The 'House of the Prophet' and the Concept of the Mosque

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The earliest mosque for which there is archaeological evidence, and for which the date is reasonably secure and almost universally accepted, is that built for al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf at Wasiṭ in 84/703 (FIG.1). It consists of an enclosure approximately 100 m square, at the *qibla* end of which is a hypostyle hall. There is no trace of a *miḥrab* niche, but there are the thickened foundations of what Safar and Creswell believed to be a monumental *maqṣūra*. The rest of the enclosure is occupied by the courtyard, bordered on three sides by a single colonnade.[1]

The hypostyle structure at Wāsiṭ was by no means the only type of mosque to be built in the 80s/700s. Many uncertainties continue to surround the Marwānid rebuilding of the Aqṣā mosque in Jerusalem, but there can be little doubt that the works initiated by 'Abd al-Malik and completed under al-Walīd resulted in a mosque that was strikingly different from Wāsiṭ (FIG.2). The prayer-hall was characterised by aisles set perpendicular to the *qibla* wall. The central nave was almost twice the width of the flanking aisles, with a high gable roof, and culminated in a great dome over the three bays before the *qibla* aisle. The nave was elaborately decorated, and the dome, and possibly the *qibla* wall, were covered with mosaics. The mosque may have had a *miḥrāb* niche. The Aqṣā seems to have had no courtyard of its own, but was set on the axis of the Dome of the Rock, and thus integrated into the new complex of *al Ḥaram al-Sharīf*.[2] Just a few years later (87–96/706–715), al-Walīd's new mosque at Damascus represented another distinctly different type (FIG.3). Again, the prayer hall was characterised by a broad central nave, covered with a mighty gable roof, and culminating in a dome in front of the *qibla* aisle; but, here, the three aisles were parallel, not perpendicular, to the *qibla* wall. This mosque, too, was richly decorated. According to Sauvaget, the mosque commissioned in 88/707 or 90/709 by al-Walīd on the site of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina (FIG.4) represented an architectural compromise between the hypostyle mosques of Iraq, such as Wāsiṭ, and the 'basilical' mosques of Syria with their heavily accentuated

1. Safar 1945, Creswell 1969, vol.I.1, pp.132–8, Creswell & Allan 1989, pp.40, 42 n.33, Rousset 1992, pp.44, 142 no.205 (with bibliography).
2. Raby forthcoming.

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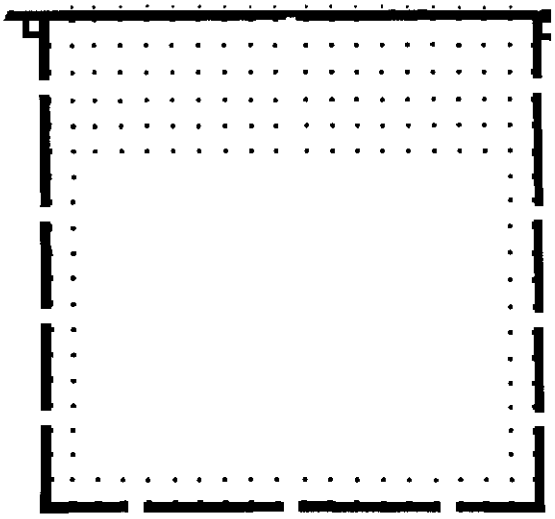

