulers as a beneficent patron and archetypal builder. In Islamic society generally, the act of building structures to house religious institutions and to accommodate religious practice was a duty incumbent on the sultan. Moreover, architectural patronage came to be accepted as a means of expressing the pious intentions of the builder during the Tughluq period. Firuz Shâh’s lats can certainly be viewed as visual expressions of his piety. This intent is best expressed in words attributed to the sultan himself:

Among the gifts that God bestowed on me, His humble servant, was a desire to erect public buildings. So I built many mosques and colleges and monasteries, that the learned and the elders, the devout and the holy, might worship God in these edifices and aid the kind builder with their prayers.

These sentiments, which illuminate Firuz Shâh’s motives, remain part of his legacy.
Notes

1. Muḥammad Qāsim Firishta, Taʾrīkh-i Firishta, or Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī, trans. John Briggs as History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India (Calcutta, 1829, 1900), 1:270. Firishta’s number may be exaggerated.


4. Fīrūz Shāh’s restoration projects are enumerated in the Futūhāt-i Fīrūz Shāhī, trans. H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, History of India as Told by Its Own Historians (London: Trubner and Co., 1871–73; rpt. Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, n.d.), 3:383–85. The sultan’s repair to the Qub Minār is also noted in an inscription on the Qub itself. See J. A. Page, An Historical Memoir on the Qub, Delhi, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India 22 (Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1926), 34.

5. Shams-i Sirāj ‘Aff, Taʾrīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī, in Elliot and Dowson, History of India, 3:353. Also see Page, An Historical Memoir on the Qub, Delhi, 44–45.


7. The Sirat-i Fīrūz Shāhī manuscript is in the Khuda Baksh Public Library, Patna. The author of the Sirat is not known, nor is his patron certain. The Patna manuscript, dated A.H. 1002, is a copy of a lost manuscript written in A.H. 772. Portions of the text translated by Mohammad Hamid Kuraishi were published in Page, Kotla Firoz Shah, 33 ff. The Patna manuscript also contains thirteen paintings believed to have been copied from the original manuscript. These paintings, reproduced by Page, illustrate the conveyance of the Topra column to Fīrūzābād, the pulley system engineered to maneuver it, and the ground plans of the successive stories of the foundation structure.


11. The structure designed by Fīrūz Shāh as the foundation for the lat has close formal affinities to Buddhist stūpas, which contained pillars embedded in their centers. Although the Topra pillar was raised above the top level of Fīrūz Shāh’s structure for greater visibility, the stūpa nonetheless provided a model for the design of a structure intended to support a monolithic pillar. Remains of stūpas in Haryana could have provided prototypes for Fīrūz Shāh’s monument. In addition, the stūpa had a solid core with a circumference of passageways that permitted circumambulation. Fīrūz Shāh’s design incorporated a perimeter of vaulted passages, which also allowed for circumambulation, but their original purpose is uncertain. Similarities between the monuments are coincidental, and no ritual association is implied.

12. A diagram of the lat pyramid appeared in Asiatick Researches 1 (1788): pl. opposite p. 379. Another drawing of the building in the Archaeological Survey of India has been reproduced in Agha Mahdi Husain, Tughluq Dynasty (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1976), pl. opposite p. 421, where it is incorrectly identified as the kushki shikār. The same drawing is reproduced in M. R. Tarafdar, "Notes on Indo-Muslim Architecture," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan (1966), fig. 1; and in
Abha Rani, Tughluq Architecture of Delhi (Varanāsi: Bharati Prakashar, 1991), fig. 25. Also see the elevation drawing in Welch and Crane, "The Tughluqs," fig. 3.

13. 'Afīf, Tārīkh, 350, 358. The Meerut lat is not mentioned in the Srat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī, but I have not consulted the manuscript firsthand to confirm this. The Meerut pillar was first published by Cunningham in Archaeological Survey of India, Report 1 (1871): 168–69; 5 (1875): 142–44.

14. 'Afīf, Tārīkh, 358, states: "Every great king took care during his reign to set up some lasting memorial of his power."


17. Fatehābād suffered from repeated invasions. During Babur’s reign, Humayun besieged the fortress and afterwards was appointed governor of the region. An inscribed tablet dated to his reign has been placed in the wall of a modern ʿidgāh, and a mosque erected during Humayun’s reign still stands near the site. See Shokoohy, Haryana I, 12–15, 22–23.

18. The ṣamalaka is the crowning element of the shikara of nagara-style temples of north India. It encircled a conceptual pillar or axis of the Hindu temple that symbolized, among other things, the axis mundi. See Stella Kramrisch, The Hindu Temple (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946), 2:350–51. By the fourteenth century A.D., the ṣamalaka was a well-established feature of Indo-Islamic architecture, seen on the tomb of Ghīyāḥ al-Dīn Tughluq in Tughluqābād. The use of the ṣamalaka on the Fatehābād and Ḩīṣār lats probably reflects the influence of local workmen.


25. For a cogent analysis of Āsoka’s pillars, see Irwin, "Āsoka’s Pillars."


28. Irwin, "Akbar and the Cosmic Pillar," 48 and 50, n. 3, suggests that Muslims’ knowledge of pillar cults was derived from archaic pillar-cult myths of pre-Islamic Arabia, whose origins in turn are to be found in the steppes of Asia. See also Irwin, "Islam and the Cosmic Pillar" (1988), 141–42.

29. ‘Afīf, Tārīkh, 350; Strat, 34.

30. Strat, 34; ‘Afīf, Tārīkh, 351–52. Also see Irwin, "Islam and the Cosmic Pillar" (1989), 397, who suggests that, by removing the pillars to Fīrūzābād, Fīrūz Shāh hoped to "harness their reputed magical power to his own sovereign ambitions."
31. 'Afff, Ta'rikh, 352.

32. *Strât*, 34. The account in the *Strât of the Mongols* repeated failures to move the Topra pillar may indicate the author's concern about the Mongol encroachment. The *Strât* was written before Timur's incursion into Delhi at the end of the century. 'Afff's account, on the other hand, was composed afterwards, and his narrative is peppered with references to this decisive event.

33. *Strât*, 34; 'Afff, Ta'rikh, 350. The appellation mînâr was used during Firûz Shâh's reign; the Qub Mînâr was known as the mînâr of Muhammad ibn Sam, and 'Alî al-Dîn Khaljî's unfinished tower was also referred to as a mînâr. Yet there is no indication that Ilutmish's iron pillar was referred to as a mînâr. Also see A. B. M. Husain, *The Manâra in Indo-Muslim Architecture* (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1970), 54–58, 107–14, which refers to all four lats as mînârs.


38. The tâs-i ghariyâl was probably an apparatus used to signal the hour of prayer rather than a structure. See S. H. Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History* (Bombay, 1939), 1:324–25.

39. All four lats had pre-Islamic inscriptions, but only the Fatehâbâd column has an Islamic epigraph. It is not known whether the inscription has survived in its entirety. The bottom portion of the column has badly eroded. A one-line inscription of pre-Islamic origin also remains un-faced on the Fatehâbâd lat.

The Asokan edicts on the Topra and Meerut pillars were left intact by Firûz Shâh. The Topra column in Firûzâbâd contains, in addition to Asokan inscriptions, two nagarr inscriptioned dat-ed Samvat 1581/A.D. 1425, one of which mentions Ibrâhîm Lodi. See Page, *Kolla Firoz Shah*, 26–29.

40. The most renowned architectural epigraph of the Tughluq period is the *Futûhâ-i Firûz Shâhî*, an allegedly autobiographical account, whose text is preserved today in manuscript form only. This text is believed to have been inscribed on eight stone slabs, which were placed on a dome in the courtyard of the Jamî Masjid in Firûzâbâd, but no firm archaeological evidence supports this. Moreover, an illustration of a ground plan of the mosque in the *Strât-i Firûz Shâhî* manuscript in the Khuda Bakhsh Public Library, Patna, shows no dome in the courtyard but instead only one dome over the entrance gate.


42. A translation of this important inscription is presently being prepared by Mehrdad Shokoohy. A summary of its text, published by Shokoohy in *Haryana I*, 20–22, is paraphrased here:

The name Allah appears first. The narrative then begins with the historical events of the reign of Ghiyâth al-Dîn (the first Tughluq ruler), concentrating on the events following the assassination of the last Khaljî sultan Mubarak Shah and Ghiyâth al-Dîn's success in removing the assassins from power and declaring himself sultan. The narrative shifts to the close of Ghiyâth al-Dîn's reign and the accession of his son, Muhammad bin Tughluq, on 1 Sha'bâh A.H. 725/13 July A.D. 1325. The inscription continues with the events of the last years of Muhammad's reign and provides details about the campaign to Thatta, during which Muhammad died, including those events that brought Firûz Shâh to power. The inscription also records that Muhammad designated Firûz Shâh as his successor and that Khwaja Jahan Ahmad Ayas challenged his accession.


44. The Ghazna towers have been published by S. Flury, "Das Schriftband an der Türe des Mahmūd von Ghazna (998–1030)," Der Islam 8 (1918): 214–27; S. Flury, "Le Déc or épigraphique des monu-
ments de Ghazna," Syria 6 (1925): 61–90; J. Sour-

45. The minaret was first proposed as a symbol of power and victory in James Fergusson and R. Phene
Spiers, History of Indian and Eastern Architecture (London: John Murray, 1910), 518. Bloom, Minare-
et, 173, rejects the interpretation of minarets as "victory towers." Other so-called victory towers in
India include the mīnār near the Bari Mosque in Chota Pandua, Bengal, and a now lost mīnār built by Balban. See Catherine B. Asher, "Inventory of Key Monuments," The Islamic Heritage of Bengal, ed.
G. Michell (UNESCO, 1984), 53; and J. Burton-

46. The Jām tower has been published in A. Maricq and G. Wiet, "Le minaret de Djam. Le découv-
erte de la capitale des sultans ghorids (XII–XIII sièc-
les)," Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 16 (Paris, 1959); William Trousdale,

47. Ralph Pinder-Wilson, "The Minaret of Mas'ūd III

48. Pinder-Wilson, "Minaret of Mas'ūd III," 101. Also see Richard Ettinghausen and Oleg Grabar, The
Art and Architecture of Islam: 650–1250 (Harmonds-

49. Grabar, Formation of Islamic Art, 114, suggests that the mīnār’s function in later Islamic architecture
broadened to include symbolic expressions of social, imperial, or personal prestige, although he
refers specifically to monuments in Isfahan, Istanbul, and Cairo.

50. Page, An Historical Memoir on the Qubh, 41.


52. Barani, Ta’rīkh, 266–67; ‘Affī, Ta’rīkh, 275–86.

53. Futūhāt, 387; Hodivala, Studies in Indo-Muslim His-

tory, 1:344.

54. Futūhāt, 383; Page, An Historical Memoir on the Qubh, 34.

55. Maricq and Wiet, "Le Minaret de Djam," 15–20,

suggest that the Jām mīnār symbolized the omph-

alos of the Ghūrid empire and the power of the

sultan.

56. Futūhāt, 382.

57. For a discussion of architecture as a metaphor of
power in another part of the Islamic world, see Gür-
ru Necipoğlu, Architecture, Ceremonial and Pow-

er: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth


58. Welch and Crane, "The Tughluqs," 159; Strat, 42,
states: "After it had remained an object of worship of the polytheists and infidels for so many thou-
sands of years, through the efforts of Sultan Firuz
Shah and by the grace of God, it became the minar
of a place of worship for the faithful."

59. Diyā' al-Dīn Barani, Fatawa-yi Jahandari, translated
by Mrs. Afsar Umar Salim Khan with introduction
by Mohammad Habib as The Political Theory of the

60. Welch and Crane, "The Tughluqs," 160.

61. Futūhāt, 382.
THE TRANSFORMATION OF ARABIC WRITING:
PART 2, THE PUBLIC TEXT

BY YASSER TABBA

In the first part of this work I discussed the two-phase transformation of Qur'anic writing from angular to cursive, phases that were associated with the calligraphers Ibn Muqla (d. 940) and Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 1022). I also presented an evaluation and an interpretation of this highly important change, relating it to contemporary ideas about the nature of the Qur'ān, which was definitively proclaimed as the eternal and uncreated word of God. These ideas were themselves shown to be closely linked with the newly emergent movement of the Sunni revival, a movement that sought to reaffirm the legitimacy of the 'Abbāsid caliphate and the traditionalist basis of Islamic thought while opposing and undermining contrary beliefs and political systems, in particular those of the Fātimids.

In this paper I will discuss the parallel transformation of monumental inscriptions from angular to cursive—a transformation that postdated the Qur'ānic one by nearly a century but that seems to have been, at least in part, propelled by similar conditions. Extending the discussion from the sphere of Qur'ānic manuscripts to that of public inscriptions proved to be far more difficult than I had envisioned. Despite the greater accessibility of the material, in the form of a large number of dated public inscriptions from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, at least two major hurdles pose themselves before this quest. The first is that, whereas substantial textual material exists on scribal and Qur'ānic calligraphy, and of course on the Qur'ān itself, nearly nothing is known about the masters and the making of monumental inscriptions before the Ottoman period. Even when monumental inscriptions do end with the name of an artisan, this signature often refers to the architect or the building supervisor, not to the calligrapher. The second is that, although public inscriptions often contain Qur'ānic passages, they are not usually exclusively Qur'ānic. Indeed, a sizeable portion of monumental inscriptions is quite secular in nature, being primarily concerned with titulature, patronage, and waqf and somewhat less so with poetry and mystical evocations.

Is it, then, legitimate to use the findings of the preceding article, which were exclusively based on Qur'ānic material, to interpret the transformation of Arabic monumental writing generally? This question will concern us in this paper, but we can tentatively say at this point that, whether religious or secular in content, most monumental inscriptions were public and official, thus reflecting some of the ruling dynasty's concerns, which were always theocratic in nature. In a largely aniconic artistic culture, these public inscriptions were by necessity one of the primary visual means for political expression (often tied up with religious concepts) and one of the few effective ways for a dynasty to distinguish its reign from that of its predecessor. While it is true that most dynasties also resorted to other more symbolic means of political expression, such as gates, minarets, or domes (and in fewer cases sculpture), public inscriptions remained throughout much of the medieval Islamic period the chief means for transmitting political and religious messages and for portraying these messages in a dynastically distinctive manner.

The dual nature of monumental inscriptions—informative and symbolic, denotive and connotive—has been examined in a number of recent and penetrating studies. Despite their differing research objectives, the authors of these studies have attempted to move beyond traditional epigraphic documentation, in which their work is ultimately grounded, into questioning some of the premises associated with the visuality and receptivity of public inscriptions. Richard Ettinghausen, pointing out the great complexity and limited legibility of some inscriptions (written in floriated or plaited Kufic, for example), has suggested that the reading and comprehension of such inscriptions was "reserved for a limited number of persons." Even for those select few, Ettinghausen adds, the "reading" of these texts was "nearly always based on previous knowledge and not on direct word by word reaction," while "for the vast majority of the congregation and passers-by the inscription remains incomprehensible as a verbal communication in the modern sense." In
other respects, the high placement of some of these inscriptions, their complexity, and the existence of serious epigraphic mistakes among them lead him to conclude that “readability was only a secondary concern”—a concern that was superseded by “the Gestalt of the inscription as a whole and the inclusion of the caliph’s name.”

While Etinghausen questions the informative aspect of at least some Arabic inscriptions, Erika Dodd takes this discourse one step further to suggest that the reading of inscriptions was unnecessary or redundant in view of the immanent and transcendent nature of the word of God in Islam.

A verse from the Koran does not have to be read for it to have meaning. It exists eternally, of and for and by itself, and it does not exist in the reader, nor does it depend on the reader and it does not even have to be read to be appreciated. For the ordinary Muslim layman, the simple presence of a Koranic verse was as evocative as an icon for a Christian worshipper, and produced a similar emotional response.8

Although Dodd does not specifically address the duality of meaning in Arabic public inscriptions, it is perhaps implicit in her distinction between “reading,” by which she probably means decipherment, and “emotional response,” which seems to result from the symbolic or connotative aspects of the text. Thus, in her passionate search for a deep and pervasive meaning in Islamic art, Dodd collapses the duality of public inscriptions into their symbolic, internalist aspects while neglecting their formal specificity and manifold variations. In short, Etinghausen grapples with the formal complexities of some monumental inscriptions only to suggest that such inscriptions were not intended to be read, whereas Dodd ignores the question of form altogether.

More recently, Irene Bierman has dedicated a series of detailed and penetrating studies to Fatimid inscriptions, examining them in terms of their public impact, the ambiguities inherent in the Kufic script used, and the content of the inscriptions. Regarding the “Kufic script as inherently difficult to decipher, for reading any Kufic text requires a more supportive context to help distinguish the graph (letter) shapes than reading a text written in one of the other Arabic scripts where all twenty-eight letters are differentiated,” Bierman asks “how and why certain scripts were employed in certain contexts to express certain connotations.” More specifically, Bierman’s analysis of some of the most distinctive forms of floriated Kufic, such as the lam-alif and the word Allah, leads her to conclude that “the unusual knotting of these upright letters seems . . . to resonate with those Ismai’ili beliefs that reveal, by means of letter symbolism, an aspect of the esoteric (al-bā‘īn) meaning of the Qur’an behind the plain (al-zāhir) religious message of the written text.”

In a long and complicated essay on Islamic calligraphy, Oleg Grabar has presented a number of brilliant observations that reflect on his long-term involvement in the field while pointing out new avenues for research. Rejecting the large-scale and indiscriminate application of the term calligraphy, or “writing with the intent of being beautiful,” to all manner of Arabic writing, Grabar prefers postponing the use of this term until after the tenth-century reforms of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwāb,11 or more generally, until after Arabic writing had developed sophisticated and overtly described systems of replication, aesthetics, and criticism. While such a degree of textual self-consciousness is often desirable for validating the emergence of a particular art form, it is by no means necessary, and one might postulate alternate means for the creation of aesthetic standards in calligraphy or other medieval art forms, standards that reflect an internalist appreciation of early Qur’anic scripts, not their externalist criticism.

Of perhaps greater interest for this paper are Grabar’s hypotheses concerning the role of public inscriptions in Islamic society, specifically the various dichotomies they establish between literalist reading and formalist appreciation; private understanding and the conditions of public display; and single-gaze or “monoptic” perception and time-consuming decipherment. At the risk of greatly oversimplifying Grabar’s complex discourse, it seems that most of his dichotomies are variations and elaborations of the main one that we have established above, namely, the distinction between the denotive and connotative aspects of official Arabic writing. Indeed, the chief importance of Grabar’s essay resides not so much in his sustained historical analysis of this important problem but in his various attempts to place these distinctions within a sociocultural context, specifically to locate this problem within the matrices
of political power and religious knowledge. He therefore draws attention to the distinction between official and populist currents in public inscriptions, contending that the former were “fostered by the courts . . . and practiced by highly skilled professionals” as “a means to control and distinguish,” while the latter had much more flexible standards and displayed greater variety.\(^\text{12}\) In official writing, which is the only kind that concerns us here, Grabar suggests that aesthetic values—such as skill, complexity, and ambiguity—were inextricably linked with questions of power and status, such that the ability to build, own, or fully appreciate objects or monuments with complex inscriptions becomes one of the criteria for justifying the power of a social or political elite. We shall see below how this important equation of knowledge and power was played out during the transformation of public writing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

With the possible exception of Bierman, there are two main problems with these otherwise outstanding attempts to reach a symbolic understanding of Arabic public calligraphy: a synchronic, nonhistorical, or, in Grabar’s case, multihistorical perspective that does not address specific factors of historical change; and an overall reluctance to engage the question of complexity in calligraphic styles. For Ettinghausen, complexity is, more than anything, a hindrance to understanding; for Dodd, it is an insignificant feature, since the inscriptions were not intended for reading; for Grabar, it is an important indicator of social and political privilege; while for Bierman, the complexity and ambiguity of the floriated Kufic script stand out as specific embodiments of Fātimid Ismā‘īlī theology.

This paper places questions of complexity and historical change at the center of discussion as it explores the transformation of Arabic public inscriptions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In order to provide a context and a point of contrast for this transformation, I will begin by reviewing the problem of the creation of the floriated Kufic script under the Fātimids, suggesting in the process some of the political and theological issues associated with its development. Second, I will trace the subsequent development of cursive scripts from their rather vernacular origins in Iran to their definitive formulation in twelfth-century Syria, pointing out the role of Nūr al-Dīn in promoting this process. Third, I will follow the spread of highly standardized cursive scripts in twelfth-century Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. Fourth, I will examine the differing situation in Fātimid Egypt, where the use of floriated Kufic writing persists for several decades after the perfection of monumental cursive writing elsewhere and where the ultimate introduction of cursive scripts in the last quarter of the twelfth century coincides with the establishment of the Ayyūbid dynasty.

**Floriated Kufic**

Of all the varieties of monumental Kufic, floriated Kufic is perhaps the most elegant, combining as it does angular characters with curvilinear plant forms. Indeed, in its fully developed form, exemplified by the inscriptions of the Fātimid mosques al-Azhar and al-Ḥākim or the late-eleventh-century minaret at the Great Mosque of Aleppo, floriated Kufic may be considered the peak of achievement in early Arabic epigraphy. The beauty and inherent complexity of the script have attracted the attention of numerous scholars, both European and Arab, who have gone a long way toward analyzing its characters and ornamental forms and proposing theories for its origin and development.\(^\text{13}\) Although Flury argued at one point for an Anatolian origin of this script,\(^\text{14}\) most paleographers today concur that ‘Abbāsid Kufic underwent subtle and inconsistent changes between ca. 830 and 960, which led to the creation of the so-called foliated Kufic, before being definitively transformed into floriated Kufic in the second half of the tenth century.\(^\text{15}\) The main point of difference among these authors centers on whether floriated Kufic developed gradually out of foliated ‘Abbāsid Kufic over a period of a century or whether it was suddenly created in the early Fātimid period. Grohmann, arguing for a gradual multicentered development,\(^\text{16}\) concluded that three neighboring countries have participated decisively in the evolution of floriated Kufic: Palestine, with the first traceable connection of a floral element with a letter; Egypt, where in the middle of the third century of the Hijra the decoration of letters with palmettes had already reached a high perfection and where the decoration of the aspices had been invented possibly in connection with, or imitation of, Coptic forerunners;
and the Hijaz, where the tombstone of 250 H [fig. 1] shows genuine floriated Kufic definitely established.\(^\text{17}\)

There are several problems, however, with this view of gradual development from foliated to floriated Kufic. The first is that Egyptian inscriptions that postdate the early attempts at floriation but predate the Fātimid takeover of Cairo in 969 have a more traditional form, suggesting that “this initial phase of floriated Kufic was not able to impose itself fully, not even in Egypt.”\(^\text{18}\) The second is that nearly all the early foliated inscriptions come from funerary stelae, not from official inscriptions, of which the few that remain tend to maintain a sober and austere Kufic style. This is evident from the complete absence of foliation in the ʿAbbāsid and Tūlūnīd inscriptions at the miqāṣ (Nilometer)—dated 247/861 (reign of al-Mutawakkil) and 259/873 (reign of Ibn Tūlūn) (fig. 2).\(^\text{19}\) Apparently, then, early developments toward the floriated script were restricted to funerary stelae and other nonofficial inscriptions and had no impact on the official inscriptions of the period, whose style in any case seems to have been derived from Iraq.