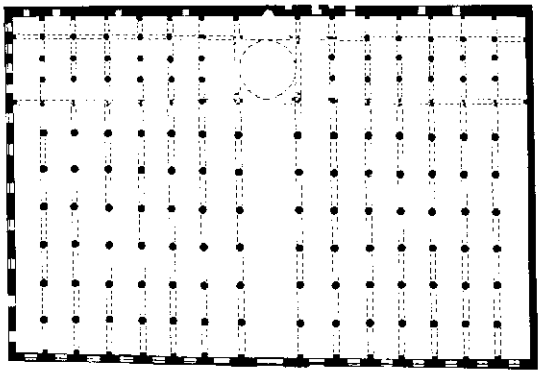

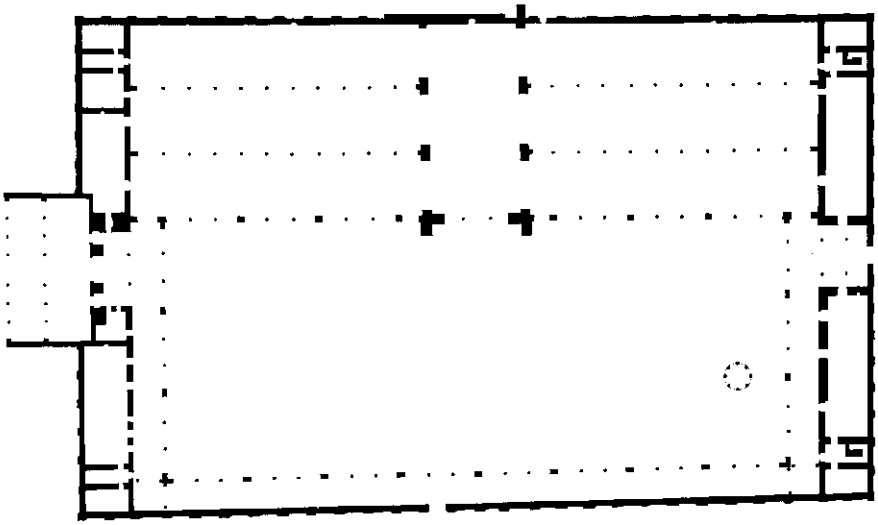

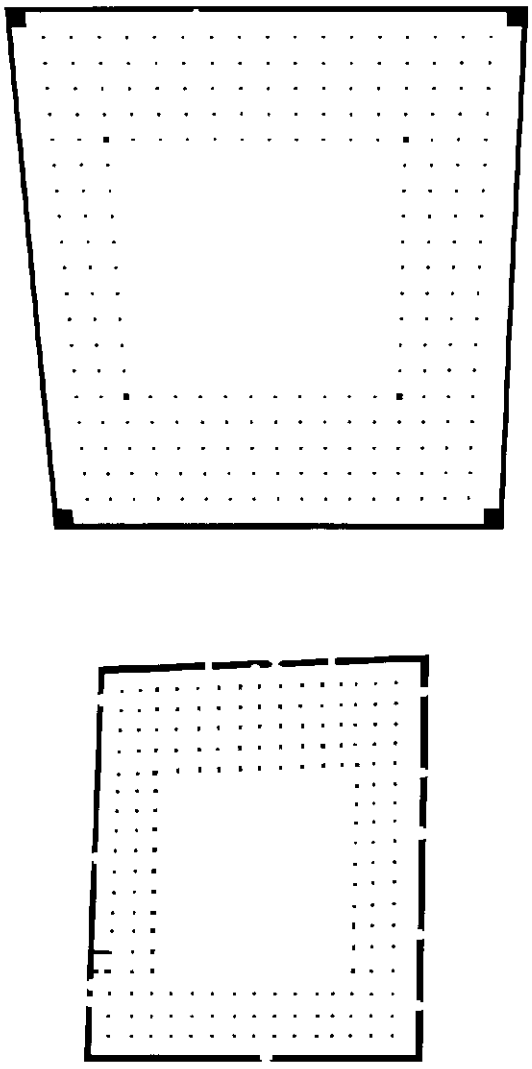

Scale approximately 1:1600

Figure 1. (Left, top) Reconstruction of the plan of the mosque of al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf at Wasiṭ (after Safar 1945)
Figure 2. (Left, middle) Jerusalem, al-Aqṣā: the Marwānid mosque (after Hamilton 1949)
Figure 3. (Left, below) Damascus, the mosque of al-Walīd (after Creswell 1969)
Figure 4. (Top) Medina, the mosque of al-Walīd
Figure 5. (Above) Ṣan'a', the mosque of al-Walīd (after Finster 1978)

axial naves, such as al-Aqṣā and Damascus.[3] The Great Mosque at Ṣanʿā', also attributed to al-Walid, may refer directly to his mosque at Medina, but it also makes use of spolia and of architectural and constructional details inherited from the distinctive pre-Islamic traditions of South Arabia (FIG.5).[4]

Other types of mosque are also attributed to al-Walid. The mosque at ʿAnjar has an unusual plan: the prayer hall and lateral *riwāqs* are two aisles deep, but the northern *riwāq* has only one aisle (FIG.6).[5] The palace at Minya has a small mosque which, unusually, is longer than it is wide (FIG.7).[6] The mosque at Jabal Says was a small cubical chamber with an exceptionally deep projecting niche *miḥrab*: the interior was divided into two unequal parts by two stilted semicircular arches that carried the flat wooden roof (FIG.8).[7] None of the mosques at ʿAnjar, Minya and Jabal Says had a courtyard.

Variety is also to be seen in two other mosques for which there *may* be archaeological evidence, but from a date significantly earlier than Wāsiṭ. In his forthcoming study of the Aqṣā mosque, Julian Raby will argue that the predecessor of the Marwānid building described above can be largely reconstructed on the basis of the excavations and survey conducted by Robert Hamilton in 1938–42 (FIG.9). Hamilton originally dated this building – his Aqṣā I – to the reigns of ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Walīd but, before he died, he came to agree with Raby that it must be earlier; Raby is now inclined to attribute it to Muʿāwiya in the early 40s/660s. It was a substantial structure, built of stone, and dressed with marble. The covered prayer hall measured just over 50 m north-south, and at least 45 m east-west. The arcades, like those of its Marwānid successor, ran north-south, and were carried on reused marble columns and capitals. These, in turn, carried arches and a fenestrated wall which rose to ceiling height. The central nave, perhaps for purely structural reasons, was slightly wider than the other arcades. North of the prayer hall are traces of a portico, and, beyond that, of an open paved area with drains and cisterns, which may have been the courtyard of the mosque.[8]

A very different mosque was apparently built at Kūfa in 50/670 by Muʿāwiya's governor Ziyad ibn Abihi.[9] It was summarily described by Muqaddasī, and visited in May 580/1184 by Ibn Jubayr who gives the fullest description.[10] In 1765, Niebuhr made a little plan of its ruins.[11] Archaeological soundings by the Iraqi Department

3. Sauvaget 1947, p.110.
4. Creswell & Allan 1989, pp.87–8.
5. Creswell 1969, , vol.1.2, p.479.
6. Creswell 1969, vol.1.2, pp.383–4.
7. Creswell 1969, vol.1.2, p.476. It is intriguing that the dimensions of this cubical mosque (little more than 9 m square and some 9 m high) closely approximate those of the Kaʿba.
8. Raby forthcoming.
9. Ṭabarī 1879, vol.1, p.2492, lines 8–15.
10. Muqaddasī 1877, pp.116-7. Ibn Jubayr 1907, pp.240–2.
11. Niebuhr 1774, vol.II, pp.261–4, pl.42b.

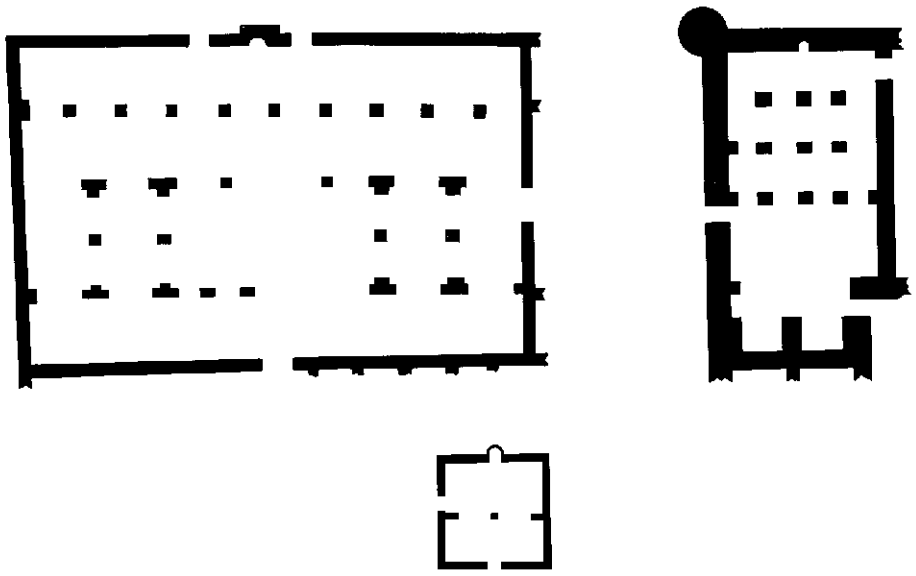

Figure 6. (Left) 'Anjar, the mosque (after Creswell 1969)
Figure 7. (Right) Khirbat al-Minya, the mosque (after Creswell 1969)
Figure 8. (Below) Jabal Says, the mosque (after Creswell 1969)
Scale approximately 1:300