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**Fig. 1.** Hijāz (Arabia). Gravestone, 250/864. Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo. From Grohmann, Arabische Paläographie, 2:fig. 32.

**Fig. 2.** Cairo. Nilometer. Tūlūnīd inscription (Qurʾān, 2:256), 247/861. From Dodd and Khairallah, Image of the Word, 1:fig. 22.
The third and most serious challenge to Grohmann's scheme of gradual development is that the inscriptions of the early Fāṭimid period, namely those at al-Azhar (361/972) and al-Hākim mosques (before 403/1013), differ completely from the ʿAbbāsid Kufic inscriptions of the preceding century and even from the earlier foliated inscriptions. Whereas only a small proportion of the characters of pre-Fāṭimid foliated Kufic sprout ornamental leaves, nearly every character in the inscriptions at al-Azhar and more emphatically at al-Hākim is embellished with leaves that completely transform the letter form and the overall appearance of the script (fig. 3).

Jumāṭah was the first definitively to reject the likelihood of a continuous development of floriated Kufic style and to embrace the opposing view of a sudden transformation. After having painstakingly analyzed the earliest inscriptions at al-Azhar mosque, located around the hood of the mihrâb and elsewhere in the sanctuary, he concluded that "these inscriptions cannot be said, whether in terms of their writing style or decoration, to be a natural development of third century Egyptian writing." He added further that this "style of writing . . . differs in its totality from the developed writing styles of Egypt in the third century, a matter that makes us wonder whether the Fāṭimids may have brought with them upon their departure from North Africa a special style of writing which had developed greatly and rapidly during half a century."

This interesting hypothesis is, however, very difficult to prove since no immediately pre-Fāṭimid official inscriptions remain in Egypt and since no early Fāṭimid inscriptions have survived from al-

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**Fig. 3. Cairo. Mosque al-Azhar: Alphabet of inscription in the maqṣūra, 361/972. From Grohmann, Arabische Paläographie, 2:fig. 248.**
Mahdiyya or other Fātimid cities in North Africa. But this does not change the fact that the Fātimid inscriptions at al-Azhar represent a totally original style in floriated Kufic and that they are the earliest official inscriptions to utilize this ornamented script.

The inscriptions at al-Hākim mosque, executed over a long period extending from 370/972 to 403/1013, demonstrate the prevalence of the floriated Kufic in official Fātimid inscriptions and the adaptability of the script to a variety of media, including stone, stucco, and wood. The stucco inscriptions at the springing of the mihrāb dome and the stone friezes that encircle different levels of the minarets exhibit the basic aesthetic feature of the script: “a quite particular connection of writing and floral tendril growing out of the letters and forming with them an organic unit, serving at the same time to fill the space ideally” (figs. 4 and 5). Ambiguities between text and ornament, foreground and background are thereby created, and these ambiguities are enhanced by the fact that the characters of the script are themselves internally transformed by means of “curvatures, counter-curvatures, knots, and indentations.” A splendid example of this kind of virtuosity can be seen in the cenotaph of Fātima at the Bab Saghir cemetery in Damascus, dated 439/1037, in which Sourdel-Thomine noted ten different types of the lam-alif character (fig. 6).

Following its development under the Fātimids, floriated Kufic spread outside of Egypt in the eleventh century, at first to regions directly controlled by the Fātimids, especially Palestine and southern Syria, or subject to their propaganda (da'wah), such as western Iran, and subsequently to other parts of the Islamic world. Outstanding specimens of floriated Kufic, generally dating ca. 1050–ca. 1150, survive in southern Anatolia (e.g., the Great Mosque of Diyarbakr [1085, 1126, and 1156]);24 Aleppo (e.g., the minaret of the Great Mosque [1090] [fig. 7] and Qastal al-Shu'aybiyya [1150–51]);25 Damascus (e.g., cenotaphs of Fātima [439/1047] and Sukaina [early twelfth century] at the Bab Saghir cemetery);26 Palestine (e.g., the minbar at Ascalon); Spain and North Africa (e.g., the Great Mosque of al-Qarawiyyin at Fez [1135]);27 and Iran (e.g., Masjid-i Ḥaydariyya at Qazvin [twelfth century]).28 There is little possibility that these were autonomous developments, and one would have to agree with Grohmann that “it is certainly from here [Egypt] that its development has advanced to Mesopotamia on one side and to North Africa on the other” (table 1).

Table 1. The Development of Monumental Scripts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kufic (Mother Arabic Script)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Secular Scripts</td>
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<td>Official (Triangular Aspices)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportioned Scripts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ibn Muqta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thuluth of Ibn al-Bawwāb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghaznavid and Early Seljuq</td>
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<td>Compact</td>
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<td>North Africa</td>
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<td>Almoravid</td>
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<td>Almohad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nasrid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elongated</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late Seljuq</td>
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<td>Palestine</td>
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<td>Syria</td>
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<td>Jazira</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayyūbid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zangid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
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</table>

21 F. T. 275/335-376; M. A. S. 73, 53, 21; C. 3, 4-6; S. 25, 113, 122.
22 M. A. S. 73, 95-96; C. 3, 6-7; S. 25, 113, 122.
23 M. A. S. 73, 95-96; C. 3, 6-7; S. 25, 113, 122.
24 M. A. S. 73, 95-96; C. 3, 6-7; S. 25, 113, 122.
25 M. A. S. 73, 95-96; C. 3, 6-7; S. 25, 113, 122.
26 M. A. S. 73, 95-96; C. 3, 6-7; S. 25, 113, 122.
27 M. A. S. 73, 95-96; C. 3, 6-7; S. 25, 113, 122.
28 M. A. S. 73, 95-96; C. 3, 6-7; S. 25, 113, 122.

Fig. 5. Cairo. Mosque al-Hākim: Inscription on casing of northwest minaret, 403/1013. Photo: author.

Fig. 6. Damascus. Cenotaph of Fātimah: Inscription on northern face, 439/1037. Author’s drawing after Moaz and Ory, *Bāb al-Saghīr*, pl. IVb.

Fig. 7. Aleppo. Minaret of the Great Mosque: Uppermost inscription, 483/1090. From Herzfeld, *Alep*, 2:pl. LIII.
It seems clear, therefore, that despite sporadic earlier developments of the Kufic script, floriated Kufic was effectively created under the Fatimids, who were also the first to use it for official inscriptions. What were the motives for the creation of this script, and what did the new privileged script mean within the context of early Fatimid propaganda? In a theocratic state embroiled from the start in political and sectarian controversy, it would seem likely that the creation of a new public form of expression was intended to reaffirm the dynasty’s claims to legitimacy while distinguishing it from earlier dynasties. A more specific religious meaning has been proposed by Bierman, who suggested that “the unusual knotting of the upright letters seems...to resonate with those Isma‘ili beliefs that reveal, by means of letter symbolism, an aspect of the esoteric (al-bâ‘în) meaning of the Qur‘ân behind the plain (al-zâhîr) religious message of the written text.”29 Indeed, this reading is consistent with one of the fundamental tenets of the Isma‘ili doctrine, namely the distinction between the exterior or exoteric and the inward or esoteric aspects of religion. “The zâhîr consists in the apparent, generally accepted meaning of the revealed scriptures and in the religious law laid down in them. It changes with each prophet. The bâ‘în consists in the truths (bâ‘îqî‘âq) concealed in the scriptures and laws which are unchangeable and are made apparent from them by the lâ‘wil, interpretation, which is often of cabalistic nature relying on the mystical significance of letters and numbers.”30 It is this duality of meaning and the valorization of bâ‘în over zâhîr that was to be challenged by the transformed scripts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Precursors to the Transformation (1030–1150)

In view of the dominance of the monumental floriated Kufic script during the eleventh and first half of the twelfth century, it is not surprising that the demise of this luxurious script and its ultimate supplantation by cursive writing have attracted some attention. What is surprising is that from the start this transformation has been associated with the Sunni challenge to Fatimid Isma‘ili authority, or the so-called Sunni revival or reaction. The broad outlines of this process were laid out a century ago by van Berchem:

I have demonstrated that around the middle of the sixth century A.H. the square script, called Kufic, hitherto universally used in inscriptions, was replaced by the cursive style, commonly called naskhi. This phenomenon seems to be connected with the Sunni reaction which, leaving Iran in the fifth century, gradually invades Baghdad, Mesopotamia, northern Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, being conveyed by the Seljuqs, the Zangids, Nūr al-Dīn, and Saladin. The relationship of the two phenomena...is readily explained by bearing in mind that the Sunni reaction, which in Syria coincided with the Mongol invasion and the Crusades, was accompanied by religious, political, military, and administrative changes. This revolution naturally extended to architecture and to the arts and crafts that depend on it.32

Van Berchem’s far-reaching proposals were taken up by none other than Ernst Herzfeld, who in a series of epigraphic and architectural studies succeeded in elaborating his mentor’s highly suggestive thesis and in attributing the bulk of the transformation to Nūr al-Dīn.33 Curiously, the matter has been nearly totally forgotten since then, as most art historians and epigraphers shifted their focus from the documentation and formal analysis of inscriptions to their iconography.34 But van Berchem’s central thesis is too important to ignore and yet too problematic and incomplete to accept uncritically. In the following section I shall therefore point out some of these problems and fill in some gaps in the earliest development of official cursive inscriptions.

In a slightly earlier publication van Berchem had noted that cursive scripts appear sporadically on the coinage of the late Samanids and the Ghaznavids, making them the earliest instances of cursive inscriptions in a public context.35 Actually, this contention is only partly correct since the cursive inscription in all Samanid and early Ghaznavid coinage is restricted to the name of the reigning prince (e.g., Naṣir ibn Nūḥ), whereas the rest of the inscription is in Kufic script (fig. 8).

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ARABIC WRITING

127

Rabī‘ the latter in the year one and twenty and four hundred, may he be forgiven.\textsuperscript{39}

Although more cursive than angular, this extremely peculiar script has no known parallels in monumental inscriptions. It seems to stand midway between Ghaznavid Eastern Kufic and the early \textit{thuluth} script, combining the elongated uprights and some of the character forms of the former with the cursiveness of the latter. The script has other tentative or “transitional” features, including elongated U-shaped fillers (commonly seen in floriated Kufic inscriptions),\textsuperscript{40} inconsistent use of orthographic marks, and variation in the size of characters, such that the words on the third and fourth lines are larger than those of the first and last lines. In view of its transitional character, further underlined by its location within an entirely Kufic context, this was quite likely one of the very earliest official cursive inscriptions.\textsuperscript{41}

Although no other inscriptions seem to imitate the calligraphic style of Māhmūd’s cenotaph, a number of later Ghaznavid and Ghūrid inscriptions employ perfectly cursive scripts. These exist in two basic varieties: a compact script, which is subsequently seen in the central and western Islamic world, and an attenuated, monumental script, which is most commonly seen in the Ghūrid monuments of Afghanistan and India.\textsuperscript{42} The latter script, which might be related to the script on Māhmūd’s cenotaph, will not concern us here. Among the earliest specimens of the compact style are two fragmentary inscriptions, the first bearing the name of the Ghaznavid ruler Abu’l-Muẓaffar Ibrāhīm (1059–99) and the second containing the words Yamīn al-Dawla, which was the \textit{laqab} (attribute) of the late Ghaznavid sovereign Bahrām Shāh (1118–52) (fig. 10a–b). This

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{fig9}
\caption{Ghazna (Afghanistan). Cursive inscription on cenotaph of Māhmūd ibn Sebūtekin, 420/1030. Author’s drawing after photograph in Flury, “Ghazna,” fig. 9.}
\end{figure}

What we have here, therefore, is not the earliest instance of the transformation of the official script but simply the use of cursive script for the “signature” of the ruling sovereign.

The earliest official cursive inscriptions \textit{are}, however, from the eastern Islamic world, where they seem to begin sometime near the end of the reign of the great Ghaznavid sultan Māhmūd (998–1030).\textsuperscript{36} The well-known cenotaph of Māhmūd of Ghazna, dated 421/1030, consists of a large rectangular platform surmounted by a triangular grave cover, all made of marble of possible Indian origin.\textsuperscript{37} It contains six inscriptive bands: one in the middle of each of the four rectangular sides and one in each of the sloping pediments. Only one of these inscriptions, located on the northern side of the upper grave cover, is written in a cursive (or at least non-Kufic) script; the other five are written in an Eastern Kufic script, with typically tall uprights and restrained floriation (fig. 9). The cursive inscription, which consists of six lines within a trilobed arch, reads as follows:

Has died, may God’s mercy be upon him, and may He illuminate his chamber\textsuperscript{38} and brighten his face, the evening of Thursday, seven [days] remaining of the month of
script, which is almost always written on a bed of arabesque, is characterized by its legibility, squat-ness, high degree of cursiveness, and near absence of diacritical marks. In all these respects, this script closely resembles the _thuluth_ of Ibn al-Bawwáb as seen in the verse counts and chapter headings of his unique manuscript—a script that, as I have demonstrated previously, spread in the eleventh and twelfth centuries among the calligraphers of the eastern Islamic world. Indeed, this early monumental cursive script emulates an even more specific feature of the great master’s style, namely interconnection—the tendency to connect normally independent characters by a thin, sinuous line. This particular hallmark of the master’s script was rather slavishly copied by many of his students and followers. Its use in the earliest cursive official inscriptions as well as in later inscriptions in Syria and North Africa suggests close affinities between Qur’anic and monumental writing and points once again to the pivotal importance of the reforms of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwáb and their patrons, the ‘Abbásid caliphs. I will return to this important connection later.

It is somewhat surprising that the earliest official cursive inscriptions are not from Baghdad, where one would expect them given the Baghdadi origin of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwáb, but from one of the easternmost regions of the Islamic world. In the absence of any supporting evidence, it is difficult to say whether cursive official inscriptions were used by the ‘Abbásid caliphs in the first half of the eleventh century. But in view of the large-scale destruction of most early and medieval Islamic monuments in Baghdad, it is possible that such inscriptions once existed and may have provided a model for the Ghaznavid development. It is also possible that the early cursive Ghaznavid inscriptions were directly based on the manuscript hand of Ibn al-Bawwáb, which became instantly popular in the eastern regions of the Islamic world.

Whatever the conduit may have been, the borrowing by the Ghaznavids of an official ‘Abbásid form of expression fits well with their cultural affiliation with the caliphate. Like the ‘Abbásids, the Ghaznavids were staunch Sunnis at a time when it might have been more advantageous to accept some form of Shi’ism. They were also loyal supporters of the ‘Abbásids and bitter opponents of their arch-enemy the Fāsimids, who under the caliphate of al-Ḥākim (996–1021) were ever more active in their Iṣmāʿīlī propaganda. Maḥmúd of Ghazna wasted no opportunity in courting the favor of his exact contemporary, the caliph al-Qādir (991–1031). For his immediate recognition of the caliphate of al-Qādir (whose succession was vexed by another pretender), Maḥmúd was awarded a _mantshir_ (charter) for Khurasan, a _khīfa_ (robe of honor), and his first caliphal titles Yamín al-Dawla (the right arm of the state) and Amín al-Milla (the defender of the community [i.e., the orthodox]). Other titles, such as Nizám al-Din and Nasír al-Haqq, were awarded him in 408/1012–13 when he executed the Fāsimid propagandist Taharti in Bust.

By the early decades of the twelfth century, cursive monumental inscriptions had become fairly commonplace, both as architectural friezes and in epitaphs, but they did not supplant Kufic inscriptions until much later. Indeed, quite commonly cursive and different varieties of the Kufic script were used in the same monument—an exercise of virtuosity common in a large number of Seljuq monuments. The Seljuq script seems to develop straight out of the compact _thuluth_ style first seen at Ghazna in the second half of the eleventh century, as a comparison of one of the earliest monumental cursive Seljuq inscriptions (on the exterior of the _mihrah_ dome of the Great Mosque of Isfahan, dated 1086–87) with the slightly earlier Ghaznavid fragments will demonstrate (cf. figs. 10 and 11). Both scripts are highly cursive, especially for monumental inscriptions, betraying in this respect their likely origin in paper calligraphy. Their character forms are not sufficiently distinct: specifically, the _alifs_ are not pointed, the knots or “eyes” are not always open (e.g., the _mim_ in the Seljuq inscription), and some of the characters (e.g., the _r _ and the _n _ ) seem to flow imperceptibly from the preceding character. These “deficiencies” are corrected in the inscriptions of the twelfth century, which begin to differ from the earlier style in their pointed uprights, open “eyes,” uniform and fairly
distinct characters, and in the separation between the inscription and the arabesque ornament beneath it. These features are quite amply illustrated by a related group of gravestones from western Iran or the Jazira that show remarkable virtuosity in their different varieties of cursive and Kufic scripts. One of the finest of these is a splendidly carved marble gravestone, dated 549/1154, with three types of Kufic scripts and an equal number of cursive scripts, all of especially high quality (fig. 12). It is worth noting, however, that despite the overall development of the cursive scripts, especially the shahâda in the upper rectangular panel, none of them is dotted or vocalized.

Commenting on these calligraphic changes, van Berchem has noted that in the east the development of cursive writing, and especially its supplantation of the Kufic script, is very gradual indeed: Kufic inscriptions continue in historical epigraphy until the end of the twelfth century, become increasingly rare during the thirteenth century, and practically disappear by the end of that century. This led him to conclude that "in the east the change was a purely practical and autonomous process: cursive writing from daily life slowly and without plan or design supplanted a monumental script that no one could read." While it is true that the transformation was gradual and at times sporadic and that the mixed use of Kufic and thuluth in the same building does pose some problems of interpretation, it may be precipitous to conclude that the change was "purely practical and autonomous" and "without plan or design." It is perhaps more prudent to suggest that in certain instances, for example under the early Ghaznavids and in the first Seljuq monuments, the use of a cursive script for monumental inscriptions was indeed purposeful and was motivated by external forces whose nature is just beginning to be understood. But it remains problematic that the new cursive writing took so long to establish itself and that for more than a century it was used simultaneously with a totally different calligraphic style, the floriated Kufic. This matter requires further investigation and cannot be settled within the scope of this essay.

*Nūr al-Dīn, 1146–74*

Several scholars have commented on the decidedly different situation in Syria, specifically under the reign of Nūr al-Dīn Malīmūd ibn Zangī (1146–74). Van Berchem was the first to note that the change from angular to cursive scripts in Syria was as sudden as it was quick, having been put into effect within a few years by the orders of Nūr al-Dīn as an "intentional act for the achievement of a vast plan, part of a reform." Herzfeld stated the matter even more emphatically by placing this transformation "at a point almost exactly defined by the year 548 [1153]," when Nūr al-Dīn abandoned the form and content of earlier Seljuq protocols and embraced the changes produced by "the deep movement of the Sunnite reaction." Most recently, these observations have been reiterated by Sourdel-Thomine, who concluded that "Nūr al-Dīn ordered the adoption of the cursive script in official inscriptions, to the detriment of the angular script, which without disappearing completely, was reduced to repetitions of ancient types."

Despite the plausibility, even overall veracity, of the conclusions drawn by these eminent scholars, the chronological sequence of inscriptions in Syria from the late eleventh to the middle of the twelfth century presents two important problems. The first is that one early cursive inscription does exist in Syria: the third inscriptions frieze on the
minaret of the Great Mosque of Aleppo, dated 483/1090 (fig. 13). Curiously, while the four other inscriptional bands on the minaret are written in floriated Kufic of the highest possible quality, the cursive inscription is comparatively mediocre, perhaps displaying the mason’s lack of experience in the new style. Like other contemporary Seljuq inscriptions, it is written on a bed of arabesque and contains no dots or vowel marks. Even more curiously, it is a Shi‘i inscription giving the names of the Twelve Imams preceded by a tašlīya. Two possible (but perhaps insufficient) explanations can be offered for this apparent discrepancy. The first is that this minaret was erected during the period of Seljuq control of Aleppo and represents a local attempt to imitate the Iranian Seljuq practice of using both styles of calligraphy in the same monument. The second is that the minaret was begun by Ibn al-Khashshāb, member of a Shi‘i patrician family, who continued as supervisor (mutawalli) of its construction after the Seljuq takeover of the city.54 Could the inscription, then, be seen as an act of rapprochement between the Seljuqs and the Shi‘i majority in Aleppo?55 Or was the inscription Ibn al-Khashshāb’s idea, a way of making a legible Shi‘i statement with a cursive inscription? The last possibility would also seem to explain later instances of the Twelver Shi‘i use of the cursive script, seen above in the Freer gravestone of 1154 (fig. 12).

The second problem is that Nūr al-Dīn did not use the new cursive style from the beginning of his reign. In fact, his earliest known inscription at the mashhād al-Dikka in Aleppo, dated 1146, is written in a rather simple Kufic style that closely resembles his father’s (Zangi) inscription of 1128 on the same building.56 The poor quality of the inscription, its derivative style and titulature, and the fact that it commemorated a building act on a Shi‘i monument are all symptomatic of the precarious start of Nūr al-Dīn’s career.57 His very next dated inscription (Shawwāl 543/February 1149) at the portal of the madrasa al-Hallāwīyya, however, is written in an excellent thuluth script that closely resembles some of the better specimens of late Seljuq cursive writing on brick or stucco (fig. 14). It is a pleasing and legible style characterized by compactness, pointed uprights and generally open knots, and full use of diacritical and orthographic marks. The character forms are uniform in appearance and begin to display characteristic tapering in the thickness of the line (easily visible in the ǧam-alif), a feature already seen in the earliest Ghaznavid inscriptions and even earlier in the Qur‘ānic calligraphy of Ibn al-Bawwāb and his successors.58 The cramped space forced the mason-calligrapher to overlap some of the letters; except for that problem, the inscription is very easy to read.

This inscription, in effect, initiates the total transformation of monumental calligraphy for Syria and ultimately also for Egypt. With two exceptions, to which I will return, all the succeeding inscriptions from the period of Nūr al-Dīn and his Ayyūbid successors are written in the cursive thuluth script. We are led to inquire, therefore, what exactly took place in the early career of Nūr al-Dīn that led him to embark on this fundamental transformation. Although later sources, written under the patronage of Nūr al-Dīn and Ayyūbid sovereigns, are deliberately vague about Nūr al-Dīn’s early years, a close reading of one of the very few preserved Shi‘i histories of the period, Ibn ābī Ṭayyīr, suggests that, like his father, he was initially far more tolerant of Shi‘ism and quite ambivalent in the pursuit of Sunni orthodoxy.59 His personal and public transformation is a complex process, discussed elsewhere by myself and others. It suffices to say here that two major factors contributed to this momentous change in direction: early and somewhat unexpected successes against the Crusaders, and improved links with the ‘Abbāsid caliphate. Between 1146 and 1149 Nūr al-Dīn was able to recapture the north Syrian city of Edessa, to aid in defeating the Second Crusade, and to deal a major defeat to prince Raymond of Antioch (who perished in battle). According to Gibb, “in the eyes of all Islam, he had become the champion of the faith and he now consciously set himself to fulfill the duties of this role.”60

The ‘Abbāsid caliph wasted no time in recognizing the victories of Nūr al-Dīn by bestowing on him various honorific titles, the most important of which was al-mujāhīd (the fighter for the faith). This title appears for the first time on the madrasa al-Hallāwīyya and becomes subsequently one of his most common epithets. But the caliphate had other concerns than the Crusades, namely the restoration of Sunni orthodoxy all over the Islamic world, particularly in Egypt, where the Isma‘īlī Fatimids had long posed a political threat and theological challenge to the ‘Abbāsids. The chief apologist for the ‘Abbāsid cause at the time was the powerful theologian and vizier Ibn Hubayra, whose call for the unification of Sunni Islam and for the destruction of the Fātimids seems to have
struck an immediate chord with Nūr al-Dīn. The two are known to have corresponded about these matters, and it was at the vizier’s urging that Nūr al-Dīn finally attempted in 1163 to wrest Egypt from the hands of the Fātimids and retake it in the name of the caliphate. Thus, early triumphs against the Crusades, the machinations of Ibn Hubayra and the ‘Abbāsid caliphs, and undoubtedly a personal proclivity toward orthodoxy and asceticism, all motivated Nūr al-Dīn’s pursuit of Sunnism, making him the primary force behind the Sunnī revival.

Beginning as a subsidiary theme to the more pressing problem of the counter-Crusade, the revival of the Sunnah soon became the central motive of Nūr al-Dīn’s policy, and it is therefore legitimate to view all his major acts through this traditionalist reaction. The calligraphic transformation was one of the most visible signs of this broad movement, which had lain dormant in Syria during the turbulent decades of the first half of the twelfth century but was now being propagated by the ‘Abbāsid caliphs and Nūr al-Dīn. At its most basic, the use of cursive writing for public inscriptions declared, by virtue of its total difference from earlier public inscriptions, the end of the Fāṭimid period and the beginning of a new era. More specifically, the use of a script with demonstrable links to the ‘Abbāsid caliphate was intended to reinforce the legitimacy of Nūr al-Dīn’s rule in Syria and in all other territory conquered in the name of the caliph. Finally, by virtue of its legibility and unambiguousness, the new public writing shattered the cherished duality of meaning implicit in Fāṭimid inscriptions.

Before further exploring the implications of
these issues, I would like to investigate this calligraphic transformation in Nūrid Syria and in other parts of the Islamic world. The next dated inscription by Nūr al-Dīn, at the Qastal al-Shu'aybiya in Aleppo (545/1150), immediately presents a problem, since it is written in a highly elaborate script that recalls the late-eleventh-century floriated Kufic on the minaret of the Great Mosque. I have elsewhere investigated this important monument, proposing that it was re-built by Nūr al-Dīn as a commemorative structure intended to celebrate his triumphs against the Crusaders while evoking the earlier victories of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who had conquered Aleppo in 16/687. The use of an archaizing script seems to comport well with the deliberately archaizing appearance of the architecture and the commemorative nature of the monument.

With the exception of this inscription and a decree in Damascus dated 551/1156, whose floriated Kufic may have had to do with the bureaucratic nature of the inscription, all the other inscriptions of Nūr al-Dīn are written in monumental thuluth. Two other specimens from his period and one from the closely related era of his young son Ismā'īl will suffice to establish the overall character of the mature thuluth script before the Ayyūbids. The first inscription comes from a wooden minbar commissioned by Nūr al-Dīn in 559/1164 for his mosque at Hama (central Syria). This inscription, which simply states the shahāda, is written within a cartouche in a large and clear thuluth (perhaps originally highlighted with paint) on a bed of arabesque scrolls (fig. 15). Fully cursive and entirely legible, the script is also characterized by pointed and highly tapered uprights (e.g., alif and lām-alif), open knots, and interconnection, seen here in the way that the rā and ṣīn of the word rasūl are joined.

The inscriptions of Nūr al-Dīn and his son Ismā'īl at the maqām of Ibrāhīm in the citadel of Aleppo, dated 563/1168 and 575/1180 respectively, are among the best executed thuluth inscriptive plaques of the twelfth century (figs. 16 and 17). The script can best be described as a flesherier version of the first cursive Nūrid inscription of 1148, a dense and rather short script whose squatness is relieved by the tapering of the beginning and end of its letters and by the judicious use of interconnection. Comparing the inscription of Nūr al-Dīn with that of his son, we note more overlapped letters and greater reliance on interconnection, but without an undue loss of legibility. Both scripts are of course fully vocalized and equipped with all the required orthographic marks, making them the most easily legible and unambiguous inscriptions of their time.
The Canonization of the Thuluth of Ibn al-Bawwâb: 1170–1260

By the time of the death of Nûr al-Dîn in 1174, the monumental cursive script that he had helped introduce into Syria had become standard for all public inscriptions, not just in Syria but also in Upper Mesopotamia, Anatolia, North Africa, and Spain (see table 1). Although it is unlikely that every dynast in all these regions was following the example of Nûr al-Dîn, some of them may have been, while others may have received their cultural clues from the ‘Abbâsid caliphate itself. We will, therefore, examine the situation in each of these regions, beginning with Syria under the Ayyûbids.

Syria

In Aleppo, inscriptions produced under al-Zâhir Ghâzî (1195–1216), the greatest architectural patron in the medieval history of the city, build on the high calligraphic tradition established by Nûr al-Dîn.66 The two best preserved and most accomplished inscriptions of Ghâzî are located in the citadel: a foundation inscription, dated 606/1210, at the end of the entrance block on the tympanum of the Lion’s Gate and another foundation inscription, dated 610/1213, above the entrance to the mosque. The first and aesthetically superior inscription proved too difficult to photograph and draw, and Herzfeld’s otherwise excellent drawing of the gate deprives the inscription of all its calligraphic flair (fig. 18).67 In truth, this is a magnificent inscription, a masterpiece that balances monumentality with fluidity and legibility with embellishment. Thinner and somewhat more attenuated than its Zangid predecessors, it still manages to maintain the tapered appearance of the uprights and the interconnection of some of the letters, as in the way the zay and the ya of al-Ghâzî are linked. The second inscription is nearly identical to the first, possibly even made by the same calligrapher, but differs from it primarily in being more cramped—a condition that forced the calligrapher to overlap some of the words and to rely a little too much on interconnection (fig. 19).

Altogether, the calligraphic script created under al-Zâhir Ghâzî may be seen as the first truly monumental cursive style in stone. It is therefore not surprising that it continues with minor changes to the very end of the Ayyûbid period. A series
of long inscriptive friezes from the madrasa al-Firdows, dated 635/1235–36, attests to the continuity and subtle development of the early Ayyubid script, which becomes less tapered, a little more attenuated, and minimally interconnected (fig. 20). Interestingly, inscriptions in the rest of Syria and in Palestine, which never achieve the superior quality of the Aleppo inscriptions, undergo a similar process of development between the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century. In Jerusalem inscriptions dated 575/1180, 587/1191, and 589/1193 closely resemble the heavy thuluth style of the Zangid period. An inscription dated 604/1208, on the other hand, is closer in its thinness and attenuation to the inscriptions of al-Zâhir Ghâzî and his successors.69

UPPER MESOPOTAMIA

No early cursive monumental inscriptions have been preserved in Baghdad, which unfortunately precludes an examination of the impact of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwâb on their native city. Indeed, the earliest preserved monumental inscriptions do not occur until the period of the Caliph al-Nâsîr (1180–1225).69 The situation is a little more encouraging in Mosul, where, outside of a handful of early-twelfth-century tombstones inscribed in a crude cursive style, the earliest monumental cursive inscription is the one surrounding the inner frame of the mihrâb of the mosque al-Nûrî, dated 543/1148 (fig. 21). The inscription is written on a bed of arabeque and seems to stand midway in terms of development between early Iranian inscriptions and the Zangid inscriptions of Aleppo. Indeed, the entire composition of this flat mihrâb with friezes of floriated Kufic inscriptions framing an inner cursive inscription is clearly modeled after a Seljuq Iranian prototype. Interestingly, the mihrâb is signed by a certain Muṣṭafa al-Baghdâdi, whose nisba suggests that he originally came from Baghdad. This is one of the very few references to the existence of mason-calligraphers in the ‘Abbâsid capital.

As in Syria, monumental cursive writing seems also to have been introduced en masse into Mosul under Nûr al-Dîn, who though never its actual ruler, exercised considerable control over it during the latter part of his reign.71 The mosque that he founded there between 1170 and 1172 contains numerous inscriptions on the capitals of its massive piers (fig. 22). Although bearing a general resemblance to the Nûrid inscriptions in
Aleppo, they still retain two features of early Seljuq cursive inscriptions, namely the absence of diacriticals and the presence of an arabesque background. Other inscriptions from this mosque, possibly dating from the first Nürid phase, consist of long friezes in white marble inlaid with black marble. These are somewhat closer to contemporary Aleppine inscriptions in their character form, their use of diacriticals, and their minimal background ornamentation.

Other than these twelfth-century inscriptions, the only pre-Mongol monumental inscriptions in Mosul are those decorating the various shrines erected during the reign of Badr al-Dīn LuḥT (1222–59). Two of these shrines, the mashhads of Imām Yahya Abu'l-Qāsim (637/1239–40) and Imām ‘Awīn al-Dīn (646/1248), preserve a number of excellent cursive inscriptions on marble, which are comparable in quality to the best inscriptions in Aleppo. The portal to the mosque of the later shrine displays to advantage the great variety of cursive scripts used in Mosul in the few decades preceding the Mongol invasion (fig. 23). The uppermost frieze, serving the function of a cornice, is in monumental thuluth (or thuluth jaliyy), a large and slow-moving script with minimal overlapping of words and practically no interconnection. Another large script, rendered in white marble on bluish alabaster, presents the name and titles of Badr al-Dīn across the lintel. It is a highly attenuated script that brings to mind the late Ayyūbid inscriptions of Aleppo. The third, and for us most interesting, calligraphic style in this portal is represented by a long frieze that enframes the portal on three sides. The inscription, which gives the fairly common Ayat al-Kursī (Verse of the Throne), is written in a splendid compact thuluth style that recalls, even surpasses, the twelfth-century inscriptions in Aleppo. With no less than twelve instances of interconnection, this inscription might appear to have sacrificed legibility for the sake of cursiveness and artistic nuance (fig. 24).
Remarkably, however, it remains perfectly legible throughout—a feature that must be attributed to the excellence of its calligraphy and the unobtrusive nature of its interconnections, whose extreme thinness further enhances the tapering of the letter forms. It is astonishing that a calligraphic nuance first introduced in the late tenth century, and whose ultimate origin may have been quite accidental, should still find considerable resonance in monumental writing two and a half centuries later.

North Africa

In North Africa, including Sicily, the floriated Kufic script remained dominant until about the middle of the twelfth century, when it was challenged, both in coinage and on monuments, by the cursive script. Appearing first in some Tunisian tombstones from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, the style is initially seen within a monumental context late in the period of the Almoravid (1056–1147). The earliest cursive monumental inscription in North Africa is a long frieze that encircles the base of the famous ribbed filigree dome of the Great Mosque of Tlemcen (Algeria), dated 530/1136 (fig. 25). The script closely resembles other “Seljuq” thuluth inscriptions that we have so far seen in Ghazna, Isfahan, Aleppo, and Mosul. Undotted, unvocalized, and displaying some of the characteristic tapering of letters, this historical inscription is also written on a bed of arabesque. On the basis of the published photographs and drawings, it is impossible to determine whether it contained any interconnected letters.

A more extensive cycle of early cursive inscriptions is found farther west, at the mosque of al-Qarawiyyin at Fez. The inscriptions belong to the major Almoravid building phase, in which the entire axial nave of the mosque was rebuilt in 531/1137 with a series of muqarnas vaults. The cursive inscriptions coexist with a plethora of highly complex floriated Kufic inscriptions, resembling in this respect a group of Qur’anic manuscripts written in the Maghribi script but utilizing the thuluth script of Ibn al-Bawwāb for their chapter headings. Seemingly restricted to a medallion above the miḥrāb and to short friezes framing the cells of the two muqarnas vaults nearest to the miḥrāb, these inscriptions are almost identical to the Tlemcen inscription, except that some of them are written on an unadorned background (fig. 26). The foundation inscription above the miḥrāb consists of four short lines of slightly more developed thuluth, which attempts, though not very successfully, to utilize to the
The fullest the feature of interconnection. Nearly every word is connected with the following one, and that, combined with links that are nearly the same thickness as the script itself, results in a dense and hard-to-read inscription (fig. 27).

The overall naiveté of these inscriptions seems perfectly consistent with the newness of cursive writing in North Africa and with the apparent desire to steer close to an imported model with all its idiosyncrasies. This model, as suggested above, was the new calligraphic style in the ‘Abbāsid capital—a style that had been formulated by Ibn al-Bawwāb and popularized by his many students. Copying one of the most important cultural symbols of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate was perfectly consistent with the Almoravids’ strong links with the ‘Abbāsids, whom they recognized from early on as the spiritual heads of Islam, and who in turn recognized them as rulers of al-Maghreb in the name of the caliph and Sunni Islam. The numerous letters exchanged between Ūṣuf ibn Tāshufln and his son ‘Ali and the various ‘Abbāsid caliphs attest to the Almoravids’ veneration for the ‘Abbāsids, whose name was included on their coinage and pronounced during the Friday khutba. The appropriation of this cultural symbol and its incorporation within the most important mosques of the Almoravids was therefore intended as a sign of homage to the ‘Abbāsids and as a means to enhance the legitimacy of the Almoravid state.

**Egypt, from Fāṭimid to Ayyūbid**

In discussing the inscriptions of the mosque of al-Salīb Tafln, dated 555/1160, van Berchem concluded that they demonstrate that the Kufic script was used in historical inscriptions until the end of the Fāṭimid dynasty. Commenting on this transformation, Creswell declared that “henceforth the beautiful decorated Kufic script, the glory and pride of Fāṭimid art, was to be used no more for historical inscriptions but employed solely for decorative bands of quotations from the Qur'ān, and that to an ever decreasing extent.” Despite relatively minor recent objections to these conclusions, they remain as sound today as they were a century ago. Indeed, the earliest public cursive inscription in Cairo is Ayyūbid: it is dated 575/1179 and once belonged to a madrasa built by Ṣalāh al-Dīn next to the shrine of Imām Shāfī. Although this inscription was not available for analysis, it seems perfectly appropriate that the earliest cursive inscription in Egypt should belong to the shrine of the most important theologian of Sunni Islam, and one that the Ayyūbids in particular held in special regard. Commemorating the building of the shrine of Imām Shāfī and his wooden cenotaph by cursive inscriptions reinforces the fundamental transformation undergone by Egypt under the early Ayyūbids.

As was the case in Syria and Upper Mesopotamia, this transformation was to a large extent initiated by Nūr al-Dīn, who had in 1164, 1167, and 1169 sent three expeditions to Egypt intended to retake it from the Fāṭimids and bring it back into the orthodox fold. All three forays were led by Shirkūh and his nephew Ṣalāh al-Dīn, who, after the death of his uncle in 1169, assumed real authority in Egypt. But despite his relative independence and the increasing tension between him and Nūr al-Dīn, it should be emphasized that Šalāh al-Dīn ruled Egypt in his mentor’s name until the latter’s death in 1174. Religiously and ideologically, the legacy of Nūr al-Dīn extended much farther than that, for Šalāh al-Dīn, true heir of his suzerain, became the champion of orthodox Islam and recaptured Jerusalem in the name of the ‘Abbāsid caliph.
A much better known inscription from the period of Salāh al-Dīn still remains in situ in the Mudarraj Gate of the Cairo citadel (fig. 28). Dated 579/1183–84, it commemorates the completion of Salāh al-Dīn’s work on his foremost military installation, which in fact had become his official palace after he had abandoned his earlier residence in the Fatimid city. Made nearly a full century after the Seljuq inscriptions in Isfahan and Aleppo, fifty years after the Almoravid inscriptions in North Africa, and thirty-five years after the formulation of a monumental cursive style under Nūr al-Dīn, this inscription is quite astonishing in its crudeness and carelessness. With a spindly line, inconsistent letter forms, and neither points nor vowel marks, the script displays none of the refinements that had long been established in cursive monumental calligraphy. A similarly naive writing style is employed in another inscription bearing the name of Salāh al-Dīn, a fragment preserved at the Islamic Museum in Cairo (fig. 29). Though considerably thicker, the script is stiff and untapered, and the letter forms are nearly indistinguishable from one another. Both inscriptions reflect the inexperience of local calligraphers in this new calligraphic style, which is quite surprising given the royal nature of the texts. Indeed, not until the latter part of the Ayyūbid period did any monumental cursive inscriptions approach in quality those seen in Syria and Iran. By the time of the last important Ayyūbid sultan, Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (1240–49), cursive monumental calligraphy in Cairo had already reached a level of development at least comparable to that in Syria and Iran (fig. 30).

Conclusion

With their conquest of Egypt in 969, the Fatimids introduced, or perhaps reinvented, the floriated Kufic script and facilitated its propagation in most of the Islamic world. Characterized by many writers as the most elegant variation of Kufic calligraphy, if not Islamic calligraphy as a whole, this script was gradually supplanted between ca. 1075 and ca. 1175 by cursive monumental scripts of the thuluth variety. This process began sporadically and rather indefinitely under the Ghaznavids and their successors the Great Seljuqs, from whose time we have the earliest in situ cursive inscription on a monument. Used at first simultaneously with floriated Kufic on the same monument, cursive calligraphy began to achieve its ultimate dominance during the reign of Nūr al-Dīn in Syria. Under his guidance, not only did the cursive script replace the floriated Kufic in nearly all Syrian monumental inscriptions, but a truly monumental thuluth script was developed for the first time in stone. Simultaneous with the reforms of Nūr al-Dīn was the tentative introduction of cursive official writing into central and western North Africa under the Almoravids. This independent development notwithstanding, there is ample evidence to suggest that it was Nūr al-Dīn who catalyzed, if not directly mandated, the switch from Kufic to cursive public inscriptions in Syria, various parts of the Jazīra, and ultimately in Egypt, the last stronghold of the floriated Kufic script.

Although it has often been difficult to provide early examples of official cursive writing from Baghdad, I have stressed the central role of the
Abbasid caliphate throughout this article and the preceding one. It was in Baghdad that the earliest semi-Kufic and fully cursive Qur'ans were produced, and it is quite possible that some of the earliest monumental cursive inscriptions were also made there. More likely, however, the earliest monumental cursive inscriptions in Iran were direct imitations of calligraphic specimens produced by the master calligraphers of Baghdad during the eleventh century— Ibn al-Bawwāb and his circle. Indeed, early cursive monumental writing, with its excessive cursiveness and its penchant for interconnection, betrays a direct dependence on paper calligraphy and specifically on the hand of Ibn al-Bawwāb.

The appropriation and public display of the Qur'anic script of Ibn al-Bawwāb by the newly emergent Sunni dynasties strongly suggest a degree of awareness of the religious and political implications of the new calligraphic style. Religiously, the supplantation of the highly ambiguous floriated Kufic script by clear and legible cursive scripts implied the acceptance and endorsement of the Sunni belief in the single and unambiguous nature of the word of God, whether in Qur'ans or in public texts. The long-held duality in the meaning of the Qur'anic message, which had been transformed by the Fāṭimids into an esoteric cult, was visibly challenged by a script whose legibility and accuracy left little room for variant readings and therefore variant interpretations. Without completely doing away with the dual nature of early Arabic official writing, especially as exemplified by the floriated Kufic, the new cursive script shifts the balance decisively in favor of the denotive over the connotive aspects of writing. Subsuming the mystical within the informational and the bātin within the zāhir, the new public inscriptions perfectly embodied and eloquently propagated the exoteric and encompassing tendencies of the Sunni revival.

Politically, the public display of a calligraphic style with indisputable links to the 'Abbāsids was intended to recognize the spiritual reign of the caliphate as well as symbolically affirm the legitimacy of the dynasty paying homage. This process is paralleled in the diplomatic sphere by the caliph's bequest of titles and official garments in return for gifts received and the inclusion of his name on the coinage and in the khutbah. Practiced by most dynasties of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries—including the Great Seljuqs,
Zangids, Ayyûbids, Almoravids, and Almohads—this reciprocal process aided the greatly weakened but newly assertive caliphate while providing some basis of legitimacy for these arriviste dynasties. Indeed, two of these dynasties, the Turkish Zangids and the Kurdish Ayyûbids, finally brought down the Fâṭimid state and restored Egypt to Sunni orthodoxy.

This symbiotic relationship between a center possessing legitimacy but lacking power and a periphery lacking legitimacy but wielding real power had existed for several centuries, but it seems to have acquired a symbolic level of representation in the eleventh century. I have argued here and elsewhere that the late ʿAbbâsid caliphal was engaged in the production of symbolic forms (e.g., the muqarnas dome) and that these forms found wide acceptance in much of the Sunni Islamic world. Often originating in the nonofficial, even vernacular sphere, these forms were systematized in the tenth and eleventh centuries according to geometric processes, producing elegant types that were then used in highly significant contexts. Thus iconically charged, these forms became the veritable symbols of the Sunni revival and the resurgent caliphate and were as a result adopted and further developed by Sunni dynasties in various parts of the Islamic world. Neither cursive monumental writing nor the muqarnas dome entered official usage in Egypt before the end of the Fâṭimid period, but they became quite common once Egypt had rejoined the ranks of the Sunni world and declared its allegiance to the caliphate.