of Antiquities seem to indicate that Ziyād's foundation survives *in situ* beneath the present mosque and dictates its plan.[12] From these sources, Creswell reconstructed Ziyād's mosque as an enclosure approximately 100 m square, at one end of which was a hypostyle hall; the courtyard was bordered on two sides by a double colonnade; again, there was no *miḥrāb* (FIG.10).[13] All accounts stress the exceptional height (30 cubits or *circa* 15 m) of the stone columns of the prayer hall and *riwaqs*. The roof rested directly upon the columns, without the medium of arches, a feature that Creswell derived from the *apadana* or hall of columns of the Achaemenian kings.[14]

In addition to these early archaeological buildings, the historians transmit descriptions full enough to permit hypothetical reconstructions of at least five other early mosques: Baṣra I (?14/?635), Kūfa I (17/638), Fusṭaṭ I (21/641–2), Baṣra II (45/665), and Qayrawan I (50/670).[15] In addition, we have brief reports of the foundation of many tens of *jawāmi'* mosques during the first century of Islam.[16]

12. Creswell 1969, vol.I. 1, p.48 (postscript).
13. Creswell 1969, vol.I. 1, pp.46–8; Creswell & Allan 1989, pp.9–10; Rousset 1992, pp.44–135–6, no.190 (with bibliography).
14. Creswell 1969, vol.I. 1, pp.46–7.
15. Creswell 1969, vol.I. 1; Baṣra I, p.22; Kufa I, pp.22–6; Fusṭāṭ I, pp.36–8 & Creswell 1940, vol.II, pp.171–96; Baṣra II, pp.44–5; Qayrawān I, p.61.
16. It is astonishing that these have never been systematically collected; Finster's splendid

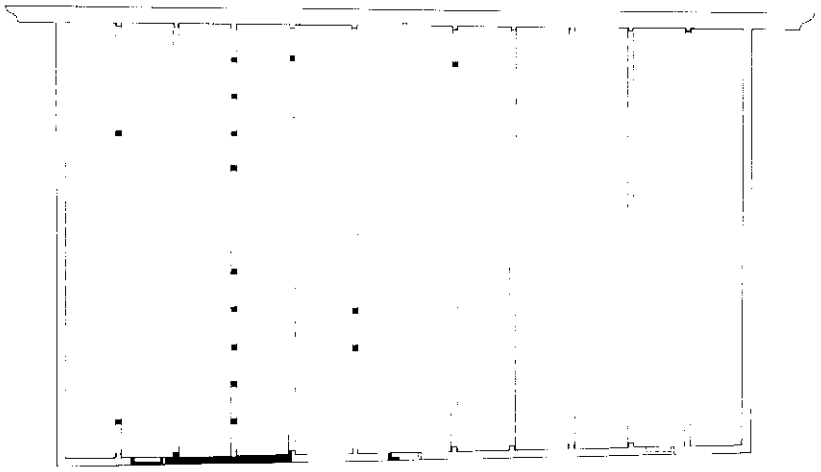

Figure 9. Jerusalem, al-Aqṣa, the pre-Marwanid mosque (after Raby forthcoming)
Scale approximately 1:1000

After Wāsiṭ in 84/703, archaeological mosques become relatively plentiful, and one can reconstruct the plans of a dozen or more *jawāmiʿ* mosques built under Umayyad rule, from Cordoba in the west to Bhambor in the east (FIGS 11 & 12).[17]

Considering these early mosques, archaeological and not, one is immediately struck by the great variety that they display in the plan and elevation of the prayer hall, in constructional techniques and materials, and in decoration. Clearly, each of the mosques at say Kūfa, Damascus, and Ṣanʿā', was influenced by different building traditions which had their roots in the pre-conquest cultures of, respectively, Iraq, Syria, and South Arabia. At the same time, it is evident that they are all variations on a single theme.

The ground plans of these earliest mosques all refer to a common model, to a mental template, to a concept of the mosque which was certainly already fixed at Wasiṭ in 84/703, and may arguably be traced back to Jerusalem in the 40s/660s and

catalogue of the early mosques of Iran (Finster 1994), which lists both standing buildings and those which are known only from written sources, demonstrates how useful this approach could be for the study of the development of the mosque throughout the early Islamic world.

17. Aleppo: Creswell 1969, vol.1. 1, p.483. ʿAmmān: Northedge 1992, pp.62–9, figs 20–27, pls 8–10. Bhambor: Ashfaque 1969. Cordoba I: Creswell 1940, vol.II, pp.138–61. Darʿa: Creswell 1969, vol.1. 1, pp.650–1. Damascus: Creswell 1969, vol.1. 1, pp.155–96. Ḥamā: Creswell 1969, vol.1. 1, pp.17–21. Ḥarrān: Creswell 1969, vol.1. 2, pp.644–8. Jerusalem, Aqṣā II: Raby forthcoming. Medina: Sauvaget 1947. Ramla: Creswell 1969, vol.1. 1, pp.482–3. Ruṣāfa: Otto-Dorn 1957; Sack, forthcoming. Ṣanʿa': Finster 1978; Finster 1979; Finster 1982a; Finster 1982b; Finster 1986; Serjeant & Lewcock 1983, pp.323–50; Creswell & Allan 1989, pp.83–8. Sūsa: Finster 1994, pp.249–52.

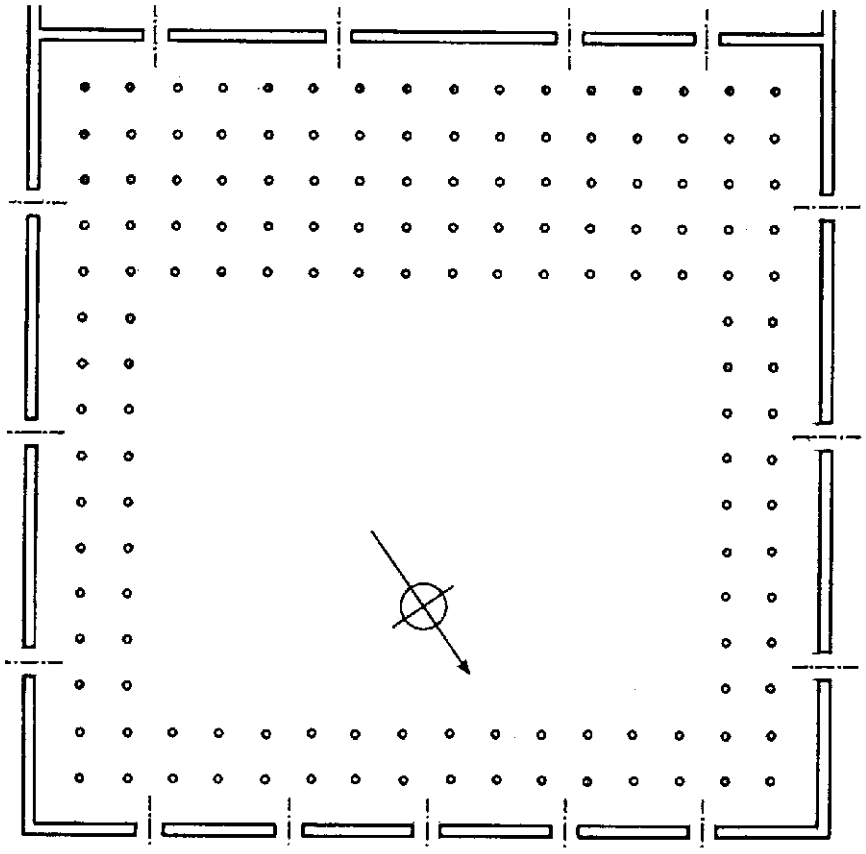

Figure 10. Creswell's reconstruction of the plan of Kūfa II (after Kuban 1974)
Scale approximately 1:1000

to Kūfa in the 50s/670s. The concept may be described as a walled enclosure, one end of which is occupied by a multi-aisled hall aligned upon a *qibla*, and the rest by an open courtyard lined with porticos, in such a way that the three elements form a unified whole. What makes this concept distinctive is the arrangement of its principal components and their proportions. The components themselves, the open courtyard and the covered sanctuary and porticos are, of course, common to other religious building types, most obviously to the Graeco-Roman temple. Whereas the temple usually had a centralised plan, with the sanctuary at the centre of the temenos, the plan of the mosque could be described as terminal, with the prayer hall at one end of the enclosure. We can see this contrast most clearly in the transformation of the temenos at Damascus with its church on the central site of the original temple, into the mosque of al-Walīd with the prayer hall occupying the southern end of the enclosure (FIG. 13). As will be discussed in more detail below, the mosque was not unique in arranging a colonnaded courtyard and a covered sanctuary symmetrically