Decentered during the tenth and eleventh centuries, the deeply fragmented Islamic world of the twelfth century was groping for legitimate political authority and a spiritual center. Real unity, which was impossible to achieve and for the most part undesirable, was replaced by ceremonial allegiance, and the caliphal symbols were introduced in order to mitigate the gap between reality and myth. The "semiotic contract" struck between the ʿAbbâsid caliph and his distant and largely independent subjects ensured the wide dissemination of these symbols in a remarkably short time and their further development in the succeeding centuries. But the iconographic life of artistic forms was shortened by the absence in medieval Islam of an institution or an ecclesiastical body that would engage in a sustained textual interpretation of them. Thus, increasingly elaborate forms came to convey only a generalized Islamic meaning.
Notes


11. Grabar, Mediation, 60 and 66–69. Grabar eliminates early Kufic Qur’ãns from the realm of calligraphy, since in his view they do not demonstrate an adequate level of elaboration, or, perhaps more importantly, since their elaboration does not seem to be based on a set of well-defined rules and standards of aesthetics. While it is true that early Qur’ãns are rather austere in their frugal use of gold and of fully illuminated folios, their worth and artistic merit resided in their exclusive use of vellum, an expensive medium that would have restricted their patronage to the upper stratum of society, and in their exacting and highly uniform calligraphic style. As for the absence of codes of beauty and manuals of calligraphy for the early scripts, there is little doubt that they once existed, although they probably differed considerably from the later manuals, with their step-by-step instructional approach. It would otherwise be impossible to explain the sudden development of a monumental script under the Umayyads from what must have been a very poorly developed system of writing. Grabar, Mediation, 94–95 and 103–4.


15. Grohmann, "Floriated Kufic," 207–8. William and Georges Marçais proposed that the floriated Kufic script may have come from North Africa to Egypt with the Fātimids (Les monuments arabes de Tlemcen, [Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1903], 88). Grohmann, however, has convincingly refuted this position by pointing out that no true floriated Kufic existed in Tunisia during the early Fātimid phase. His fig. 2 depicts a tombstone from Qayrawan, dated 341/
952, whose script has some foliated letters but cannot be called floriated.

16. Grohmann, "Floriated Kufic," notes the existence of a number of ninth-century funerary stelae in Egypt and Palestine that contain early specimens of floriated Kufic. One inscription in the Haram of Jerusalem dating between 301-4/913-17 does indeed show a Kufic script that had begun to sprout leaves.


18. Grohmann, "Floriated Kufic," 209. This important point is amply illustrated and discussed in Jun'ah, Dirâsa, 209-14, who concludes that the inscriptions of the first three-quarters of the fourth/tenth century tend to be of poorer quality and simpler ornamentation than those of the preceding century.

19. Étienne Combe et al., Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1932-40), vol. 2, no. 461; hereafter RCEA.


24. Flury, Islamische Schriftbänder, pls. III-XIII.

25. Ernst Herzfeld, Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptions Arábicarum, Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1954), vol. 2, pp. 56-63 and 86-91.


28. For excellent specimens of Iranian floriated Kufic see Sourdel-Thomine, "Kitâbât," figs. 22-25.

29. Grohmann, "Floriated Kufic." Indeed, Max van Berchem, "Notes d'archéologie arabe," 18:72, was the first to note the central role of the Fâtimids in creating and disseminating the floriated Kufic: "it developed under the Fâtimids of Egypt, the ‘Abbasids, the last Umayyads of Spain, and other Muslim dynasties until the introduction of cursive script. One finds it in all the Fâtimid texts of Egypt, in a large number of the inscriptions of Syria, the Caucasus, Iran and Mesopotamia, Sicily, North Africa, and Spain" (my translation).


33. See, for example, Ernst Herzfeld, "Damascus Studies in Architecture, III," Ars Islamica 11-12 (1956): 38.

34. I was not immune to this trend, and in my doctoral dissertation, "The Architectural Patronage of Nûr al-Din, 1146-1174" (New York University, 1983) I paid very little attention to the transformation of the script of official writing under Nûr al-Din.


36. In her recent compendium, The Monumental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), Sheila Blair has proposed a number of tenth-century Buyid commemorative inscriptions from Persepolis as specimens of early cursive writing (p. 13 and figs. 11-13 and 32-33). In fact, however, there is nothing cursive about these inscriptions, and they do not resemble or even "betray the shift toward" the fully cursive style of Ibn al-Bawwâb. Furthermore, they are far more angular in the photographs than in the transcriptions, which considerably soften the ligatures, shorten the uprights, and increase the space between words. The original (e.g., fig. 31, an inscription dated 392/1001-2) is quite angular, resembling an unornamented version of contemporary floriated Kufic. This kind of informality is to be expected in inscriptions that stand midway between graffiti and foundation inscriptions.

37. Excellent color slides in the University of Michigan collection indicate that both cenotaph and triangular cover are made of the same material—a slightly translucent pinkish-gray marble or alabaster—and that both employ the same size slabs.

38. I have suggested reading the first word in the third line as hujratuhu (his chamber, possibly even alluding to the hujra of the Prophet in Medina) rather than the pejorative and therefore very unlikely


41. Flury, “Ghazna,” 87-89, has argued that the entire pyramidal tomb cover, with its floriated Kufic and early cursive inscriptions, must postdate the tomb, suggesting that it may have been added to the original cenotaph after the fall of the Ghaznavids, as a sign of veneration to a great Islamic hero. His argument for this late date rests on three objections, one archaeological and two paleographic. Archaeologically, Flury (on the basis of André Godard’s observations) has argued that the pyramidal top is uncommon for Ghaznavid tombs and that it is poorly connected with the rectangular cenotaph beneath it. Yet Flury himself shows a cenotaph (pl. XX, 1-2) for an unknown Ghaznavid dignitary with exactly the same composition. See also n. 37 above. Paleographically, Flury notes first that the Kufic inscription departs significantly from other Ghaznavid inscriptions. But, once again, an examination of just the Ghaznavid inscriptions he illustrates in his article suffices to demonstrate the wide variety of Kufic writing under the Ghaznavids, which is precisely the conclusion that Flury reaches at the end of the article (p. 90). Perhaps a better explanation for the uniqueness of Mahmūd’s Kufic inscription is technical: it is more deeply carved and modeled than other Ghaznavid inscriptions. The second paleographic objection has to do with the cursive inscription, which indeed does not resemble any other cursive inscription, Ghaznavid or otherwise. But this perhaps indicates its early rather than late date, suggesting that it may have been produced at a time when calligraphers were not yet able to break away from the long and powerful tradition of the floriated Kufic. To assume, as Flury did, that this inscription was made in the late twelfth century, we would have to demonstrate that a model existed for this script, either in the early eleventh century or during the time of its alleged manufacture in the late twelfth century. Since neither of these postulates is at all likely, we would have to accept that this inscription was made around the time of Mahmūd’s death in 1080. Janine Sourdel-Thomine, “A propos du cénotaphe de Mahmūd à Ghazna (Afghanistan),” in Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honor of Katherina Otto-Dorn, ed. Abbas Daneshvari (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1981), 127-35, has also questioned the early date of the cenotaph on the basis of stylistic and paleographic evidence. But the stylistic peculiarities of the carving that she notes are most likely attributable to the fact (or at least great likelihood) that most of these stone cenotaphs were carved by Indian masons since Iranian artisans would have been quite unskilled for the task. Paleographically, Sourdel-Thomine presents absolutely no comparisons or possible models for the cursive inscriptions and no explanation as to how, indeed why, they could have been produced in the late twelfth century.


43. Tabbaa, Qurʾānic Calligraphy,” 135-36.

44. Tabbaa, Qurʾānic Calligraphy,” figs. 19-21.

45. While the connection of Ibn Muqla with the ‘Abbasid caliphate cannot be questioned, the same is not true of Ibn al-Bawwāb, who never achieved Ibn Muqla’s official status and who briefly served as keeper of the Buyid library in Shiraz. Indeed, his connection with the Buyids and the fact that the eulogy in his one preserved Qurʾān includes a reference to the “Pure Family of the Prophet” has led David Storm Rice (The Unique Ibn al-Bawwāb Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin: E. Walker, 1955), 13) to conclude that “Ibn al-Bawwāb shared the Shiʿite persuasion of his patrons, the Buwayhids.” There are many problems with this unfounded assertion. First, the Buyids themselves were only Shiʿis “in some vague sense.” Their ambivalence toward Shiʿism was manifested in their numerous concessions to the Hanbālī caliphs; Roy Mottahedeh, Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 28. Second, the ‘Abbasids, as direct descendants of the Prophet and as Ḥanbalis, were loath to relinquish their claims to the family of the Prophet. Finally, there is absolutely no possibility that Ibn al-Bawwāb was Shiʿi, since his biography in Ibn Khallikān (Wafayāt al-aʿyān, 3:342) states that “he died in Baghdad and was buried next to the imām Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal.” He was, therefore, most likely a Ḥanbalī and, as such, theologically opposed to Shiʿism. Indeed, his employment by the Buyids as librarian and calligrapher, rather than proving his Shiʿism, might be one indication that the weakened Buyids of the early eleventh century were quite willing to soften,

hufratu hu (his hole). According to Lane’s Lexicon, there is no possibility of translating hufr as “sepulcher.”
or even abandon, some of their Shiʾi positions. See, in particular, Henri Laoust, "La pensée et l'action politique d'al-Mawardi," *Revue des études islamiques* 36 (1968): 11–92. Laoust demonstrates (pp. 65–66) that between 1007 and 1008 (almost the exact date of the Qurʾān of Ibn al-Bawwāb the Buyid Bahāʾ al-Dawla was forced to banish the famous Shiʾi theologian Shaykh Mufīd and replace him with the Ashʿarī theologian Abu Ḥāmid al-Isfārāʾīnī, primarily because the former had persisted in using the Qurʾān of Ibn Maṣūd.

46. C. E. Bosworth, "The Imperial Policy of the Early Ghaznavids," *Islamic Culture* 1 (1962): 50. Bosworth cites Jurbaḍhaqanī’s description of this event: "When the news of the execution of the envoy from Egypt reached Baghdad, and the firmness of the Sultan’s faith became known, the tongues of calumniators and the reproofs of censorious ones were silenced, and his name was always mentioned with praise and honour at the court of the commander of the Faithful."

47. Among the Iranian Seljuq monuments that bear both floriated Kufic and *thuluth* inscriptions are the following:
   3. Qazvīn, Masjīd-ʾĪ Haydariya, first half twelfth century; SPA, 8, pl. 315.
   5. Tombstone, dated 533/1138; SPA, 8, pl. 520.

48. Some of these are illustrated in SPA, 7, pls. 518c, 519e (dated 1141), and 520 (dated 1138).

49. Although this particular tombstone contains the Twelver Shiʾi formula, not all of the other tombstones in this group were Shiʾi. Indeed, those illustrated in SPA (n. 47) are quite straightforward in their Sunni pious formulas.


55. This would seem to fit in with the later Seljuq’s ambivalence toward Sunni orthodoxy. Indeed, the Seljuq prince Ridwān went so far as briefly to pronounce the *khutba* in the name of the Fātimid caliph; see Kamāl al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalāb fī tārīkh ḥalāb*, ed. Sami Dahhan (Damascus: Institut français de Damas), 2:127–29.


58. Tabbaa, "Qurʾānic Calligraphy," figs. 20–21.


63. Such deliberate archaisms, though quite uncommon, are not unknown in Islamic art and architecture. See Terry Allen, *A Classical Revival in Islamic Architecture* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1986), passim, where the author, however, speaks instead of a self-conscious revival of classical

65. See Tabbaa, "Propagation of Jihâd," 229–31. The minbar contains three other long friezes in splendid thuluth carved on a deep bed of arabesque: two surrounding each side of the balustrade and a third just below the crenellated cornice. A non-royal inscription from the now destroyed mosque of Shaykh Muhammad, dated 558/1163, displays an astonishing degree of development, particularly in the use of interconnection. This tendency has here been taken to an extreme without straining the legibility and elegance of the script. Each line contains several examples of interconnection, and some of the lines are even connected with one another vertically—a feature not encountered in any other inscription of the period.


67. For monumental inscriptions from the period of this energetic caliph are quite plentiful. One of his longest and finest inscriptions once existed in the Bâb al-'Tilasm (Talismen Gate) in Baghdad, which was destroyed early in this century. Another fine inscription carved in wood frames the door to the so-called Bâb al-Ghaibah (Gate of Disappearance) in Samarra, part of the Shi'i sanctuary dedicated to the two imâms 'AÎf al-Hâdi and Mûsâ al-Fâskarî. See Anonymous, Bâb ul Ghaiybah at Samarra (Baghdad, 1938).

68. This inscription was first discussed by Max van Berchem in F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet, 4 vols. (Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer, 1911–20), 1:17. On the basis of the mihrâb's early date and the assumption that it was made for the mosque of al-Nûrî Herzfeld (Reise, 2:224–27) proposed that the mosque was begun more than twenty years before Nûr al-Dîn, a contention that is not supported by any textual evidence. The truth is that this mihrâb was brought to the mosque al-Nûrî in the first decades of this century. It may have been originally intended for the Umayyad mosque of Mosul, which is now destroyed. I addressed the various chronological problems of this mosque in "Nûr al-Dîn," 147–51.


70. These two unusual and sumptuously decorated mausoleums are discussed in Sarre and Herzfeld, Reise, 2:249–70. Although built for alleged descendents of various Shi'i imâms, these shrines do not represent the revival of political Shi'ism. Indeed, the official veneration of Shi'i shrines in the late twelfth century was even practiced by the contemporary 'Abbâsid caliph al-Nâşir, whose policy of rapprochement with the Shi'is was intended to strengthen his power base with the local population. See Mason, Two Statesmen, 99 and 116.

71. Examples of this large thuluth are quite common in Mosul:
1. Qara Sarai, the palace of Badr al-Dîn Lu'lî, 630/1232: a large inscription carved in stucco.
2. Shrine of Imâm Yahya Abu'l-Qâsim (637/1239–40): exterior inscription above the portal, a short frieze above the corner mihrâb, and a long frieze at the springing of the dome.
3. Shrine of Imâm 'Awn al-Dîn (646/1248): inscription above the portal to the shrine.

72. This development has not been studied in depth; meanwhile, see Georges Marçais, L'Architecture musulman d'occident (Paris: Art et métiers graphiques, 1954), 250, and Terrasse, al-Qaraouiyîn, 51 and 80. For the parallel development in Sicily, see 'Abd al-Munîm Rasîlân, Al-hadâra al-islâmiyya fi 5iq"itlya wa jumâb 'ifâliya (Jeddah: al-Kitâb al-Jâmî', 1980), 80–82.

73. L. Golvin, "Kitâbât," ERE, 221. Golvin adds that "it is in fact impossible, in the absence of precise documentary evidence, to propose an Andalusian influence, as it seems that cursive writing did not appear in Andalusia until much later." This is an important observation, for it underlines a switch in the prevailing cultural influences on al-Maghrib, from Andalusia to the central Islamic world.

78. Terrasse, al-Qaraouiyîn, chaps. 2–7, discusses different facets of the Almoravid reconstruction. In the Capella Palatina—a monument that attempts to combine the latest in Byzantine, Norman, and Islamic art—the use of cursive calligraphy may be seen as just another example of an up-to-date borrowing from the Islamic world.

79. See, for example, Tabbaa, “Qur’anic Calligraphy,” fig. 27.


81. Al-Hirfî, Dawlat al-murâbîfîn, 170–72. The author mentions no fewer than seven exchanges of letters between the Almoravids and the Ābbâsids, between 1059 and 1118, covering the reigns of Abû Bakr ibn Umar (1056–73), Yûsuf ibn Tâshufîn (1061–1106), and ‘Ali ibn Yûsuf (1106–42). In the correspondence of 479/1086, Yûsuf received the Ābbâsid caliph’s approval of his newly assumed title amîr al-muslimîn along with a lengthy letter from Abû Hâmid al-Ghazzâlî, in which the great theologian praises Yûsuf as one of the great heroes of Islam.


84. Caroline Williams, “The Qur’anic Inscriptions of the Tabut al-Husayn in Cairo,” Islamic Art 3 (1987): 3–14, has made a strong case for a Fâtimid dating of this commemorative cenotaph despite the fact that it contains both floriated Kufic and cursive inscriptions. But Williams’s argument, which largely rests on the improbability that Salâh al-Dîn would have ordered a cenotaph with such vividly Shi’î inscriptions, is not completely foolproof. Indeed, the decline of political Shi’ism in the late twelfth century seems to have brought about a renewed tolerance of its pietistic aspects. One of the prime movers in this ecumenical policy was the Ābbâsid caliph al-Nâṣîr (1180–1225), who was known for his tolerance of Twelver Shi’ism and for his patronage of some Shi’î shrines, including Bâb al-Ghâyba in Samarra. This policy may have sanctioned similar acts of tolerance in Mosul under Badr al-Dîn Lu’lî (see n. 78) and under al-Zâhir Ghażâlî of Aleppo, who restored two important Shi’î shrines in Aleppo, one of which was dedicated to al-Husayn (see n. 66). In her recent book, Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 77, Doris Behrens-Abouseif has noted in passing that one of the window grilles in this mosque contains a cursive inscription. Since she does not illustrate this inscription, it is impossible to determine the veracity of her observation. But even if such an inscription does exist, its inconspicuous location would seem to undermine its importance. Could it have been a subtle attempt by a craftsman to introduce a feature that was not part of the intended decorative program?

85. Creswell, Muslim Architecture of Egypt, 2:64.

86. Imâm Shâfî lived in Cairo for the last fifteen years of his life, where he died in 820. Although a small shrine had always existed at this burial, Salâh al-Dîn began building a new one with a magnificent wooden cenotaph (also bearing cursive inscriptions) and an associated madrasa the very same year that he had declared the end of the Fâtimids and his own sovereignty.


89. RCAEA, no. 3880. Even the Répertoire, which is not noted for its aesthetic judgment, described this inscription as “d’un trait lâche et peu soigné.”


91. See, for example, Marius Canard, “Fâtimids,” ER, 2:859; and W. Madelung, “İsmâ’iyya,” ER, 4:203–5, who provides a detailed presentation of Fâtimid esoteric theology.


93. The basic outline of these processes has been preserved for calligraphy by the treatise of Ibn
Muqla, and for geometric ornament by Abu’l-Wafâ’ al-Buzjânî and others.

94. See Jonathan Bloom, "The Introduction of the Muqarnas into Egypt," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 27, where the author concludes that "muqarnas squinches belonged to vernacular architecture in the Fâtimid period, and would have been inappropriate for buildings commissioned by the court."

95. I owe this idea, like many others, to Professor Grabar; see his "The Meaning of History in Cairo," in *The Expanding Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass: Aga Khan Publications, 1985), 12.
BOOK REVIEWS

Urartu: A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B.C.E.

The book under review is the catalogue accompanying a major exhibition of Urartian metalwork held in 1991 at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. The ancient land of Urartu was located in the highlands of eastern Anatolia (what is today eastern Turkey and northwestern Iran), its political center lying in the district of Lake Van, just north of ancient Assyria. Despite a harsh terrain and climate and a powerful and hostile neighbor to the south (Assyria), the kingdom of Urartu emerged suddenly and vigorously in the middle of the ninth century B.C.E. to become one of the major political powers in Western Asia. At this same time Urartu became an important metalworking center and the premier “mining society of Anatolia and the Ancient Near East” (p. 16), flourishing for some two and one-half centuries. The swift rise of this kingdom brought it into direct contact with its neighbors, especially Assyria, which was the leading military power of its time. At the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E. Urartian power collapsed, and remembrance of the kingdom of Urartu vanished so completely that it is mentioned in no classical Greek or Roman source.

Through both Assyrian and Urartian cuneiform documents, modern scholars have been able to piece together the major aspects of the political history, political organization, and historical geography of the Urartian kingdom (the Assyrians called the area Urartu, whence the modern designation of this culture). By the late 1940s and the early 1950s the first political and economic histories of Urartu had begun to appear.

Speculation on Urartian architectural remains began in earnest with travelers to eastern Anatolia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of our era. Unfortunately, planned and careful excavation of Urartian archaeological sites has occurred infrequently in the past hundred years. Even today archaeological work on Urartian sites is poor or poorly published. Most archaeological activity has concentrated upon the large fortress sites, focusing upon producing accurate architectural plans and discovering objects d’art.

Three major Urartian sites in Turkey have been published in detail: Alttintepe, Kayalidere, and Çavustepe; from Russia detailed publications have appeared on three sites: Kamir Blur, Arin-berd, and Armavir; from Iran, one: Bastam. In Iran, German teams have conducted more sophisticated surveys of the Urartian landscape.

A relatively large number of Urartian metal objects, a particular craft industry in which the Urartians excelled, have also survived from the high point of Urartian power, and their study marks a major chapter in the art history of ancient Western Asia. These metal objects (weapons and armor, chariot and horse fittings, bowls, etc.) often carry cuneiform inscriptions written in Urartian and are sometimes decorated with relief work rendered in a distinctive style. They began to appear on the art market in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries A.D. The pioneering study of Urartian art was that of C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, Armenien einst und jetzt (Berlin, 1910–51). In the late 1960s the first synthetic treatments of the art of Urartu since Lehmann-Haupt appeared: M. N. van Loon, Urartian Art: Its Distinctive Traits in the Light of New Excavations (Istanbul, 1966), a topological survey in which two main styles of Urartian art were identified, the Court Style and the Popular Style; B. B. Piotrowski, Urartu: The Kingdom of Van and Its Art (New York, 1967), mainly a descriptive survey by artifact type; E. Akurgal, Urartäische und alliranische Kunstzentren (Ankara, 1968), an attempt to summarize briefly the main iconography and style of art from Urartu as well as first-millennium B.C.E. Iran and greater eastern Anatolia; and G. Arzarpay, Urartian Art and Artifacts: A Chronological Study (Berkeley, 1968), a compilation of inscribed objects creating a chronological framework for the study of Urartian art. Since the publication of these studies, more Urartian metal objects have come to light, the great majority, unfortunately, via illicit digging and the art market.

The exhibition of metal objects for which this book is the catalogue includes objects from the Israel Museum, museums in Europe and North America, and private collections. The editor and an international group of scholars, experts in Urartian metalwork or Urartian art, have gone well beyond a mere listing of objects in the exhibition, producing a series of essays dealing with the objects by type. The objects in the exhibition are organized into large groups based upon function: inscribed metal objects, chariot and horse fittings, utilitarian and votive armor, bronze belts, personal adornments, everyday and ceremonial utensils, secular and cultic furniture, sculpture in the round, votive plaques, and architectural elements. These groups, which are sometimes subdivided by artifact type, include all of the known (and preserved) major types of Urartian metal artifacts.