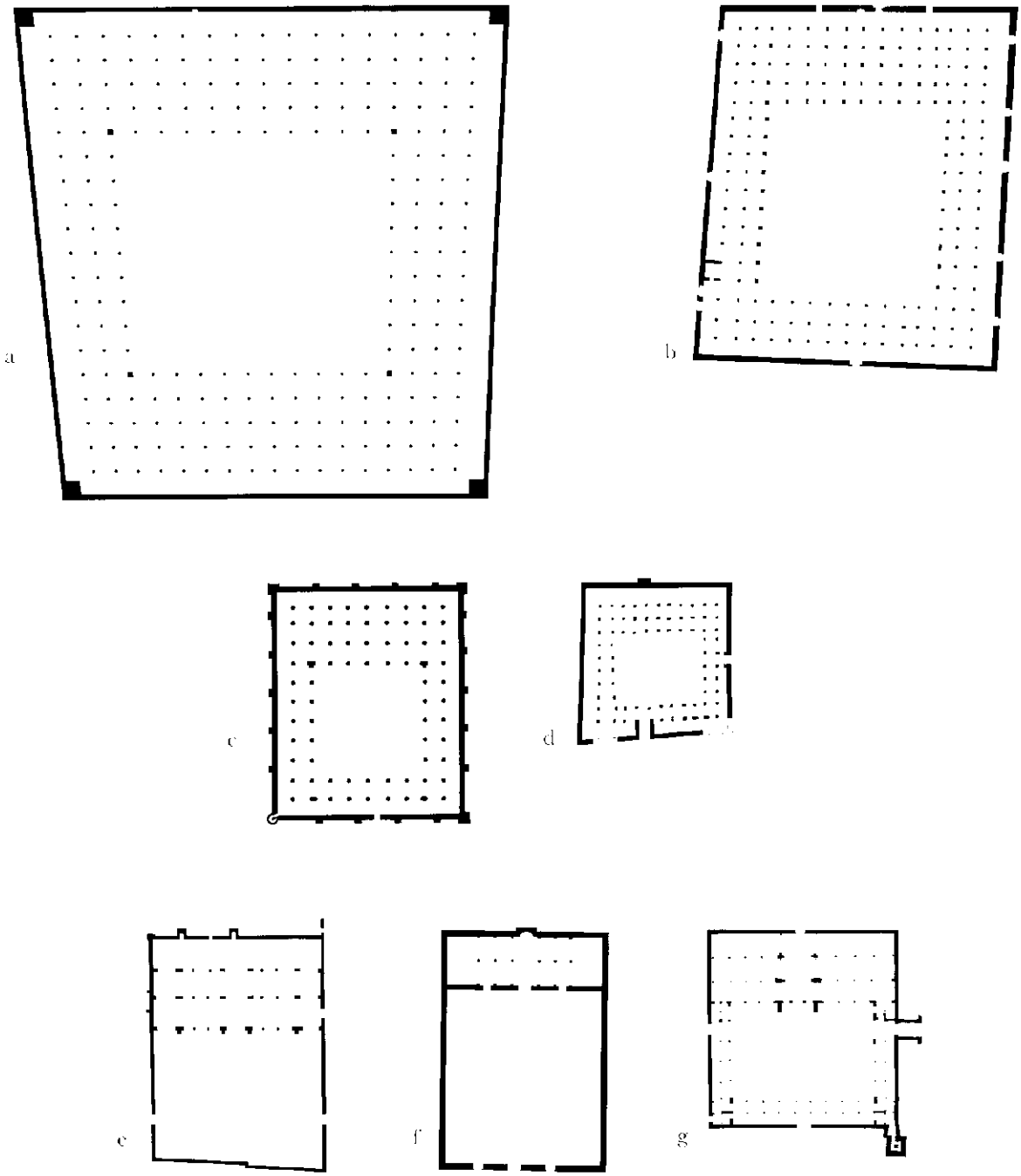

Figure 11. Plans of *jawāmi'* mosques built under Umayyad rule:

a. Madīna (after Creswell 1969)
b. San'ā' (after Creswell & Allan 1989)
c. Sūsa (after Creswell & Allan 1989)
d. Bhambōr (after Ashfaque 1969)
e. Ruṣāfa (after Ulbert 1990)
f. 'Ammān (after Northedge 1992)
g. Dar'a (after Creswell 1969)
h. Ḥarrān (after Creswell & Allan 1989)
i. Cordoba I (after Creswell & Allan 1989)

Scale approximately 1:700

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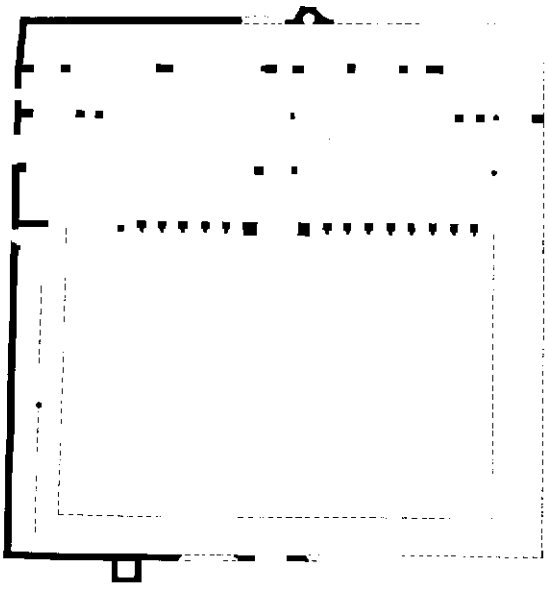

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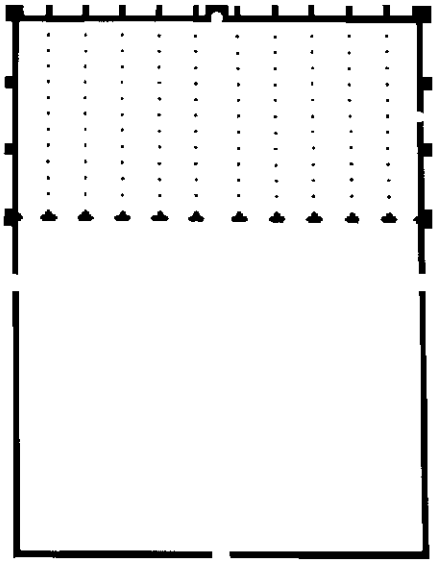


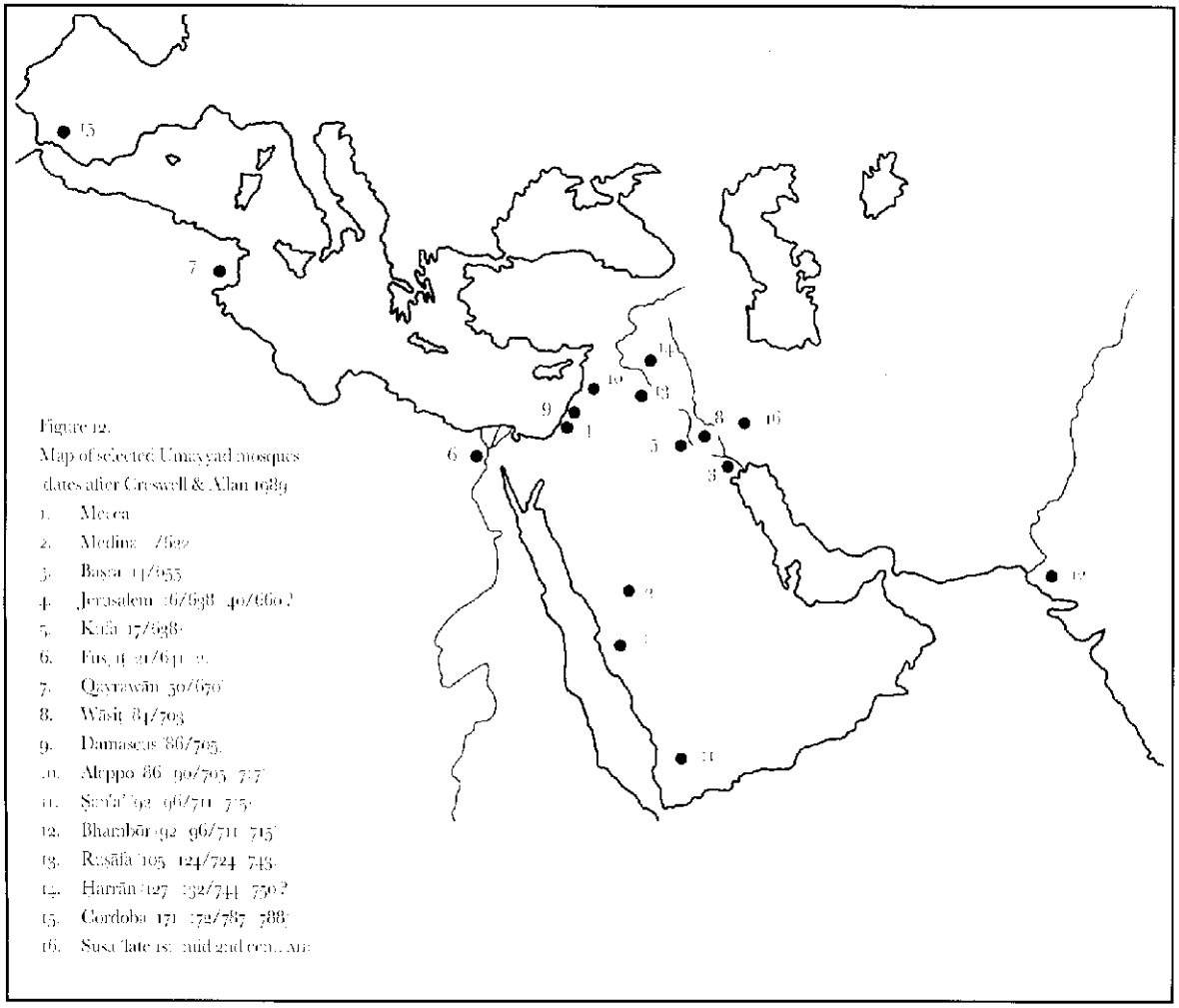


Figure 12.
Map of selected Umayyad mosques
dates after Creswell & Allan 1989

1. Mecca
2. Medina 7/629
3. Basra 14/635
4. Jerusalem 16/638 40/660?
5. Kufa 17/638
6. Fus.t.t 21/641 ?
7. Qayrawān 50/670
8. Wāsit 84/703
9. Damascus 86/705
10. Aleppo 86 90/705 715
11. Ṣan'a' 92 96/711 715
12. Bhambūr 92 96/711 715
13. Ruṣāfa 105 124/724 743
14. Ḥarrān 127 132/744 750?
15. Cordoba 171 172/787 788
16. Susa (late 1st mid 2nd cent. AH)

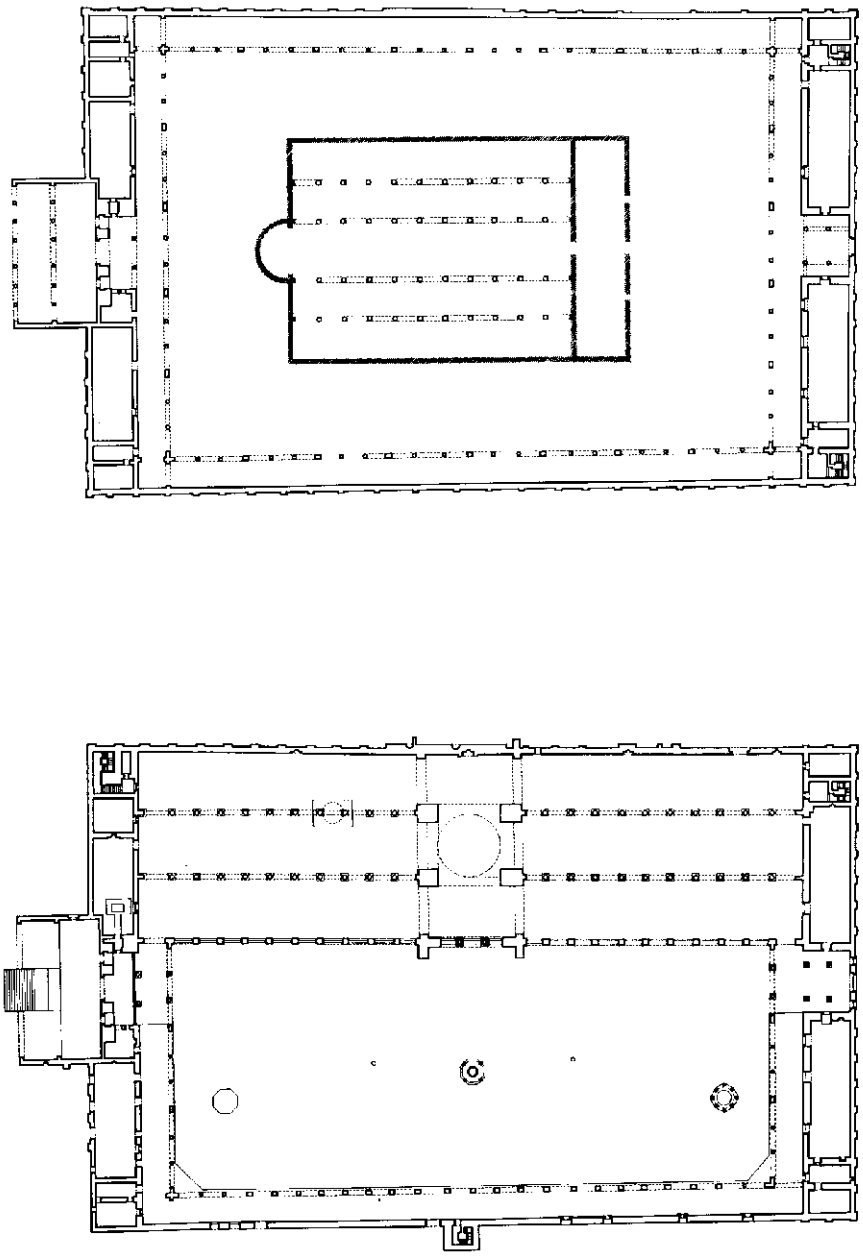


Figure 13. Damascus, Umayyad mosque (after Stierlin 1979): (above) reconstruction of the plan of the temenos and church of St John the Baptist; (below) plan of the mosque as seen today

about the central axis of the complex; indeed, in Late Antiquity, this arrangement may be found in a variety of types of religious building, including the church, the synagogue, and the temple. The proportions of the mosque, however, distinguish it from such antecedents in that its length and width are typically equal, or nearly so; indeed, a mosque may even be wider than it is long.