The essays typically provide background information on each of the artifact types, including: 1) a brief history of research; 2) references to Urartian pictorial (both monumental and minor) arts and literary evidence for the artifact type; 3) comparison with artifacts, pictorial depiction, and literary accounts from other cultural regions (mainly Assyrian); 4) discussion
of the qualities that distinguish Urartian artifacts; 5) suggestions for how the artifacts were used or made, including conflicting opinions where consensus is lacking. Where possible, the authors present a chronological development of the artifact, often drawing upon Urartian material not actually included in the exhibit as comparanda. Since so much of the material in this catalogue, as is true of Urartian art in general, does not have a secure provenance, royal inscriptions occurring on the artifacts provide the basic backbone for these chronologies. Many of the essays attempt to account for all known examples of the artifact type. The essays are generally without footnotes, but each concludes with an exceptionally good and up-to-date bibliography.

Both color and black-and-white illustrations of the actual objects are of exceptionally high quality. Often several views of an artifact are given, and some are also reproduced in line drawings (both reproductions of the actual artifact and reconstruction). The numbering system for the objects in the exhibition starts over at every large sectional heading, a practice that is tremendously burdensome to the reader trying to track down something between sections. Most authors frequently refer to objects in other sections, so this problem is not easy to ignore. Figure numbers (usually line drawings of comparative material) also begin anew with each major section.

Bracketing the catalogue essays are contributions on the history of Urartu (Salvini) and remarks on Urartian iconography (Calmeyer). Three important sections discuss ore deposits and mining in eastern Anatolia in the Urartian period (Belli), production of iron artifacts (Wartke), and technologies of production of metal artifacts (Ruder and MerHAV). These sections mark a significant advance on the traditional presentation of exhibition catalogues, which tend to focus obsessively on the object qua object.

Two appendices conclude the book. One is a list of the thirty-nine inscribed objects in the exhibition. The other lists objects in the catalogue made of gold, silver, and iron and those comprised of more than one material. A third appendix would have been quite useful for the reader: a translation (with line numbering) of the famous "Eighth Campaign" account of Sargon II, dated to 714 B.C., which describes the destruction and looting of the palace of the local prince Urzana and the temple of Haldi at Muşâşir. References to this document are ubiquitous in the catalogue.

In many ways this catalogue represents an important contribution to Urartian studies and metalworking in general in early first-millennium B.C. Western Asia. The Urartian specialist will find little new material or ideas here; nevertheless, the contributors have provided a concise and up-to-date summary of the state of knowledge about the Urartian metal industry. Individual aspects of this discussion have previously been available only in specialized periodicals and monographs (often in German). This catalogue was not meant to be a systematic study of Urartian metalwork—something urgently needed—but I suspect it will become an often-cited reference. I have also found the catalogue an important resource for undergraduates in introductory courses to the art history of Western Asia. The contributors approach the subject from a variety of perspectives, and in general the work expands the boundaries of the typical museum catalogue. Although many essays were translated from German, there are relatively few awkward phrases and typographical errors. Only on pages 254-56 is there some confusion, where figures 8 and 9 have been transposed and where it seems that figure and number references to "Personal Adornments" should read "Sculpture in the Round."

This particular catalogue and exhibition raise, however, difficult ethical questions. Perhaps more so than the study of any other cultural area (with the exception of Luristan), the study of Urartian art has been beset by problems of artifact provenance and forgery. On almost every page the contributors stress the limitations and uncertainty of their conclusions since few of the objects have a known provenance. Any understanding of chronological development of artifact types has to rely upon the isolated inscribed artifact (which is not always available) and the tenuous stylistic analysis that can be built upon that framework. Regional distinctions are impossible to make with the evidence we currently have. Some related sets of artifacts are scattered over several collections (e.g., p. 99 [horse and chariot fitting set]), while some have no documentation at all (e.g., p. 142 [bronze belts]). Some classes of artifacts are known almost exclusively from the art market (pp. 177 [armlets]), 286 [votive plaques]); other artifact types have only a handful of provenanced pieces (e.g., pp. 221 [silver utensils], 227 [cauldrons with attachments]).

Objects that came on the art market at the same time (or "are reported/alleged to have been found together") are linked together for this reason and assumed to have come from the same (unknown) findspot (e.g., pp. 143 [bronze belts], 178 [armlets], 185 [pins], 227-28 [cauldrons with bull's head attachments], 286-87 [votive plaques]). For example, Urartian votive plaques appeared suddenly on the market in 1970 and were "traced" to a hill near Güyimli. Some excavations at the site uncovered architectural remains of the Urartian period, thus "providing an approximate date for the hoard" (p. 286). In this case a group of objects appear on the market, are assumed to come from one and the same place (thus characterized as a "hoard"), are "traced" to a site where Urartian architecture is found, providing a "date" for the "hoard." Almost as unreasoned are the arguments associating a group of silver objects with the undiscovered tomb of Sarduri II. In this case the "dealer who brought them (i.e., the silver bowls) to the Adana Museum..." said that they "were found in a tomb with objects bearing the inscription 'Sarduri son of Arzisti'" (p. 223). I should stress in association with these silver vessels that MerHAV is only passing on information from an earlier publication of...
the vessels. Nevertheless, this observation and those on the votive plaques are left to stand on their own, without any comment on: 1) the dealer's obviously self-serving motive for connecting his material with an historical king of Urartu; 2) the dangers of using dealers' information or local hearsay in trying to reconstruct artifact context and provenance; 3) how the quotation of such information without qualification in scholarly publications can lend validity to the attribution over the course of time. For the last phenomenon the "Toprak-Kale furniture" is a famous case in point. Toprak-Kale has become the provenance of the so-called "Toprak-Kale furniture" (pp. 254-56, 274) by sheer repetition of the attribution (the furniture pieces were acquired in the nineteenth century by museums and private collectors and so have been in the literature for almost a hundred years).

The fact that museum and private collections underpin studies of Urartian art has even affected the agenda of Urartian art history and archaeology. Despite the acknowledged role of iron extraction and production in the establishment and consolidation of the Urartian state, little work has been done on iron objects. This may be because iron does not preserve well, and its intrinsic artistic value is much less than the better-preserved bronze, gold, and silver objects. Hence "iron objects have not elicited much interest in the antiquities market, and have value as museum exhibits only after expensive restoration" (p. 322). Research designs seem to have followed collectors' tastes.

This work, then, presents something of a dilemma. On the one hand, it is an extremely useful and important contribution to the study of Urartian art and metal technology. On the other hand, its raison d'être, an exhibition of Urartian art most of which is unprovenanced, clearly looted from ancient sites, and some of which is currently in the possession of collectors, must give the serious art historian and archaeologist pause. The editor has made every effort to avoid a descriptive account that stresses the beauty and technical skill of Urartian art (i.e., those things that motivate the collector and treasure hunter). All the contributions seek to reconstruct the ancient context of the material, its function and place in Urartian society, and the light it sheds on that society. Unfortunately, they, and all students of Urartian art, are hampered in this attempt by the lack of securely dated and provenanced material. In some ways this publication and the ethical issues it raises are indicative of an ever-growing unease between the museum world and the archaeologist. The questions of ownership of cultural heritage, looting of ancient sites, publication of unprovenanced material, and the role and responsibility of the academic community to looted material are complex and difficult. By not addressing these issues directly, this publication runs the risk of legitimating the very forces that have brought such havoc to the study of Urartian art.

M. B. Garrison


This book represents a long span of art history. Oleg Grabar's father, André, gave the Mellon lectures in 1960, and this work, based on Oleg's own Mellon lectures in 1989, is dedicated to him. We have here the mature reflections of one of the great historians of Islamic art. Oleg Grabar is at the height of his powers, with a seamless knowledge of the subject at his fingertips. His ambition in this book is to leap over the scholarly fences that divide up art history as a subject and that also divide the specialists from the public.

Professor Grabar makes a "conscious and deliberate departure from traditional scholarship" in a collection of six clearly organized sections. In the first, he propounds a new theory: that ornament (which he defines as a subclass of decoration that has no external references) mediates between the work of art and the spectator, that it is a carrier of beauty which involves the spectator in the work. It is an analogue of Plato's daemon of love, which is neither possessor nor possessed, neither god nor man, but an intermediary between worlds. Islamic art utilizes, to a high degree, ornament drawn from calligraphy, geometry, architecture, and nature. The mediatory effects of each are considered and the threads pulled together in a conclusion that leads beyond the confines of Islamic art history to propose that there are universally understood modes and values in the visual arts.

This is the bare outline for a firework display of intellectual powers such as few art historians in any subject could deliver. The speed, the erudition, the prodigality are dazzling. The section on calligraphy, particularly, is full of new perceptions for Islamicists and at the same time would be marvelously informative for anyone outside the field. (I would suggest that Derrida's description of writing as "une trace institut" emphasized the formal and conventional as opposed to the "natural trace," rather than the historicity of script. This reading is right but dull, whereas Professor Grabar's is wrong but brilliant.)

And yet it has to be said: there is a chasm yawning underneath the argument, as there was indeed under the achievement of another great art historian in isolating the subject of ornament, Sir Ernst Gombrich. The idea on which the whole book is founded, that it is possible to separate ornament from the rest of what goes to make up a work of art, that it can somehow be regarded as a separate entity from the subject or purpose of art, is an inheritance of nineteenth-century mechanistic functionalism, still clearly visible in Professor Grabar's definition of decoration as "anything applied to a structure or an object that is not necessary to the stability, use or understanding of that structure or object."
The semiotician would argue that all the signs that go to make up the work are equally necessary to its final meaning, as all the pieces of a Rubik cube are equally needed to complete the puzzle. Of course, there is a hierarchy among the elements of the work, but the hierarchy of signs, the order of importance we assign to them, is subjective for both creator and viewer and may totally counterweigh any overt primacy of function. The art of Matisse is an immediate refutation of the existence of a subordinate decorative element. As for the old museum category of the “applied arts,” what would you do with a Picasso plate? Would you really eat your dinner off it? For the Islamic art historian, these perceptions should come as a great release from the feelings of inferiority from which the subject has suffered, from an unease about frivolity and decoration, and from its relegation in museums to the lower status of the applied arts.

Yet we have not seized the chance. The assumption that there is somehow an inferior component of a work of art, the false distinction between primary and secondary roles, creates conflicts underlying the brilliant surface of this book. The definition of ornament as a subordinate element has to be rapidly abandoned, for it will not withstand the author’s scrutiny, and henceforth the argument sways backwards and forwards between the realities in any individual case and the desire to make definitive generalizations about its status. Thus, Professor Grabar comments that the treatment of the façade of Mshatta is so important that “the ornament carries its own message,” ultimately emphasizing its primary impact to such a degree that he claims it was the reason why the building was made. We are only forty pages into the book, and already the author’s own definitions have had to be jettisoned. A profuse waste of intellectual energy leads to his conclusion, “it is possible for an ornament to be the subject of the design.”

This concept of an “intermediary” that is somehow separable from the content of a work of art continues to create difficulties for the reader. Other intermediaries of a work of art, as well as those discussed in this book, says Professor Grabar, include composition, properties, shape, colors—in fact, just about everything but the title!

A similar self-inflicted problem of distinction between necessary and superfluous elements mars the section on architecture (that is, on representations of architecture in other media, rather than the treatment of buildings themselves). Professor Grabar discusses the frontispiece of a Qur'an in San'â that shows the schema of a mosque. The color plate of this shows a band with a vegetal motif running around the outside of the scheme. This band is inexplicably omitted in the line drawing of the frontispiece given in the text: it has been relegated to the status of the trivial and unnecessary. The decision has been made for us. Yet the band is a vital component. It may in fact be representational, indicating stucco vegetal relief on the walls of the mosque. If not, it is still an essential part of how we consider the representation of the mosque, for its presence transforms the image from plan to illumination.

The section on architecture is perhaps the weakest part of the book; it does not discuss one of the most powerful Islamic traditions, the representation of specific and unique buildings, the Dome of the Rock and the Ka'ba. Islam also has a tradition of relating works of art to specific buildings, in their scholarly libraries, for example. It is not impossible that the San'a Qur'an frontispiece is a kind of bookplate, representing the particular mosque in which the Qur'an was kept. Some discussion of the role of representation in creating generalities and particulars is missed here. And what has become of the second part of Professor Grabar’s original definition of ornament, that it has no external referent?

But this is a marvelously stimulating book; if anyone feels that Islamic art needs to prove itself to be an academic subject, here is the evidence. The footnotes alone amount to succinct summaries of intellectual disputes. (British art historians will be particularly grateful for Professor Grabar’s demolition job on the woollier notions of Prince Charles’s guru, Professor Keith Critchlow. It is a reflection of the pathetic status of art in Britain that few art historians here would risk offending such an important patron.) There is no slack in the pace of this book and an enviable wit: “the exciting absurdities of romanesque art,” the “acrobatically maulled personages” on the front of Amiens cathedral. The tension that Professor Grabar’s prose generates between the avowed goals (usually a triad) that he sets himself at regular intervals and the teeming originality of a mind whose ideas are always likely to burst through their confines is only part of the excitement. The conclusion, that “there are universal modes and values in the perception and appreciation of the visual arts,” may be open to objections, but it is a mark of the warmth and genius of the writer that he is willing to lay himself open to argument, to share with us in this way. The Grabars, father and son, belong to that rarest group of art historians, the bridge-builders.

Jane Jakeman


This is the catalogue for an exhibition held at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, June 18 to August 22, 1993. Documenting the first exhibition of privately collected Islamic art in Germany, the catalogue introduces historians of Islamic art in North America to new works of art and to a number of German scholars who are active in the field. The catalogue represents the combined efforts of eight scholars, two of whom also coedited and introduced it. Claus-Peter Haase wrote on calligraphy; Stefan
Heidenmann and Johann Christoph Hinrichs on numismatics; Jens Kroger on ceramics, glass, and architectural ornament; Almut von Gladiß on metalwork and jewelry; Bernard Augustin on arms; and Joachim Bautze on Indo-Islamic painting.

Following a recent historiographic trend, the catalogue is introduced by two short essays that discuss the "reception of Islamic art" and the formation of German collections in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The authors propose that these processes developed somewhat differently in Germany than elsewhere in Europe since Germany was not directly involved in colonizing the Islamic world. Rather than being motivated by hegemony and appropriation, German collecting of Islamic art was primarily propelled by the aesthetic and intuitive concerns of the collectors, some of whom were practicing artists. While the political background might be different, the aesthetic motivation closely matches that of collectors in England and France, including the famous Henri Vever, who was himself a jeweler. There is also considerable overlap in the nature of the objects collected, whose geographical, historical, and material range closely matches collections of Islamic art elsewhere in Europe or in America.

Lavishly produced, the catalogue includes excellent color illustrations of every object in the exhibition. The short essays and the catalogue entries are impressive in their up-to-date bibliographies and their thorough descriptions. One example is the entries on calligraphy and numismatics, which include translations of the Arabic or Persian texts. But some statements seem unsubstantiated, while others are downright simplistic or anachronistic. For example, the proposed connection between Buwayhid commemorative coins and Ar-ruqiq figural coinage, though intriguing, seems unwarranted since the latter group of coins was not commemorative in nature. Among the many anachronisms is the suggestion that "the Arab tribes and the sedentary townspeople, often disparaged as 'Bedouin louts', managed to establish a number of practical and speculative sciences and highly developed literature." Much of this can probably be ascribed to the translation, which at times has produced ambiguous or even incomprehensible sentences.

The collection is generally characterized by its high quality. It includes a number of outstanding objects: a series of perfectly struck Baybars dinars (13); early polychrome luster bowls (18–20); two magnificent twelfth-century drug jars (albarelli) white glazed with a blue rim (41); an albarello, thirteenth-century Kashan in pristine condition, originating from the Gurjan trove (48); an interesting collection of Iznik tiles and vessels (70–79); a fine and extensive collection of arms (123–57) that includes a Seljuk saber blade, several Ottoman sabers, a sixteenth-century Ottoman Matlock gun, and a splendid seventeenth-century Mughal shield in Damascened steel.

Yasser Tarbba


This catalogue includes both the illustrated and the unillustrated manuscripts in the New York Public Library, albeit in slightly different ways. The first and longer part of the book deals with illustrated manuscripts: twelve Arabic illustrated manuscripts in section I; twenty-eight Persian illustrated manuscripts and twenty-one painted and varnished ("lacquered") bindings in section II; twenty-five illustrated manuscripts of the late Mughal and provincial Indian schools in section III; and ten Turkish illustrated manuscripts in section IV. Designed for a general audience interested in painting, the classification of illustrated manuscripts is not by language but by style of painting. Thus, a manuscript written in Turkish but decorated with paintings in the style of Tabriz is discussed under Persian manuscripts (II, 2). Within the rubrics, the manuscripts are arranged chronologically. Each entry gives a general description and evaluation of the manuscript, including transcription of the colophon and inscriptions, as well as a list identifying the more than three thousand individual paintings. In contrast, the second and shorter part of the book dealing with unillustrated texts was designed for a more specialized audience conversant with Middle Eastern languages. Sections V (on 400 Arabic manuscripts) and VI (on 105 Persian and Urdu manuscripts) are arranged by language, then by subject and by date of the author's death. Section VII, a short section with thirty-two Turkish manuscripts, is arranged alphabetically by title. Each brief entry for the unillustrated manuscripts gives basic particulars.

The organization of the book reflects not only the interest and expertise of the principal author but also the history and strength of the collection and its two principal sponsors. Many of the illustrated manuscripts belong to the Spencer collection, endowed by the expatriate New Yorker, William Augustus Spencer. Born ca. 1857, he collected French illustrated books. While visiting the city, probably in 1910, he was shown the new library building and decided to leave his collection there. Following his death on the Titanic two years later, the New York Public Library received 232 elegantly bound books, mostly French works dating between 1880 and 1910, and a generous endowment for the purchase of other illustrated books and fine bindings. From the outset, the objective was to acquire complete or nearly complete manuscripts that show illustration and illumination in context. One of the first Islamic manuscripts to be purchased was a copy of Firdawsi's Shāhnāma, known as the Spencer Shāhnāma (II, 12), acquired in June 1929. A large volume dated 1023/1614, it has a contemporary binding of black morocco and gold-embossed plaques and contains forty-four paintings in a style reminiscent of fifteenth-century
Timurid work. This purchase was soon followed by several important Turkish manuscripts, including volume 3 of Mustafa Darîr’s life of the prophet, Siyâri nabi (IV, 2). This rare Ottoman religious manuscript with illustrations will be familiar from Carol Fisher’s study of its pictorial cycle (Ars Orientalis 14 [1984]: 75–96). The Spencer collection also includes several other fine Persian manuscripts, such as a copy of Haydar’s Makhtzan al-‘asrâr (II, 1) with superb calligraphy and one painting on blue waxed Chinese paper (see Priscilla Soucek’s detailed article on the manuscript in Ars Orientalis 18 [1988]: 1–37) and a Persian translation of al-Sufi’s Suwar al-kawâkib (II, 18), copied in 1040–42/1630–33 and illustrated with depictions of constellations and signs of the zodiac by several hands related to Riza ‘Abbâst and his school.

By contrast, the unillustrated manuscripts were acquired in a more piecemeal fashion and represent a random sampling of the art of the Islamic book and calligraphy. One large block of 250 manuscripts was acquired in 1934 out of funds for Semitic literature given by the financier and philanthropist Jacob H. Schiff. Although the acquisition records have been lost, the manuscripts apparently belonged to a prominent Arab family in Baghdad. Rather than any individual entry, these manuscripts are significant as a group representing the taste of an intellectual family in the twentieth century, and their Iraqi origins distinguish them from manuscripts in most other Western collections, which come from Egypt.

One of the most interesting features of this catalogue, and one that sets it apart from other recent catalogues of private collections, is that details of provenance are given. The Siyâri nabi manuscript (IV, 2), for example, belonged to the Ottoman royal collection until the time of Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (r. 1861–76), the bibliophile who also ordered the restoration of a seventeenth-century Turkish translation of the Shâhnâma, also in the New York Public Library (IV, 3). Such questions of provenance are extremely important not only in reconstructing the history of taste and collecting in the Islamic world but also in uncovering what happened to Islamic manuscripts at the time that they began to be appreciated by Western collectors. The Spencer Shâhnâma (II, 12) is often cited as the premier example of the revival of fifteenth-century Timurid painting under the Safavid shah ‘Abbas I (r. 1588–1624) since several paintings in it are pastiches of those in the celebrated copy of the epic prepared in 1430 for the Timurid prince Baysunghur and now in the Gulistan Palace Library in Tehran. Chemical analysis of paintings, however, shows that they cannot have been done before the first quarter of the nineteenth century as they use chrome green and other pigments that were only produced at that time. Schmitz’s stylistic analysis further suggests that the paintings were added in the first quarter of the twentieth century, as they include such features of late Qajar work as three-color gold. This could well be the time when illuminated pages also in the style of the Baysunghur Shâhnâma were added to a manuscript of the Qur’ân recently acquired by the Khalili Collection (see David James, After Timur: Qur’âns of the 15th and 16th Centuries A.D. [London, 1992], no. 5).

Schmitz’s catalogue is designed to make the Islamic manuscripts in the New York Public Library known to a variety of users, not to enhance the value of the collection. The numerous indices by title, author, artist, calligrapher, former owner, and subject make the information in the individual entries readily available. And despite minor inconsistencies in spelling and transcription, the book is sure to be consulted by a wide audience for a long time.

Sheila S. Blair


This splendidly intelligent book is, as the title carefully states, not about Mughal architecture but about architecture under the Mughals, the dynasty that ruled much of the Indian subcontinent from 1526 to 1857. Although largely concerned with dynastic patronage of mosques, tombs, gardens, and palaces, the book also discusses buildings erected by Muslim and Hindu courtiers and provincial patrons far from the capitals in north central India. This scope is particularly important as provincial architecture and the architecture produced for non-Muslims during this period have largely been ignored by other scholars. In a clear and even-handed manner, Catherine Asher, Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Minnesota, has succinctly presented one of the great traditions of world architecture, with buildings ranging from the monumental and familiar (e.g., the Taj Mahal) to the minute and neglected (the mosque of Lal Kunwar, built in 1822–23 by the consort of an Englishman residing in Delhi).