The concept of the mosque dominates early Islamic religious architecture so completely that it dictates the plan of almost every *jāmi'* mosque built. The Meccan *ḥaram*, the Dome of the Rock, and the Aqṣa mosque are the only exceptions: the first two have centralised plans; the Aqṣā, after the construction of the Dome of the Rock, had no enclosed courtyard of its own.[18] (Here I do not include the small, non-congregational mosques without courtyards, including 'Anjar, Minya and Jabal Says, found in the Umayyad *quṣūr* of *Bilād al-Sham*.)

That a standard concept of the mosque governed the form of the congregational mosques of Islam from at least as early as 84/703, and was rapidly exported throughout the conquests as far afield as Andalus and Sind, raises the question of the origin of that concept.

THE 'HOUSE OF THE PROPHET'

For most of this century, it has been almost universally accepted that the origins of the mosque lie in the house that the Prophet built at Medina (FIGS 14 & 15). *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition) states: 'Beyond doubt, the genesis of the mosque is to be sought in a single seminal building: the house of the Prophet, erected to Muḥammad's own specifications in Madīna in 1/622.'[19] Yet, the history of the development of other types of religious building, such as the church and the synagogue, raises doubts *a priori* that the Prophet's House was the sole origin of the architectural type of the mosque.

It has been suggested that the fact that the earliest Christian places of worship were ordinary houses may somehow reinforce the argument that the Prophet's House was the origin of the mosque, but this is not obviously so.[20] For the first two centuries, there was no distinctively Christian architecture, and Christian congregations met

18. Ziyād ibn Abīhi is unlikely to have built round mosques in Baṣra (*pace* Hillenbrand 1991, p.68). The text reads: 'every mosque in Baṣra, the *raḥaba* of which is circular, was among the buildings of Ziyad (*kullu masjidin bi l-Baṣrati kanat raḥabatu ha mustadīratan fa-inna-ha min binā'i Ziyādin*)': Ibn al-Faqīh 1988, p.176. Here, *raḥaba* surely means not the internal courtyard (*ṣaḥn*), but either the space within which the mosque stood, or, more probably, a sort of platform or *dukkān* in the courtyard or in front of the entrance to the mosque: cf. Lane 1863, p.1051, col.c – p.1052, col.a.

19. Hillenbrand 1989, p.678, col.b, but now see Hillenbrand 1994, pp.39 – 42.

20. Hillenbrand 1989, p.679, col.a: 'It is surely *à propos* to note that the earliest Christian places of worship, the so-called *tituli*, were also ordinary houses'.

in ordinary dwellings. The Christian meeting houses of the 3rd century, the so-called *oikoi ekklesias* or *domus ecclesiae*, whether they were modified dwellings or structures built *ex novo*, employed the vocabulary of domestic architecture. The *domus ecclesiae* of the first three centuries, however, had little influence upon the architectural development of the church from the 4th century onwards. Even before Constantine, monumental churches were built on the model of the basilica and, after the Peace of the Church, architects began increasingly to experiment with variations on the basilical form. The basilica, not the house, was the monumental prototype for the church. The *domus ecclesiae* belonged to a specific period of early Christian history, before the community had developed monumental architecture, when domestic structures were used for practical reasons, and not in order to commemorate a particular house. Only in the 4th century was a new and more appropriate monumental form, the basilica, adopted as the architectural model for the church triumphant. Even then, no single basilica, but the whole class of basilical structures served as the model; and it was not until the late 4th or early 5th century that a norm for the early Christian basilica began to emerge.[21]

The origins of the synagogue are obscure, and plagued by the failure of scholars to distinguish clearly between the building and the institution. The earliest archaeological synagogue is that at Delos, which seems to be dated to the late 2nd or mid-1st century BC, but very little is known archaeologically of the development of the synagogue until the 3rd century. Although more than 100 synagogues are now attested in Palestine, most of these date from the 3rd to 7th centuries. This wealth of new archaeological evidence has forced scholars to abandon the chronological classification of the synagogue into early, transitional, and late types.[22] All three types were current as early as the 3rd–4th centuries, indicating that by this date the synagogue was subject to diverse architectural influences, including Hellenistic and Roman public buildings, and the emerging Christian basilica. It seems likely that such architectural diversity characterised the synagogue from its very origin. Although the Temple was often commemorated in synagogue art during late antiquity, the architectural form of the synagogue is not modelled on the Temple. In short, the synagogue, like the church, evolved gradually over a long period of time, and was subject to architectural influences that varied in space and time. It did not emerge rapidly and attain maturity within a single generation; nor did it commemorate in its architecture a single prototypical building.[23]

Thus, at first sight, comparison with the origins of the church and of the synagogue

21. The fundamental study remains Krautheimer 1981, pp.23–70, to which White 1990, *passim*, esp. pp.102–48, makes important revisions.

22. Seager 1989.

23. Levine 1993 is a useful introduction and summary. See also: Gutmann 1981, Levine 1981, Chiat 1982, Levine 1987, Hachlili 1989, Flesher & Urman 1994, all with extensive bibliography.

illustrates how improbable it is that the architectural type of the mosque should have been generated by a 'single seminal building', and suggests that the origins of the mosque might be sought in the much more complicated and organic process of the transformation of pre-existing architectural forms into the Islamic mosque. At the same time, however, this comparison highlights two important respects in which the early history of the mosque was strikingly different from that of the church and the synagogue. First, only Islam was, almost from its inception, the religion of a ruling elite capable of sponsoring its own architecture. Second, in contrast to the prolonged evolution of church and synagogue, both Islamic historical tradition and archaeology bear witness that, well within 100 years of the *hijra*, Muslim leaders were building mosques according to a common standard; one which dictates the form of congregational mosques, throughout the Muslim world, to this day.

What this suggests is that the crucial question is whether the mosque, like the church and the synagogue, gradually evolved from pre-existing architectural forms, or whether, unlike them, it was deliberately 'created' by the Muslim elite. One process does not necessarily exclude the other: the architectural type or types that became the mosque may have evolved gradually before Islam, and then, after the *hijra*, have been deliberately adopted (rather than created *ex nihilo*) by the new Islamic elite. The current orthodoxy – that the Prophet's House was the origin of the mosque – begs the question whether the mosque evolved or was created. Before getting to grips with that crux, therefore, it is necessary to scrutinise the basis of the orthodox position.