The seven chapters in the book are organized chronologically, beginning with the precedents for Mughal architecture not only in Indian Islamic buildings of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries but also in those structures erected in Iran and western Central Asia during the fifteenth century by members of the Timurid dynasty, from whom the Mughals traced their descent. Asher’s discussion of the impact of buildings erected by Lodi and Sur patrons on the emergence of a distinctive Mughal idiom during the reigns of Babur and Humayun is especially interesting and convincing. The third chapter, on the age of Akbar, covers not only familiar Islamic monuments such as the tomb of Humayun in Delhi and palace at Fatehpur Sikri, but also such unfamiliar buildings as the Govind Deva temple at Brindavan erected by Raja Man Singh, one of Akbar’s constant
companions. Asher sees the age of Jahangir, discussed in the fourth chapter, as one of transition between the formative period and the crystallization of the Mughal style under Shah Jahan (r. 1628–57), discussed in the fifth, when architectural form, decoration, and meaning were woven together in a seamless fabric. The sixth and seventh chapters—on Aurangzeb, the later Mughals, and their successor states—are perhaps the most valuable, if unfamiliar, parts of this book, for the subject has never before been treated in a comprehensive manner.

The author shows a truly impressive command of a wide range of sources, easily integrating the architectural remains with contemporary accounts by the Mughals and European visitors, inscriptions on buildings, contemporary representations, and modern historical writing. As a history of architecture during a particular period, this book is commendable for including discussion of destroyed or altered buildings, and the author is careful to base her arguments on what was erected rather than what remains. The extensive bibliographical essays at the end are particularly useful. In addition to being comprehensive, the book is a pleasure to read. It is virtually impossible to find fault with the text, yet as many of the buildings discussed are some of the most memorable works of humankind, the publishers have done the author an enormous disservice by not providing a more generous format for illustrations. The illustrations in themselves are extremely well chosen, and the designer has made a laudable effort to place them near the appropriate text, but the standard format imposed by the series has meant that few illustrations are larger than a postcard and most are quite a bit smaller. There should have been many more illustrations and many in color, as color is particularly important to the visual effect of Mughal architecture. In short, this is now the standard work on the subject, and no serious library or scholar can afford to be without it.

Jonathan M. Bloom


An admirable and ambitious effort to acquaint the educated nonspecialist with "Hinduism and its art . . . little known outside the countries of its practice" (p. 11), this book draws primarily on objects in the enormously important and surprisingly underpublished collection of the British Museum. Blurton, a curator in the museum's Department of Oriental Antiquities, begins with a thoughtful introduction in which he considers with great sensitivity the term "Hindu art," seeing it quite rightly as stylistically meaningless and a Western imposition "typical of European thinking, and European attempts to bring order and understanding to a body of material which may actually be without order" (pp. 10–11). Though I reject the latter suggestion, I heartily applaud the former and note with special pleasure the serious questioning of sectarian classification in a British publication. After this promising beginning the author regretfully embraces the use of the term (albeit with reservations), yet laudably he also rejects the hollow appreciation of ill-informed aestheticism.

Indeed, the book is essentially a literate and useful introduction to the practice of Hinduism written with attention not only to the "classical" traditions and "high arts" but also to everyday practices and objects that only occasionally have attracted the interest of the art historian. Thus, to pick just one of many comparable examples, in the short span of a few pages and six illustrations in his discussion of the Goddess (pp. 154–61, figs. 97–102), the author ranges from twelfth-century Orissa to nineteenth-century Bengal, to contemporary Gujarat (twice), to ca. first-century B.C./A.D. northwest Pakistan, and finally to fifth-century Rajasthan. The great range of material presented and the immediately obvious variety have the desirable effect of emphasizing certain continuities over time, space, and social class without diminishing differences and historical developments and, most importantly, without falling into the hackneyed acceptance of a "timeless" India.

Elsewhere, the author is as ready to include humble rural shrines as the great temples of the past. It is no criticism to note that the book merely mentions (pp. 74 and 185) but somewhat surprisingly lacks a plate of any of the modern temples built in traditional styles, at least one of which attests to the elasticity of Hinduism by including images of such figures as Abraham Lincoln and Lenin. Throughout, the book easily balances the ancient (or merely old) with the contemporary, constantly reminding the reader of the living and popular dimensions of Hinduism as well as its ancient roots and profound visual and literary expressions. These aspects alone recommend it for use in teaching as an excellent and much needed general introduction to material that many students find bewildering.

I do have a few criticisms of the book, some so minor as to be mere quibbles, some more substantial, and some more editorial than authorial. As an example of the first type, certainly Mrs. Gandhi did not have to be assassinated to be considered an "associate of the gods" (p. 185); as early as the Bangladesh war of 1970–71 she was depicted in popular posters as multiarmed Durgâ mounted on a lion. In several instances I disagree with Blurton's dating of objects (see especially fig. 54), but this is of secondary concern both to the work and to my more fundamental criticisms.

To explain my concerns, I must return to the book's title, Hindu Art. Rightly emphasizing the essentially religious aspect of most Indian art, Blurton defines his subject as "the sculpture, painting and ritual objects
used in the service of the many Hindu gods and goddesses" (p. 11). Though I suspect the title is the result of an editorial decision (the volume follows in series the fine *Islamic Art* [1991] by Barbara Brend), especially in the world’s present religiously charged political climate the intended reader would benefit from more detailed analysis of the categories “Hindu” and “Hinduism” than is offered (pp. 12–13). In modern sectarian usage, they are historically recent terms, but the careless reader might come away with the erroneous impression that some concept of a “unified” Hinduism (which most, including the author, would argue does not exist even today) is an ancient one. The connections of Hindu religious practice with Buddhism and Jainism are discussed (pp. 29–32), and the artistic implications of these relationships are raised where appropriate, but the interdependence of Hindu and Indo-Muslim artistic production in later periods is not sufficiently described (pp. 193 and 201; I would further argue that the term Indo-Persian is here misleadingly applied). The author does include miniatures illustrating Hindu subjects painted by Muslims in both Mughal-derived and highly conservative styles (figs. 3 and 82, for example) but does not discuss the religion of the artists. It is certainly essential to an understanding of “Hindu” painting that some of its most important practitioners were Muslims. And if “Hindu” is indeed the defining category, why not include material from outside the Indian subcontinent? There is not only a rich ancient tradition still living in Southeast Asia; there are also contemporary arts (particularly architecture) that serve the Hindu diaspora all over the world.

Having described some problems with the first word in the title, I move to the second. The illustrations are very well chosen and generally well reproduced, though sometimes small in size (distressingly typical in recent British Museum publications). Still, the reader is left with the impression that the arts both high and low merely illustrate practices, texts, and concepts while lacking their own formal language and history. Chapter 6, a “Regional and Chronological Survey of Hindu Art,” looks and reads like an appendix added less as a conclusion than as an obligation; it does little to ameliorate the problem. The laudable desire to “approach Hindu art from a point of view that is not merely aesthetic” (p. 11) should not blind us to the significance of visual language. Objects are not incidental to the history of Indian art; they are the primary evidence (indeed, most often the only evidence) and should be allowed to speak. In this regard the student of Indian art might turn to Coomaraswamy (absent entirely from the bibliography) for guidance. These criticisms are perhaps unfair, for the book clearly and successfully intends to be primarily about art in a utilitarian sense, but the title is misleading and sits uneasily with the contents. Most of what is here is very good, but the book should have a different title.

As we approach the end of the second Christian millennium, we are simultaneously in the last of the Hindu cycles and the Earth Cow lows pitiously, unable to support herself on her one remaining leg. A symptom of this is certainly the increasing decline of editorial standards even at august institutions. For example, Aurangzeb died in A.D. 1707, not 1717 (p. 201), and the bibliographic citation for *Islamic Art*, a book in the same series as this one, refers to Brend as “Brend.” Minor points, yet they are especially unfortunate in a book that carries the moral and intellectual authority of the British Museum to a general audience. But neither such minor faults nor areas of theoretical disagreement should keep the interested reader from obtaining this highly intelligent and instructive volume.

Daniel Eihnbom


Of late, lovers of early Indian sculpture have cause to rejoice. Remains of another stūpa near Bharhut have reportedly been discovered, and the splendid *Amarāvati* reliefs in the British Museum since 1880 can now be rediscovered by the public. Like their companions in the Madras Museum, the London sculptures are among the most important bodies of surviving early sculpture and the most significant outside India. Long the victims of abuse and neglect in both India and England before they entered the museum collections, they were installed under glass on the Great Staircase in 1880, remaining on view until 1940 when they were stored away for protection in wartime. Reinstalled in the Front Hall in the early 1950s, they were removed only a decade later when insalubrious London air proved to be eroding the stone surfaces. To forestall further deterioration, they were placed in a climate-controlled basement storage area, “visited only now and then by a few rare visitors or the small number of scholars who study this material” (p. 22). The few rare visitors and small number of scholars may feel pangs of elitist regret at losing the privilege of entering that cramped room to be overwhelmed by the physical presence of those superb and densely packed sculptures, but they must take pleasure in knowing that in the present equally protected and much more spacious installation in the newly refurbished main gallery of the Edward VII Building the *Amarāvati* reliefs can once again impress upon all visitors to the British Museum the profound message of the Buddha and the unmatched skills of the ancient sculptors of Andhradeśa. To mark this happy event, the museum has published a detailed and essential catalogue by the archaeologist Robert Knox, Keeper in the Department of Oriental Antiquities, the first complete “record of the Amarāvati collection in Britain” (p. 18) since James Ferguson's *Tree and Serpent Worship* (1868; 2nd ed., 1873).
Knox owes strong and frequently acknowledged debts to the many scholars whose distinguished works on Amarāvati precede his catalogue, particularly to C. Sivaramamurti, author of *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Museum* (1942), and to Douglas Barrett, whose 1954 *Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum* has until now been the principal published access to the London material and who continued to write on the subject until 1990. Nevertheless, Knox clearly demarcates his own territory, most notably in the highly contentious areas of political history and chronology, throughout combining ambiguous early excavational evidence (some of it recently rediscovered) with more recent research to illuminate many vexing questions.

He begins with a useful overview of the history of the monument (pp. 9–16), an account glorious in ancient times, deeply depressing in modern. On the basis of both nineteenth-century evidence and the excavations of the 1950s and 1970s, Knox accepts the reasonable assumption that construction of the stūpa began in the third century B.C. (pp. 11–12). However, one might wish to question his quick assumption that the later phases of ornament necessarily resulted from direct royal patronage and carry a deliberate political message. It may have been so, but as the author would agree, the mention of a dynasty in an inscription primarily indicates date, not necessarily patronage. The comparative rarity of unquestioned royal patronage for early Indian monuments after the Mauryan period, the frequent mention of lay donors, our pitifully scanty knowledge of the mechanisms of artistic production in all of premodern India (including recent periods), and lingering uncertainties over the exact dates of the Amarāvati stūpa combine to argue for extreme caution. While in a general way one can only agree that “the fortunes of the Great Stūpa were related to the rise and fall of the ruling dynasties of the region” (p. 9), the force with which Knox implicitly attributes a specific political agenda to its refurbishment in what he later describes as the “High Period . . . coinciding with the rule of the Sātavāhanas in the Andhradesa (second to third centuries A.D.)” (p. 34) makes this reader uncomfortable.

Knox is on surer ground in his acceptance of a long chronology for the monument (p. 11). It is not appropriate here to attempt summarizing the extremely complex issues in dating the various phases of the construction and decoration of the monument, but in general some (including Barrett in his 1954 catalogue) see the development of the site compressed into a short span of time, and others (including Knox) spread it out over centuries. In both frameworks, relative chronologies of the sculpture more or less agree, though of course absolute chronologies do not, and the waters are further muddied by continuing debate on dynastic dates associated with Amarāvati inscriptions. I admire the speed with which Knox dispatches the ursome and overemphasized question of Nahapāna’s supposed mention in the *Perīplus*, and his quite sensible approach to the perhaps insoluble problems of Sātavāhana chronology allows the reader to move with him to the monument itself (p. 14).

The arguments concerning sculptural style are less authoritative (pp. 32–33 and passim), and in some respects confusing. The problems start with his suggestion that some “crude engravings” on stone date from the Maurya period, largely on architectural and inscriptional evidence. The presumed third-century B.C. material is “in the lowest relief and is stiff and unsophisticated; it is only vaguely representative and entirely lacking in naturalism” (p. 32). Now, as Ludwig Bachhofer brilliantly stated over sixty years ago (*Early Indian Sculpture* [1929], cited in the excellent bibliography), the primary characteristic of the sculpture of the Maurya period is “refined naturalism.” Assuming the crossbars are indeed of third-century B.C. date, the engravings are later than the crossbars on which they are found, or are atypical of their period, or are unsympathetically described. Whatever the case, the reader is left with an erroneous impression of third-century B.C. sculptural style. If, as argued a few lines later, other sculpture from Amarāvati can be dated with reference to similarities with sculpture from monuments elsewhere in India, why should this early phase bear so little resemblance in its relief style to the coherent, well-documented, and widely distributed style of the third century B.C. as we understand it from numerous examples? The “crude engravings” may be of the date suggested, but if they are, it is in spite of rather than because of their lack of sophistication and naturalism.

Implicit here is a presumed Darwinian evolution of style from early and simple (“crude”) to later and complex (“sophisticated”) forms, a presumption that also mars the treatment of the style “that antedates the great reconstruction of the stūpa under the Sātavāhanas but is clearly later than the crude engravings of the third century” (p. 32). This style is parallel in its flatness and abstraction to the great achievements of Bhārhatu, now mostly in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, and the Allahabad Museum and almost universally dated to the second century B.C. The similarity is rightly noted in Knox’s analysis, but the sculptures are somewhat confusingly described as bearing “comparison with Bhārhatu and early Sāñci and may not be far from those styles in a first-century B.C. date or earlier” (p. 33). What is “early Sāñci”? Does the author mean the railing of Stūpa II, also known as the Stūpa of the Saints, likewise flat in its conception of form and probably of the same date as Bhārhatu? If so, why not date the comparable Amarāvati phase to ca. second century B.C. and be done with it? Or does he mean the gates of Stūpa I, the well-known Great Stūpa, which some (including myself) date to the first century B.C., others to the first century A.D.? Stylistic development is a far more sensitive indicator of date than this volume would have us believe, and there is a great deal of difference between second- and first-century B.C. sculpture, as anyone who has compared the Bhārhatu railing and gate with the gates at Sāñci will agree. The lack of precision here is misleading. This is important because at least some of the sculptures in
Knox’s “first phase of the High Period,” dated here to the second century A.D., have very close affinities with the sculpture of the gates of Śāṅcī I (see especially cat. nos. 10, 15, and 100, pp. 57, 67, and 178–79), characteristics shared by sculpture from other monuments in the region (the splendid assault of Māra slabs in the Musée Guimet in Paris comes readily to mind). These close relationships weaken Knox’s proposed absolute dating in favor of earlier placement, though his relative dating, generally similar to Barrett’s, holds up well.

Another difficulty with his consideration of style is his value-laden descriptions of the characteristics of differing phases. Thus, in the phase parallel to Bhārhat, figures are “broad and unnaturally stiff,” lacking “any inner or natural movement” (pp. 32–33). First of all, the subtle and extremely active line and surface modeling of these reliefs is not only remarkable; it is chronologically and regionally diagnostic. Next, though there is no disputing taste, some of us, while in no way denying the sublime achievements of later periods, actually prefer the deliberate antinaturalism of this early phase, seeing its very remoteness and hieratic coolness as theologically most appropriate to early Buddhism. But these very specific criticisms do not diminish in any way the importance and quality of the catalogue, a required addition to any serious collection on Indian art.

The plates are generally good, though there is an irritating (and headache-inducing) tendency to combine color and black-and-white views of different parts of the same object, sometimes apparently intended to indicate date differences between obverse and reverse of reused stones and sometimes not. The primary arrangement of sculptures by type rather than by date is also annoying, but even these drawbacks do not cloud the considerable achievement of publishing every bit of stone from Amarāvatī in the collection, whatever its date and however minor.

Daniel Ehnbom


The city of Lahore in the Pakistani Panjab has served as the capital and royal residence of numerous kingdoms over the course of the past two and a half millennia. According to tradition, it was founded in ancient times by Lava, the son of Prince Rāma of the celebrated Hindu epic, the Rāmāyaṇa. Early historical accounts by foreign writers, including the third-century B.C. Megasthenes, second-century Ptolemy, and seventh-century Xuanzang (Hsiian Tsang), describe a city of great commerce and culture in the region that can presumably be identified with the early Lahore. With the advent of the Muslim military incursions into South Asia during the seventh century and the Mongol raids in the thirteenth century, Lahore became a favorite target of periodic conquest and pillage. Under the Mughals (sixteenth–eighteenth centuries) it developed into a magnificent city graced with elegant forts, palaces, mosques, and gardens. At the end of the eighteenth century Lahore was taken over by the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh (r. 1801–39) to serve as his capital. In 1849 Lahore and the Panjab were annexed by the British, under whose control they remained until independence in 1947.

This volume is essentially a pictorial tribute to the Mughal and Sikh periods of the city’s history by one of its preeminent native sons. The introduction is a well-written historical discussion divided into three parts: the “Early History of Lahore” traces the complex political development of the city; “19th Century Lahore Observed” describes the city’s political climate and monuments in the period under focus; and “Lahore Illustrated” briefly surveys the mainly foreign artists and photographers who captured the city in their work. Numerous historical and geographical accounts, both Asian and Western, effectively enhance the detailed text of the first two sections. Surprisingly, the last topic is cursorily treated through limited biographical annotations and views the works of art primarily as descriptive temporal documents without presenting art-historical or stylistic analyses.

The introduction is followed by a useful map of sites and a catalogue of 107 illustrations of Lahore, thematically grouped by specific monument, city view, or event. The tomb of the Mughal emperor Jāhāngīr (r. 1605–27) begins the tour and has the greatest number of depictions devoted to it. The Badshāhī Mosque (completed in 1673/74), the tomb of Ranjit Singh (completed in 1852), and the mosque of Wāzīr Khān (completed in 1634) are the royal edifices receiving the next most attention. Interspersed with these well-known landmarks are representations of various street scenes and miscellaneous structures. The arrangement of the monuments and views seems regrettably arbitrary; the serious reader’s use of the volume would have been greatly facilitated by a more logical sequence, preferably chronological. The index and list of illustrations after the catalogue section help alleviate the chaotic ordering, but a more detailed page of contents would have been immensely beneficial in this regard.

The catalogue entries vary in length and depth of analysis. Contemporary literary passages supplement the descriptions of the illuminated subjects and bring many of the monuments and scenes delightfully to life through appropriate quotes and anecdotes. Art historians may lament the general lack of aesthetic interpretation, but the scope of the volume was obviously not intended to be comprehensive. Technically, the reproductions are virtually all excellent in quality and epitomize the handsome productions of Mapin Publications. A scant few illustrations are less than ideal in
clarity, however. These deserve improvement in future editions, as does the occasionally awkward layout.

One feature would have greatly enhanced the volume: inclusion of modern photographs of the monuments and scenes represented in the nineteenth-century illustrations. While some of the structures and locales no longer exist due to the ravages of time and human activity, many are in superb states of preservation and are frequented by throngs of tourists and more serious visitors. The use and informative impact of comparative photographs can be seen in another recent publication on Lahore: Samina Quraeshi’s Lahore: The City Within (Singapore: Concept Media, 1988), which is curiously omitted from the bibliography of the work under review. While oriented toward a more popular audience, the modern photographs in Quraeshi’s work augment and broaden the educational effectiveness of the historical illustrations, a number of which are repeated in the Aijazuddin volume.

Lahore: Illustrated Views of the 19th Century is an excellent introduction to one of the most important and oldest cities of South Asia. The illustrations are generally first-rate, and the discussion is embellished by contemporary accounts of the monuments and scenes. Perhaps the most fitting assessment of the volume lies in its account (p. 21) of the celebratory tradition at the Kangra court of Sansar Chand (r. 1775–1823), who dreamed of conquering mighty Lahore. Whenever the king yawned, his attendants would exclaim, “Lahore parepat!” (Lahore has been gained!). With this fine effort by F. S. Aijazuddin, Lahore has indeed been gained.

Stephen Markel


Many technical and sacred texts contain iconographic information and devote substantial space to recording the appropriate gestures, attributes, and proportions of divine and semidivine images. The publication of this literature, at times with instructive commentary, is well advanced in India, and some of this information has been incorporated into handbooks on iconography. This type of scholarship, tending to the descriptive rather than the interpretive, focuses on forms preserved in the literary record and thus still canonical in the strictest sense. An obvious example is Viṣṇu in his supernal form Viśvaśrīpa. Most readers of this journal will need no introduction to the Bhagavat Gītā and the stunning theophany celebrated in its eleventh chapter. Similar texts praising Śiva or the goddess could be cited. Such examples form part of the upper strata and great tradition of Hinduism; the images are recognizable and are, in many cases, still produced in sculpture, painting, and popular prints. Some deities, however, have fallen from favor, and their forms are no longer made or worshipped. These deities have tended to disappear from literary accounts, though fossilized or incidental references are occasionally preserved. Certainly, the best-known instance of this phenomenon is provided by early Buddhist art in north India. Although the apparent worship of trees and other objects shown in the early reliefs seemed quite baffling when first examined in the nineteenth century, a study of inscriptions and Buddhist texts led to a remarkably thorough understanding of this sculpture and its iconographic peculiarities. This approach, which we might describe as an “archaeology of interpretation,” was pioneered by Ananda Goomarawamy and has been carried forward by such scholars as Moti Chandra and V. S. Agrawala. It is to this interpretive tradition that Bolon’s monograph belongs. What is significantly different here is that the author has tackled an iconographic form for which there seems to be no textual or epigraphic documentation.

The images surveyed by Bolon are striking and quickly described: the goddess is shown recumbent with her legs splayed to reveal her private parts; in lieu of a head, most depictions show a lotus flower and other vegetal motifs. For this representation Bolon uses the name Lajjā Gaurī. The surprisingly wide distribution and large number of these images indicate that this goddess was not a minor deity but part of an important and widespread cult. This is significant in itself because we are apt to forget that Hinduism has changed dramatically in the last millennium. Lajjā Gaurī was worshipped in many parts of the country but seems to have enjoyed special favor in the Deccan. It is curious that no images were found in eastern India, but examples may yet be discovered.

Due to the apparent absence of textual sources, Bolon focuses on the archaeological record, which consists of about 120 stone and terracotta examples widely scattered among public and private collections, religious establishments, and archaeological stores. Only one example, at Alampur, remains in situ in a temple (fig. 46). Many examples are small and fragmentary, indicating that the author has left, literally, no stone unturned. Anyone who has attempted work of this nature will appreciate the pains to which Bolon has gone; those with special interests in Hinduism and the goddess are very much in her debt.

The surviving images are divided into four basic types: 1) a form with a pot-like body and splayed legs on each side; lotus flowers and plant sprays issue from the pot’s mouth; 2) a form with a pot-like body that includes shoulders and breasts; the floral and vegetal devices in this type are placed where the head might be expected; 3) a form in which arms have been added but which retains a lotus flower in lieu of a head; 4) a completely anthropomorphic form with all four limbs and a head. The first type is the most archaic
in typological terms and shows that the womb was equated with the śāramangalā, or pot of plenty. This indicates that the goddess was an image of fertility and the source of life, a point the author rightly stresses. The four types appeared concomitantly and do not, therefore, constitute a temporal development.

After a typological classification of the various forms (chap. 1), the author discusses examples that appear in multifigured plaques (chap. 2). These help determine that the cultic associations of the goddess were consistently Śaiva. Related forms are then discussed (chap. 3). Of these the lotus is obviously the most important as it was used instead of a head in many of the images. The names of Lajjā Gaurī, most of them popular and of little historical value, are dealt with in chapter 4. The conclusion, which I think readers will find the most stimulating and provocative part of the book, explores the possible origins of this goddess and the various social and historical conditions that seem to have led to her anthropomorphization and incorporation into the Śaiva pantheon. While much of this is necessarily speculative, the ideas are nonetheless presented with due caution and with a genuine sensitivity to the religious life of India. Flights of theoretical fancy are avoided, something especially laudable given the monograph was produced in 1992 under the auspices of the College Art Association of America.

Should we have any criticism of this book, it is the desultory treatment of literary references that might help explain this goddess. Stella Kramrisch was the first to propose that Lajjā Gaurī could be equated with Aditi ṭṭanāpad.5 Bolon agrees that the word ṭṭanāpad "exactly describes this image" and mentions some of the early texts where the term occurs (p. 6). Her references, however, simply repeat what is found in M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899). While it may well be that these references shed no light on the topic, the author cannot assert there are no texts to explain the images (as is done on p. 8) without discussing the occurrences of ṭṭanāpad. For example, Sāyaṇa’s commentary on Rgveda 1.107.24 states: bhūḥ ṭṭanāpadah vrksāt jayinē.4 Why Sāyaṇa has introduced vrksāt ("from a tree") is not immediately clear, but this would seem to have some bearing on the subject, considering the vegetal associations of the goddess; the passage, in any case, underlines the need to explore the texts in a systematic and comprehensive manner. A related question centers on Bolon’s use of the term ṭṭanāpad and identification of Lajjā Gaurī with Aditi (p. 65). Given that this goddess was understood, at least in part, as Aditi and thus can be traced to the most revered Vedic texts, I found it difficult to follow why Lajjā Gaurī was then considered a rustic village goddess who came to be absorbed into the pantheon of Hinduism (p. 68). This contradiction is not satisfactorily resolved or explained. How the Vedic deities find their place in Hinduism is indeed most interesting and worthy of exploration, but the work of Eschmann & al. on the cult of Jagganātha, which is used here as a model, is helpful only in exploring the final history of this goddess, when she seems to have enjoyed a degree of noble patronage.6

A related matter, perhaps only of interest to pedants like me, are the errors in transcription that appear most conspicuously (and unfortunately) in the glossary (pp. 77–80): aṣṭamāngala for aṣṭamāngala, bhumiprasada for bhumiprasāda, kund for kunḍ, pītha for pīṭha, Prthvī for Prthvī, Rāmāyana for Rāmāyaṇa, sakti pīṭha for saktī pīṭha, vapi for vēpi. Also, the arched placement that is placed against a temple spire over the entrance is a not a sukhanāsa but a sukhanāsa (literally "parrot’s beak"). Some of the decisions regarding transcription are peculiar to my mind, such as the absence of diacritical marks on place names and the use of ch for c. chaitya for caitya, Chola for Cōla, and so forth. The use of ch can be defended in that it helps readers unfamiliar with Indic languages. This monograph, however, is not designed for popular consumption in either style or subject matter so the use of ch is inconsistent with the volume’s general tone. I have to admit that I was also surprised to see a comment regarding the “corruption of Victorian attitudes, which led to an outcast status for Lajjā Gaurī” (p. 67). Surely, these same Victorian attitudes, and British Orientalism in general, led to the serious study of ancient India and ultimately to the archaeological organizations and museums that have preserved the images of this important goddess. We should be sufficiently distanced from the imperial enterprise to look dispassionately at the Indo-British encounter.5

Notes

1. The best-known "classics" are perhaps T. A. Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography (Madras: Law Printing House, 1914–16) and J. N. Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1956); more recent material is cited in the useful bibliography provided by S. Huntington, The Art of Ancient India (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), 670–82. Aside from editions of the Purāṇa texts, etc., we might mention, as examples of śilpaśāstra, Diṃḍava, ed. Prabhāsātar O. Sompura (Palitana: n. p., 1960) and Kīrāṇava, ed. Prabhāsātar O. Sompura (Ahmedabad: B. P. Sompura and Brothers [1967]). These Sanskrit works have Gujarati commentary (the second with it also translated into Hindi).


In a footnote that does not actually condescend to an acknowledgment, Kramrisch notes that it was W. Norman Brown who identified the image as uttānapād.


Michael D. Willis


When Dura-Europos, a garrison town on the west bank of the Euphrates, was destroyed by the Sassanian Persians in 256 C.E., its synagogue had just been built and decorated (243–53 C.E.). Until 1992, when the synagogue’s wall paintings were uncovered, almost no one in the scholarly world acknowledged the existence of Jewish art. Thereafter, Clark Hopkins, the field supervisor of the Yale expedition, suggested that the paintings prove the possibility of Jewish antecedents to Christian art. Many scholars have since expanded this view, while others have focused on the place of the paintings in Jewish art. Since their discovery, Kurt Weitzmann has been fascinated by the connections between the Dura frescoes and later Byzantine miniatures. Only recently has he investigated the precise relationship between the Dura paintings and Christian art. In this book Weitzmann argues that the essential narrative or cyclic character of most of the Dura paintings and of later Byzantine miniatures suggests a common source for the two in a tradition of Old Testament narrative illustrations. He locates the source for the frescoes in illustrated books of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Bible accomplished in Egypt in the second century B.C.E. Other proposed sources are illustrated legends from the Bible (called midrash in Jewish tradition) or early illustrated versions of Flavius Josephus manuscripts; the Dura frescoes share a number of midrashic elements found in Greek texts of Old Testament stories, in a few Greek poems by Jewish poets, and in medieval Josephus Antiquitates Judaicae manuscripts.

Weitzmann also believes that painters of the Dura synagogue used illustrated biblical manuscripts as models. He hypothesizes that an illustrated Septuagint was borrowed from a library at Antioch, the closet city where Jews and Christians coexisted before the fourth century. The Dura paintings display features of the Antioch style—Hellenistic realism of figures in action or in natural relationships, combined with an “oriental” or Mesopotamian frontality. The miniatures of the later Greek Octateuchs also show iconographic parallels to art from Antioch.

After explaining the transfer of art from model to monumental wall painting, Weitzmann describes the iconography of the Dura synagogue panel by panel, relating each to its later Byzantine counterpart as well as to existing early Christian catacomb paintings and church mosaics. He pointedly calls the four portrait panels at the center of the main western wall conflated narrative scenes, possibly because this better suits Herbert L. Kessler’s reinterpretation of the lower two figures in the second section of the book. Those familiar with Weitzmann’s Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration (Princeton, 1949 and 1970) and Ancient Book Illumination (Princeton, 1959), as well as his many other studies of manuscripts, will not be surprised that he uses the iconography of late manuscript examples to hypothesize the existence of pre-third-century prototypes.

In part II, “Program and Structure,” Herbert L. Kessler focuses on the central symbols of the synagogue’s west wall. His purpose is to discuss the synagogue’s original decorative program and the changes in imagery made when the narrative scenes were added. Although drawing analogies to Christian and pagan iconography, Kessler emphasizes the distinct symbolic meaning of the central emblems to the Jews who worshiped there. The earliest decorations in the Torah niche and on the wall directly above the niche are aniconic in nature (even in the Binding of Isaac faces are turned the other way); they are the “Temple panel” of the seven-branched Menorah, the Temple in Jerusalem, the etrog and lulav (citron and palm branch, standard Jewish symbols), and, instead of the standard shofar (ram’s horn), the narrative illustration of the Akedah, the near-sacrifice of Isaac, so important to Judaism as proof of the historical covenant between God and Abraham. Above this, at center, an enormous fruitless vine growing from a thick stem is flanked by an empty throne on which a cushion supports something that looks like a hat, with a circular footstool and an empty table. The vine is not a tree of life, as some interpretations have it, but one that will bear fruit only
in the Messianic age, as envisioned by several prophets. The empty, prepared celestial throne (a Jewish *hetoimasia*) awaits the Messiah, who will establish his kingdom, and the empty table (itself flanked by lions of Judah) is the reading stand for the Torah, which also awaits the Messiah, who will explain it to the pious. The symbolic program of the synagogue's first decorative scheme is thus consistent with Jewish eschatology.

But perhaps this specifically Jewish message was not distinct enough from the Christian Messianic message, Kessler argues, and when it was repainted with an expanded narrative program, its central symbolic panels were crucially modified. The earlier interpretation was not necessarily nullified but clarified. Thus, atop the vine, acanthus, the artist added an enthroned figure in Persian dress, the costume of all royal figures in the synagogue; beneath him stands a figure at each side; a large lion below seems to be superimposed on the tree. In contrast to Christian belief, Kessler emphasizes, the Jewish Messiah is to be a human ruler. The tree may then be reinterpreted as a Jewish tree of Jesse, where the Messiah is associated with a branch of King David's family, as affirmed by Isaiah and Zechariah. The two figures are interpreted as Joshua the son of Jehozadak and Zerubbabel, governor of Judea from the house of David, who rebuilt the Temple after the return from the Babylonian exile. But because these two men are dressed as prophets, according to Kessler, they may also be interpreted as Samuel and Nathan or as Haggai and Zechariah, depending on whether the enthroned figure is seen as the historical or the Messianic David. Painted over the earlier empty throne and table is Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, as well as Jacob blessing all of his sons, symbolizing the ingathering of the exiles. Another King David is portrayed in the upper left corner, and directly above the scene is a lyre player wearing a Phrygian hat, the conventional representation of King David as psalmist. Kessler recalls that the Psalms are full of Messianic references (Psalm 32 refers to the "shoot from the house of David").

Since 1987 Kessler has maintained that the two lower of the four portrait panels between the symbolic images and the narrative scenes represent the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah rather than the generally accepted Abraham and Ezra. His reasoning is based on specific passages from both prophets and, for Jeremiah, on a legend that he hid the ark when the Temple was destroyed. Another argument for reading the two figures as prophets is their Greek costume, typical prophet garb in Byzantine art, yet in the Triumph of Mordecai just below Abraham/Isaiah the bystanders, definitely not prophets, also wear Greek dress. The fact that similar costume appears in Christian and pagan art does not prove the identity of the figure in its context at Dura. Orpheus becomes King David, Aphrodite becomes Pharaoh's daughter, and nymphs become her attendants; Pharaoh himself becomes Ahasuerus in a different setting.

I believe these two lower panel figures may rather represent Abraham and Ezra. Both led the Israelite/Jewish people—Abraham as the first patriarch and Ezra as the scribe who renewed the custom of reading the Torah to the people. Ezra is the figure of return from the Babylonian captivity, while Jeremiah is considered the prophet of destruction and exile. Both Abraham and Ezra witnessed God's covenant with the Jews, and both went up from Mesopotamia to the Land of Israel, as the Jews of Dura hoped to do in the Messianic age.

Conceivably, the identity of these two figures was always ambiguous: whoever programmed these panels might have had one interpretation in mind and the synagogue worshipper another, while a rabbi could have construed them entirely differently in his weekly Torah commentary. Multiple explanations of symbols are common in Jewish art of all ages: Zodiac and Helios, often represented in Palestinian synagogues during the Byzantine period, are perfect examples of symbols with diverse interpretations.

Why were these changes made in Dura's Messianic imagery? Kessler argues cogently that they were intended to respond to Christianity, Judaism's greatest competitor at that time. The issues between the competing religions involved whether the Messiah had already come or was yet to come, whether Christianity had replaced the destroyed Temple, and whether God's grace had been withdrawn from the Jewish people with the exile. The repainting of the panels above the Torah niche was the visual answer to the growing Christian challenge, affirming the historical promises to Abraham and Jacob's two blessings, as well as the earthly King David and his Messianic heir, who would appear in the future, rebuild the Temple, and teach the Torah. It was also important for the Jews of Dura to have images that emphasized the literal meaning of the biblical narrative rather than seeing Scripture as a prefiguration of the Gospel. What is fascinating for the history of Jewish art is that Jews often chose the very same images as their Christian competitors to explain the meaning of their own history and eschatology.

Leila Avrin


Nearly all books on the art of the Holocaust—the systematic mass extermination of Jews by the Nazis before and during World War II—focus on art created by those interned in the concentration camps, most of whom perished before achieving recognition. Other books depict Holocaust memorials. This book is the first serious and successful effort by an art historian to
concentrate on the visual reaction of Western artists to the attempted destruction of European Jewry.

Many of the artists whose works are discussed here are known to historians of modern Western European art: Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Paul Klee, Max Beckmann, Francis Bacon, George Grosz, Karen Appel, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, Jacques Liphchitz, and Anselm Kiefer. Some, such as Jakob Steinhardt and Ludwig Miedner, are known as German Expressionists; some in the context of American art: Ben Shahn, Philip Evergood, William Gropper, Leonard Baskin, George Segal, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman. Others are less known in the general art world but recognized by collectors and historians of Jewish and Israeli art: Mordechai Ardon, Avigdor Arikha, Samuel Bak, Naftali Bezem, Yehuda Bacon, Marcel Janco, Maryan S. Maryan (Pinchas Burstein), and (Emanuel) Mané-Katz. Many others would be unknown to most readers, among them Gerhart Frankl, Renato Guttuso, Mauricio Lasansky, Zoran Music, Lea Grundig, Lasar Segall.

Amishai-Maisels has organized an awe-inspiring body of painting, drawing, and sculpture under two major themes: "Depiction" and "Interpretation" of the Holocaust. The first chapter under "Depiction," called "I Am a Camera," takes up representations of concentration camps by inmates and others. "On the Run" examines portrayals of refugees fleeing from the Holocaust; "Mass Murder into Art" shows Jews being rounded up and deported to death camps; "Resistance and Liberation" discusses paintings about partisans, revolt in the ghetto, liberation, and survivors.

The author analyzes the crucial problem of how the artist can depict a subject of such unimaginable horror while still maintaining some aesthetic distance so as not to alienate the viewer, who must be educated. She first explores how brutality has historically been treated in Western art. Martyred saints depicted by Baroque artists were specific individuals whose deaths had religious significance. Holocaust artists, by contrast, must represent the senseless death of anonymous masses. More relevant are Goya's Disasters of War etchings, which portray senseless, anonymous killings with documentary realism. Each work shows few enough victims to render them visually bearable and allow the viewer to identify with them, but the entire series creates a cumulative effect of mass murder. Holocaust artists must similarly walk a thin line between revulsion for the murder and the aesthetic appeal that art must embody. Amishai-Maisels fully describes, illustrates, and analyzes the style (color, expressionism, degree of realism or abstraction, surrealism) in which each artist grapples with this fundamental problem.

A particularly insightful discussion of Ben Shahn, for example, reveals that his employment in the U.S. Office of War Information (1942-43) constantly exposed him to photographs and films of Nazi savagery. He could not depict these as they were, so his poster of the Lidice massacre, This Is Nazi Brutality, portrays a chained man with a sack over his head, thus eliminating any display of emotion; the telegraphed message "All men of Lidice—Czechoslovakia—have been shot" is appended. His wartime paintings and drawings also avoid showing atrocities: he diluted his depiction of concentration camps to worried men standing behind barbed-wire fences. Or he represented the Holocaust by means of symbols. In Allegory (1948) Shahn painted a tenement fire in Chicago, but the black Hickman children, set beneath his fire-wolf/lion symbol of incarceration, are derived directly from a photograph of Holocaust victims in the files of the Office of War Information. He said he dressed the children in the play clothes of his brothers and sisters (but their clothing is almost identical to the war photo), recalling a fire in the Russian village of his grandfather (whose name was Welw-Leb, or Wolf-Lion), where his own father was burned and scarred saving his children from the flames. Thus, the fires of his own childhood, the crematorium, and the tenement are merged in one painting.

Because most artists do not directly represent Nazi atrocities, the bulk of the book is devoted to "Interpretation." The author first characterizes the subjects that were to become symbols in art: barbed wire, crematoria chimneys, mothers with children, the child alone, and relics that Nazis took from their victims—piles of shoes, rings, eyeglasses, dentures, dolls, crutches, prayer shawls. Concluding this chapter are the traditional memento mori found in Baroque art: skulls, skeletons, candles, but within a Holocaust context.

Biblical imagery linked Holocaust artists with old literary and artistic traditions. In Lipchitz's David and Goliath (1933) a swastika on Goliath's chest makes the symbolism unambiguous. Other biblical allusions serving Holocaust artists include: King David as psalmist (psalms are recited in times of danger and as memorials to the dead), Moses, and Joshua representing heroism; Cain, Haman, Moloch (the Ammonite god to whom children were sacrificed), Sodom and Gomorrah (the camps) symbolizing evil; Job (either accepting his fate or protesting against God) as archetypal victim. After the war Mané-Katz, Steinhardt, and Shahn portrayed Rachel mourning her children (the people of Israel). Steinhardt also drew Jonah prophesying, accusing God, or refusing to preach. Noah came to symbolize hope and salvation.

But the sacrifice of Isaac provided Holocaust artists with the richest vein of traditional biblical iconography. This theme first appeared in Chagall's 1934 illustration for a poem by Abraham Walt, which envisions the sacrifice of Isaac occurring in every generation, a constant sword at his throat as he awaits the angel who will save him. As the situation in Europe worsened, Chagall modified his iconography. His 1942 sketch for Yellow Crucifixion depicts the sacrifice on an open Torah scroll placed at Christ's right; around and below the Crucifixion are aspects of the Holocaust—the burning village and the sinking of the refugee ship Struma, which merge with the flight into Egypt from the Gospel. Other artists who used this theme were Mordechai Ardon, Maryan S. Maryan, and Leonard Baskin.

The most striking of Holocaust images—and to many
Jews and Christians the most disturbing—is that of the crucified Jewish Jesus. It was Marc Chagall's association of Jewish martyrdom with the Crucifixion in White Crucifixion (1938), Yellow Crucifixion (1943), and The Crucified (1944) that inspired many Holocaust artists with this and related Christological themes, such as Golgatha, the descent from the cross, and the pieta. Chagall was not the first to portray a Jewish Jesus. In 1873 Mark Antokolsky's sculpture Ecce Homo showed Christ with a Jewish face, wearing a skullcap and sidecurls, his cloak derived from a book on historical costume. And in 1913 Jakob Steinhardt's Pietà depicted a beaten old Jew dying in the arms of a careworn Mary. Other artists who used the Crucifixion to represent the Holocaust were Abraham Rattner, Naftali Bezem, Graham Sutherland, Marcel Janco, Otto Pankok, Lea Grundig, Rico Lebrun, Mordechai Moreh, Mathias Goertiz, Ernst Fuchs, Mauricio Lasansky, and Francis Bacon.

According to the chapter "Of Myths and Monsters," artists who looked outside the Bible for symbols often found them in classical mythology: Prometheus (Max Beckmann, 1942; Jacques Lipchitz, 1933; Leonard Baskin, before 1949 and 1950), Odysseus (Beckmann in the Departure triptych of 1932–33 and Odysseus and Calypso, 1943), the rape of Europa (Lipchitz, 1941; Beckmann, 1933), Theseus and the Minotaur (Lipchitz, 1942–43), Perseus (Beckmann, 1940–41), Sisyphus (Jacob Landau, postwar), and Aeneas carrying his father Anchises (Baskin, 1950).

One chapter is devoted to the problem of how much abstraction or stylization is necessary to achieve sufficient distance from the events of the Holocaust. Artists like Chagall, Baskin, and Shahn argued against abstraction, while others considered it the only way to cope with the subject. Works by some artists—such as Frank Stella and Louise Nevelson—are so abstract that only their title or the context in which they appear (a Holocaust memorial or museum) illuminates their meaning. Other artists experimented with both figurative and abstract styles.

The Holocaust impelled some Jewish artists to re-identify with Judaism. Such was the case with Ludwig Meidner, a German Expressionist who rebelled against Judaism, became a socialist, and nearly converted to Catholicism. As Nazi anti-Semitism grew, however, his increasing personal Orthodoxy was reflected in his art. Foreseeing the catastrophe in Germany, he left for England, where he continued to portray devout Jews, the massacres in Europe, and finally the Jewish survivor. Other artists who returned to their Jewish roots were William Gropper, Jack Levine, Barnett Newman, and Ben Shahn. A final chapter examines artists' responses to the post-Holocaust period.

Biographical information on the artists is given only where relevant to their Holocaust works. Nearly every work mentioned in the text is illustrated (ninety-nine in color), with three to six clear reproductions per page. The author meticulously renders names according to the spelling the artists used at the time the work was executed. An extensive bibliography includes works used in this study only, as well as books and articles listed alphabetically by artist. Subheadings for longer entries and individual artists would have improved the index; the reader often must skim more than a hundred pages to locate discussion of a single subject or particular work.

Ziva Amishai-Maisels is Professor of Art History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, researcher on the religious themes of modern artists, and the foremost expert on Jewish artists of the twentieth century. Several of her analyses and conclusions about artists such as Chagall, Lipchitz, Shahn, and Newman are based on original research and interviews. The author modestly claims that her work was not meant to be encyclopedic but to include only artists who interpreted their subjects in a certain way. She calls it an "interim report," not the final word on the subject. It is difficult to imagine a study more comprehensive and meticulously researched than this profound and creative book.

Leila Avkin


Combining a reasoned text with beautifully reproduced plates, this volume presents for the first time a rare signed and dated fourteenth-century (1321) handscroll from the collection of Philip and Marjorie Robinson featuring, as the title tells us, the small-scale life of nature. The painting has an interesting pedigree, apparently coming to England in the late eighteenth century and, as an elegantly penned signature affirms, acquired in 1797 by William Butler, a scholar (writing master) of considerable talent and wide interests. There are also a nineteenth-century sale label and a registered number associated with the collection of Sir Thomas Philips.

Beginning with its 1321 inscription, the Chinese record of the scroll is significantly supportive. While the artist, Xie Chufang, is otherwise unidentified, the recipient, a certain Dashan, is most likely the fourteenth-century scholar Zhang Xu. Further, the painting is followed by three poem-colophons of four seven-character lines. The first writer, "Songhua daoren," is unidentified, but his poem is closely followed by the brush of two contemporary Suchou scholars, the determined recluse Chen Shen (1293–1362), whose calligraphy is also inscribed on the famous Zheng Sixiao Orchid of 1306 now in Osaka, and Chen Zhi (1292–1362),
an intimate of Ni Zan. Two other colophons by unidentified hands are considered by the author to be
early. An opening title page, broadly translated as
"Fascination of Nature," is by an official and calligrapher, Cheng Luo, who entered the Ming court at
Beijing in 1464. Next is a seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century affirmation of authenticity in the form
of a seal from the well-known collector Geng Jiazu. Thus, we are brought to the Qing dynasty and within
striking distance of the scroll's journey to England.

With such historical security, rare for an otherwise
unknown painter, Professor Whitfield is able to expand
our knowledge beyond a single scroll to a far more
general account of subject and style in the fourteenth
century. Frog or toad, lizard, coxcomb, morning glory,
even a mantis capturing a cicada are found in the decor
of Yuan blue and white porcelain, among which a pair
of double gourd vases from the Topkapi Saray Museum
are especially significant. A qīn dish from the Ash-
molean, on which forms are arranged in a clockwise
circle similar to the unfolding of a handscroll, relies
particularly on painting format.

As to painting itself, while a tenth-century interest is
cited, major focus turns to the late Song and Yuan. A
previously unpublished handscroll in the Palace Muse-
num, Beijing, Eight Insect Themes by Zhou Boqi (1298-
1369), may be the original, noted in the writings of Su
Shih in 1084, but a more conservative interpretation of
Chou's 1330 colophon-inscription suggests it was a
抄写 made by him after a Song scroll shown him earlier
by Chao Meng-fu (d. 1222). The Metropolitan Muse-
num's Odes of the State of Pin offers another example of
Song taste in a similar theme, this time a soft ink detail
featuring large-scale cicadas in a willow, no earlier than
the late thirteenth century. While literature traces the
school back to the eleventh century, we know of it in its
more "decorative" elements as seen in the rare surviv-
ning work of Lü Jingfu now kept in Japan—a pair of
hanging scrolls in Kyoto's Manshu-in, Flowering Plants
and Insects, and the well-known Melon and Insects in the
Nezu Museum, Tokyo. The latter is especially close to
the Xie Chufang scroll so the author urges a Yuan date.

Skeletal as it must be, Professor Whitfield has assem-
bled an impressive outline of a rare and largely forgot-
ten subject and its painters (extending in later stages
even to Korea). Its significance for the Yuan, however,
is supported not only by its spread to more than one
medium but by word and symbolic meaning, echoing
that time's discontent. The poem on the Nezu scroll by
Lü Jingfu alludes to Shao Ping, who during the Han
planted melons on the site of the massacre of some
3000 loyalists during the Wang Mang interregnum
(a.d. 8–23). Melons, then, become a symbol of loyalty.
The high-climbing snail in Eight Insects crawls ambi-
tiously too high and dries out on top of the wall. Schol-
ars who have embellished Xie Chufang's images
lament their lack of moral order: "Small insects labor to
eat, each his own" (Chen Shen). At the same time
neglect calls out for attention. To see it is truth revealed.

"Only insects can keep the nature of heaven" (Chen
Zhi). Thus, the theme reveals compelling symbols of
reclusion: "Every kind of insect is enjoying the delights
of seclusion." Of this the cicada appears a special
symbol: "But still more I love the cicada on its twig / To
have no demands, to be self-sufficient, twin purities."

Such escape and reclusion dominate the most brilli-
antly surviving painting of the subject, the handscroll
Early Autumn signed "Qian Xuan," now in Detroit. As
early as 1929 Benjamin March noted the same accurate
portrayal of 801 nature as in Roderick Whitfield's 1993
description from Xie Chufang, as a close-up dragonfly
comparison (pl. 24a–b) illustrates. Similarly, Yuan
poem-colophons, admittedly copies on the Detroit
scroll, expand meaning. Except for the dragonfly's
consumption of midges, however, predation in Early
Autumn is more implicit than actual; the invitation to
retreat, both visual and verbal, is its most compelling
aspect: "Already you have wished to leave the worries
of life / And joined with the deep places of water and
cloud make them your home." Portraits of insect and
frog, while brilliantly conceived as individuals, are yet
embraced by harmonious color and tone, fading leaf
and grass and the suggestiveness of mist-filled atmo-
sphere. Whitfield stresses the "sense of implied move-
ment . . . without any sense of artificiality," citing John
Hay's "spatial compression" as characteristic of the
scroll's integrity (p. 85).

Inevitably, the author must address the question of
whether this scroll is truly by Qian Xuan. He refutes
the idea that one model of Qian's authenticity, Sparrow
on an Apple Branch in Princeton, differs markedly from
Early Autumn. A detailed comparison of the sparrow
with a frog from the insect scroll shows remarkable
closeness (pl. 27). At the same time he denies that Early
Autumn bears any valid relation to the Ming treatment
of a parallel subject, the contrast explained by Sun
Long's (act. ca. 1500) Plants, Animals, and Vegetables,
now in the Jilin Provincial Museum.

As so often with those periods of Chinese painting
from which little has been preserved, authenticity must
balance on a thin line where connoisseurship, hypoth-
esis, and reason can be joined. For Qian Xuan and Early
Autumn, conclusions need not be uniform. Still, one
continues to evaluate the painting, its quality, its close-
ness to a broader picture of late Song and Yuan art, and
what we know all too briefly of the artist's life and
personality: his familiarity with Hangzhou in the late
Song, his unique rejection of "normal" literati behav-
ior, the burning of his scholarly writings, the deliberate
professionalism of his painting (the tangible skill of the
hand more important than abstractions of the mind),
his archaic painting modes, self-consciousness about
his name, and rejection of the expected in another
puzzling vision of reclusion, Dwelling in Floating Jade
Mountain. Are not retreat to ancient styles, to a moun-
tain, and to an insect all facets of consistency?

This, however, goes beyond Professor Whitfield's
admirable focus. In a careful presentation of a hitherto
unrecognized scroll he has immeasurably clarified a theme and its historical place. On the Qian Xuan issue he concludes that Xie Chufang’s painting shows “how what has been described as ‘one of the loveliest of Chinese paintings’...may still indeed be a masterpiece of Qian Xuan’s time, but also usefully reminds us of the artificiality of the separation between scholar and professional” (p. 91).

Other scrolls might have been woven into the argument. As early as the first half of the thirteenth century (1240) bee fly and grasshopper (or cricket?) take a visible place on or near three tall chrysanthemum clumps in the introductory section of Mou Yi’s Beating the Clothes (Palace Museum, Taipei). Two such insects are in close juxtaposition in Early Autumn. An anonymous hanging scroll in Tokyo (formerly Asano collection), Bamboo and Insects, generally considered late Song or early Yuan, displays many of the same tiny creatures as Xie Chufang, including a cockox—also a melon. Of similar date, two bee flies and two leaf-devouring bush crickets (?) are drawn to the hanging tip of a Grape Vine, also in the Tokyo Museum. While the parallel depiction of fish is cited in porcelain, painting, and even textile (pp. 68–71), Zhou Dongqing’s precisely dated (1291) scroll, Pleasure of the Fishes in New York’s Metropolitan Museum, is conspicuous by omission. The painting is a classic Yuan study of each living form and its watery ambient.

There are occasional slips in editing, most notably misprints of the characters in Chen Shen’s poem: change hung (first line) to si (second line); si to bi (third line); mou (last line), the ending then rendered, “Small men plotting gain lack righteousness / Their wisdom, precisely of this kind.”

Richard Edwards


Masuda Takashi, a leading figure in the enormous Mitsui conglomerate, represents a new elite emerging in Japan during the Meiji period (1868–1912). Christine Guth’s study focuses on Masuda as a patron of the tea ceremony and collector of art. By successfully demonstrating that Masuda’s cultural activities were integral to his social and business networks, Guth documents the process through which “traditional” social practices can be redeployed to new ends during a period of profound social and economic change.

There exists a growing literature on Meiji art, especially wood block prints and Western-style painting. As Guth correctly points out, however, not enough attention has been paid to the collection of “traditional” arts during this period of rapid modernization (pp. 9–13). Scholars such as Julia Meech, Warren I. Cohen, and Guth herself have turned their attention to the collecting of Japanese art in this critical period. Art, Tea, and Industry is the most thorough treatment of this important subject to date.

Masuda’s art collecting revolved around the tea ceremony. To situate his activities, Guth provides an extensive history of the tea ceremony and its role in shaping the use and collection of the arts, including architecture, painting, calligraphy, and ceramics. She discusses Japanese aesthetes’ longstanding appreciation of Chinese wares (karamono), and the development of the concept of wabi taste strongly associated with the sixteenth-century tea master Sen no Rikyū. Guth also examines the key concept of tori aware, or “selecting and matching.” As she points out, a host was expected to follow an established “lexicon and grammar” in choosing the setting and types of utensils to be used for the ceremony. At the same time, the host needed to be sensitive to the unique circumstances of a given ceremony, taking into account such factors as the season and the taste of guests. Therefore, a certain amount of creative adaptation was also appreciated in tea circles (pp. 64–68). It is clear from Guth’s description of specific gatherings hosted by Masuda that he remained within the broad traditional guidelines yet took the liberty of incorporating objects not previously employed in the tea ceremony.

Guth explores Masuda’s role in expanding the repertoire of the tea ceremony arts by appropriating certain types of Buddhist pieces not previously used for tea. The tea ceremony had from the beginning been deeply indebted to Zen Buddhism, and tea masters readily employed monks’ calligraphy and other objects with Buddhist overtones (pp. 54–55). Yet, prior to the Meiji Restoration of 1868, most Buddhist arts were seen primarily as religious objects inappropriate to the tea room. Some considered trade in Buddhist art sacrilegious, and because Buddhist arts were frequently used in funerals and memorial services, they were also associated with death (pp. 101–2). Guth argues that after the Meiji Restoration, views of Buddhist arts shifted significantly. A widespread disillusionment with Buddhism in the early Meiji period eroded the religious aura of Buddhist icons. At the same time, many temples lost financial and political support and were forced to close or sell off art treasures to remain solvent. Art collectors took advantage of these circumstances to acquire many extraordinary works. Buddhist arts quickly became commodities appreciated more for their aesthetic character than for their religious significance (p. 100).

Guth’s discussion of the development of Buddhist art collecting raises fascinating questions about the changing role of Buddhism in Japanese society at this
time. Masuda became an important collector of Buddhist art and at his gatherings began to display Buddhist works that had not been shown in that context before. He named a tea group that he founded, the Daishi kai, after the ninth-century Shingon Buddhist monk Kôbô Daishi. Yet, according to Guth, Masuda was "too much of a pragmatist to be a deeply religious man" (p. 118). She argues that Masuda appreciated Buddhist objects primarily in aesthetic terms, and he honored Kôbô Daishi primarily as a cultural leader rather than as a religious figure. How are we to understand the processes that afforded Masuda and some of his contemporaries enough distance from Buddhism to view Buddhist arts primarily in cultural or aesthetic terms? Given Masuda's own complex relationship to Buddhism, his activities offer an excellent opportunity to examine the broader phenomenon of the breakdown in institutional and ideological support for Buddhism in the early Meiji period. These issues could have been explored more deeply in the book.

Guth draws a direct connection between the political significance of the tea ceremony in its early years and its appropriation for the newly emerging entrepreneurial class of the Meiji period. The great sixteenth-century military leader Toyotomi Hideyoshi collected teawares and sponsored tea gatherings as a way to demonstrate his artistic cultivation and thereby legitimize his newly acquired social status. In Hideyoshi's day, the exchange of teawares often served to cement personal and political alliances. Guth is especially effective at demonstrating how Masuda and his circle followed this historical precedent by using the tea ceremony as a forum for strengthening business ties. These "new daimyô" (as Guth calls them) exchanged teawares as a way to affirm friendships or resolve conflict. Tea became a part of the corporate culture at the Mitsui Company. Masuda even conducted business at tea gatherings; ambitious young aspirants within the corporation had to be accomplished in tea if they hoped to function effectively within this milieu (p. 130). Masuda and other business leaders were acutely aware of their parvenu social status and engaged in cultural pursuits at least in part to enhance their social standing. Masuda's position as a cultural impresario culminated in a 1922 gathering of the Daishi kai in which he hosted over six hundred guests in a manner reminiscent of Hideyoshi's famous Grand Kitano Tea of 1587 (p. 159).

Japan's interaction with the world increased dramatically after the Meiji Restoration. Masuda, whose business interests depended in large measure on international trade, actively participated in this process. Yet, as Guth indicates, Masuda and many of his contemporaries felt compelled to affirm their national identity as they grappled with rivalries and alliances in the international arena. For Masuda, a sense of national identity deeply informed his engagement with "traditional" Japanese art. His "cultural nationalism" was expressed most clearly through his campaign to slow the sale of valuable pieces to foreign collections (see chap. 6).

Guth identifies various other possible motives behind the promotion and protection of Japanese arts. Criticism of Japan's new elite strengthened in the wake of the weak economy after World War I. As Guth suggests, Masuda may have engaged in cultural philanthropy, in part to defuse criticism of his vast wealth (p. 183). Some collectors of traditional arts may even have positioned themselves as patriots defending the national cultural heritage from acquisitive foreigners such as Ernest Fenollosa in order to deflect attack (see Guth's discussion of a speech by Masuda's contemporary Okura Kihachirô, p. 162).

Guth's book casts a wide net, not only detailing Masuda's activities but also tracing the origins of tea and teawares, offering a history of the Mitsui Company, and outlining the biographies of many of Masuda's associates. In places these efforts to provide a context perhaps threaten to obscure the primary focus of the study. Overall, however, the fact that the book extends out in so many directions is also its great strength. The unique way that Guth weaves these diverse elements together should make this volume invaluable to Meiji specialists, and the rigorous background she provides should make it stimulating and accessible to a broader audience. Art, Tea, and Industry is a welcome contribution to the cultural history of Meiji Japan.

Notes


3. Guth explains *wabi* as "the taste for restrained and simple things, even those that are imperfect or worn with age" (p. 54).

Jonathan M. Reynolds

This sumptuous book, which accompanied a resoundingly successful exhibition of Japanese archaeological materials at the Sackler Gallery (9 August–1 November 1992), captures much of the flavor of the stupendous collection of artifacts on display. But it is more than a catalogue: An innovative structure carries the reader through up-to-date syntheses of each period of Japanese prehistory and protohistory, with each period-chapter (from the Palaeolithic through Asuka) followed by specific site and artifact descriptions. All 258 objects in the exhibition are presented in large photos (variously in color or black and white) with extended captions. The synthetic chapters by Richard Pearson adopt an anthropological approach to Japanese cultural development; the subsequent descriptions written by fourteen Japanese archaeologists will update English-language readers on recent Japanese scholarship.

The site essays present both newly excavated locations and old finds that have revolutionized thinking about their periods but were not previously available in English. Okamura Michio describes the Bubadan Asite (Miyagi Pref.), which has been controversially dated to 200,000 years ago; remains of open fires have been detected within scatters of stone artifacts, providing rare evidence on Palaeolithic settlement organization. Kobayashi Tatsu presents the Nishida site (Iwate Pref.), an almost fully excavated Jomon settlement of surface structures arranged around grave pits in the central plaza area. Sahara Makoto tackles the Yayoi-period site at Yoshinogari (Saga Pref.) in the context of the Wei dynasty chronicles of China. The Kofun period merits three sites: Tsutai Otsukayama (Kyoto Pref.), where thirty-three triangular-rimmed mirrors—a specialty of author Tanaka Migaku—were found in 1894; Mitsudera (Gunma Pref.), an elite family’s residential compound, described by Shiraishi Taichiro; and Kuroimine (Gunma Pref.), a farming village whose burial by two meters of volcanic ash is detailed by Tsude Hiroshi. For the Asuka period, Inokuma Kanekatsu presents the mizucchi water clock excavated at the presumed Kiyomigahara Palace site of Emperor Tenmu.

At first glance this book appears to be a relatively thorough treatment of interesting new data and ideas about pre-Nara Japan. It supersedes Aikens and Higuchi’s Prehistory of Japan (New York: Academic Press, 1982) as the major synthetic work on Japanese archaeology. Except that it is already out of print, it would serve well as an introductory textbook for the discipline. Pearson adopts the view that rice cultivation had begun as dry land cropping by 1000 B.C. (p. 85), and he accepts the new dating of the Kofun period as beginning in a.d. 250. Admiringly, his descriptions of Hokkaido and Okinawa during the Kofun period explicitly emphasize regional diversity. The objects are also well presented, many in photographs with the background blocked out. But the book is marred by a multitude of small mistakes and some major substantive misunderstandings. The former are enumerated by J. E. Kidd, Jr. in his review of the book for Journal of Japanese Studies (19, 2 [1993]: 460–64), which can be treated as an errata sheet.

An example of the latter is Pearson’s discussion of backed blades, side-blow flakes, knives, and microblades (p. 41). He treats these all as separate categories, whereas side-blow flakes are only one version of backed blades, and the term knife-shaped object is an alternative appellation for the whole category of backed blades. Backed blades (or so-called “knives”) are common prior to 14,000 B.P. (not after, as stated), whereas microblades are the ones that become numerous after 14,000 B.P.—and not only in Hokkaido but also in Kyushu. The relationship of backed blades to knives is made clear only in figure 4 and in the caption essays by Doi Takashi for objects 26–31 (pp. 57–59).

Generalized statements are sometimes made without supporting data or scholarly citations. Thus we are told: “At least some Jomon groups spoke a language ancestral to modern Japanese after 5000 B.C., and . . . the Jomon people, themselves a composite of people from southern China and Siberia, contributed substantially to the modern Japanese population” (p. 63). How do we know what the Jomon spoke, and from when? This is an arena of highly controversial academic debate, and the reader learns nothing of the arguments over the origins of the Japanese language. Furthermore, there have never been any indications that the Jomon were a migrant population, as suggested by the phrase “a composite of people”; it is generally assumed that they developed from the indigenous East Asian Palaeolithic population after a founding element was isolated from the continent by rising sea levels. To have them coming “from” somewhere else obscures the position of the Japanese mountain chains as merely the easternmost boundary of “East Asia land” in the Palaeolithic of lowered sea levels. As for the Ainu, they were not “one group among many who lived in Japan during the Jomon period” (p. 63). They probably have genetic continuity with some Jomon-period groups, but the northeastern peoples have undergone several cultural transformations between then and now. It would be just as misleading to say that the Jomon are alive and well in Hokkaido today. Finally, Pearson observes that, for the Jomon, “The most important food items came from the mountain slopes and basins of Nagano, where deer, wild plants, and probably small river fish flourished” (p. 65). Surely, he does not mean that Nagano served as a food production center for the entire archipelago? That no other locations yielded plant
foods, deer, and fish? It puzzles me why such blanket statements have been made by an author who clearly knows better. Is some text missing here? Were time pressures too much for author and editor alike to make this a coherent description? I was also surprised to hear, despite the evidence presented in figure 15, that the Kinai region was more powerful than Kyushu in Middle Yayoi, as judged from wealthy burials (p. 130). What wealthy burials? The moated precincts common in Eastern Seto had no grave goods; the chiefly mound burials date only from the end of the period in Late Yayoi—as the author later notes (p. 145). Finally, the prototype of keyhole tombs is not found on the southern Korean coast (p. 197); those tombs date to the fifth century, well after their beginning in Japan. And in the tombs sue ware did not replace haji ware (p. 201), which was never included as a grave good in the Early Kofun period. Umami was not one of the large tomb groups in fourth-century Nara—Yanagimoto was (p. 208); Umami became important in the fifth century. Finally, Tsubai Otsukayama tomb was located not in southeastern Nara basin (p. 209) but in southeastern Kyoto basin, as made clear in Tanaka's essay.

In his chapters, Pearson aims to interpret "from the excavated evidence how people's lives changed throughout the millennia of Japanese prehistory and protohistory and also to illuminate the social and cultural context of recovered objects" (p. 26). Unfortunately, he couches his discussion in the outmoded, rigid, evolutionary framework, presented in Elman Service's *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective* (New York: Random House, 1962), of bands (≡ Palaeolithic), tribes (≡ Jomon), chiefdoms (≡ Yayoi), and state (≡ Kofun-Asuka). This framework is trebly disadvantaged: 1) Tribes have been rejected as a general evolutionary stage (by some, as Pearson acknowledges), and certainly none have been ascertained in the Jomon period. In fact, Pearson discusses at length Watanabe's search for ranking and stratification in the Jomon period (p. 81); I would have expected some discussion here, but Watanabe's opinions are merely given without critique. 2) The potential variation in social organization within periods is downplayed—despite the claim, for example, that "Ancient Japan was particularly rich in different kinds of chiefdoms" or can "thus be seen as a mosaic of varying levels of social complexity" (p. 29). If one wants to stress the variety, then the normative framework (of Japanese periodization, in this case) must be discarded. 3) Each period is treated as a different, progressive evolutionary stage when, in fact, the transitions between periods are the foci for the most interesting developments (as Pearson notes when discussing the rise of a centralized power across the Yayoi-Kofun divide, p. 149), and there were plenty of "devolutions" as well. Once the period names are equated with these stages of evolution, the latter are not invoked again in discussion. The chapters thus read as normative accounts of cultural history—more like the Japanese discipline of archaeology—rather than as a tightly argued example of Western anthropological archaeology. Although I appreciate Pearson's effort to relate the Japanese sequence to a now well-known evolutionary scale, I feel that it fails due to the tension between the anthropological and the cultural-history approaches.

Despite the above problems and misgivings, I intend to recommend this book to my students. It holds a wealth of data and detail readily assimilable for the first-timer. What mistakes there are will probably not be digested, and the reader should come away with a vivid visual and intellectual impression of the flow of Japanese pre- and protohistory. Finally, I applaud Pearson for his excellent handling of the Japanese contributions, which provide detail to counterbalance the synthetic chapters. Coordinating the writing, translating, and editing process was no mean feat, and the resulting book is marvelously diverse.

Gina L. Barnes

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**Correction**

In Eleanor Sims's article in volume 22, "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausî's Shâhnâma Commissioned by Princes of the House of Timûr," the second line of n. 6 on p. 59 should read "at Burlington House in 1931: BWG, cat. 46, pp. 55," etc.