CAETANI AND THE 'HOUSE OF THE PROPHET'

Caetani devotes thirty pages to a discussion of 'The origin of the mosque and the foundation of the Muslim rite' in which he seeks to demonstrate that the religious institutions and practices of early Islam were less the products of an individual's conscious design than of broad, long-term historical processes.[24] Caetani's premise was that the mosque could not have sprung fully-formed from the Prophet's head on the very first day that he set foot in Medina but was rather the product of an organic historical process.[25] He sought to locate the evolution of the mosque in the decades after the *hijra*, in what he described as the 'slow transformation of a building intended for exclusively domestic use, into a meeting place for the believers, and finally into a mosque destined for worship'.[26]

24. Caetani 1905, vol.1, pp.432–60.
25. Caetani 1905, vol.1, p.432.
26. Caetani 1905, vol.1, p.432.

> Muḥammad's first thought,' he writes, 'on coming to dwell in Medina ... was to build himself a dwelling, a *dār*, which in Arabia in those days consisted of an enclosure of humble rooms, almost huts, grouped irregularly and concentrically around an open courtyard that was more or less spacious according to the wealth and the number of the family that occupied it. If the family was not very numerous, the rooms were all grouped together on one side and, because Arab private life required a private courtyard, closed on all sides for domestic purposes ... and to keep domestic animals, ... the rest of the area was completely enclosed by a wall. The open space thus formed the meeting place for all the family, and the ensemble of these architectural elements was so compact, that a single door communicated with the outer world. Bit by bit, as the family grew, whether by new marriages, or by the increase of children and grandchildren, onto the rooms already existing around the courtyard wall were built new rooms identical to the former until, one day, with the constant growth of the family, all the periphery of the courtyard was taken up with dwellings ... This system of house-building, that I have seen still in use in many of the poorest and most isolated villages of the Near East (Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, etc.), was that adopted by the Prophet. ... The purely domestic and utilitarian nature of the building ... is demonstrated by a number of traditions which the biographers of the Prophet failed to see in their true light. All of them believed that the prime intention of the Prophet was to build a place of worship, and that the dwellings of the Prophet and his family were thus an addition, an *ad hoc* arrangement of secondary importance to simplify the process of construction. Rather, it was completely the contrary: in fact, Muḥammad set about building himself a house for his own particular and private use, and only at a later stage, through circumstances that none could have foreseen, and as the result of a process that was completely unintentional, the spacious courtyard in the middle of the Prophet's House assumed a public character and eventually, after the death of Muḥammad, even a sacred character, that of a true place of worship. The creator of the mosque was not the Prophet, but historical determination that is above every human will."[27]

Caetani follows this passage with a long discussion, based on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, of the activities and events said to have taken place in the Prophet's courtyard which, he asserts, demonstrate that 'the original idea of the Prophet was to build not a place of worship but a simple private house like that of every other inhabitant of Medina'.[28]

As we shall see, Caetani's idea of what might have constituted ordinary domestic life in 7th-century Medina was at best idiosyncratic, but it is his naïve use of *aḥādīth* that betrays the fundamental weakness of his argument.[29] These traditions teach correct behaviour and prohibit transgressions, or they establish precedents for activities that were common in mosques in mature Islam, or they authenticate the claims to companionship or excellence of individuals or groups. Thus, for example, the story about an Arab urinating in the mosque does not demonstrate that he 'took it to be the simple courtyard of a private house'; it is rather an entertaining and instructive teaching story: the Prophet stops his followers from interrupting the man in full

27. Caetani 1905, vol.1, pp.437–8.
28. Caetani 1905, vol.1, p.441.
29. For a different critique of Caetani's argument, see Akkouch 1935, pp.398–401.

flow, instructs them to wait until he has finished, and then quips 'You have been sent to make things easy, not to make them difficult!'.[30] Again, the stories about spitting in the mosque, far from demonstrating that it was just an ordinary house, teach that pollution of a mosque is wrong ('spitting in the mosque is a sin'), and should at least be contained by spitting into one's robe or under one's feet.[31] Yet again, the Ethiopian spearmen who performed in the courtyard were not standard domestic fittings, but rather establish a precedent for similar displays in mosques in celebration of the *ʿīd*.[32] Finally, the presence in the mosque of wounded after the Battle of the Ditch does not indicate that it was really a house, but instead sacralises the excellence of the Banū Ghaffār and the glorious martyrdom of Saʿd ibn Muʿādh.[33]

Such stories may or may not be historical: if they are, they demonstrate not that the Prophet's Mosque was really a house, but rather that it was used for a wide variety of military, political, and social activities, as well as for prayer.[34] My subject here is the architectural form, not the institution of the mosque, but it is worth stressing that *al-masjid al-jamiʿ* was never simply or, perhaps, in early Islam, even primarily a place of worship.[35]

Caetani's argument is further undermined by the rather tetchy passages in the *Qurʾān* that seek to secure a little domestic peace for the Prophet: 'O believers! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet (*buyūt al-nabīy*) for a meal, unless leave is given to you and without waiting for the proper time (i.e. until it is ready). But, when you are invited, enter and, when you have had the meal, leave, without lingering for talk';[36] and 'Surely those who call to you from behind the apartments (*al-ḥujurāt*), most of them have no sense. And, if they had patience until you would come out to them, that would be better for them'.[37] In these passages, the Prophet's domestic apartments (*buyūt* or *ḥujurāt*) are explicitly treated as private space.

Nonetheless, Caetani described the Prophet's House, not his mosque, as a courtyard approximately 100 cubits (50 m) square, enclosed by a mud-brick wall 7 cubits high, pierced by three entrances. At first, Caetani related, there was no structure within the courtyard, but after the Muslims began to complain of the heat of the sun whilst they were at prayer, a portico or *zulla* was built against the northern wall of palm trunks supporting a roof of woven palm branches and mud. In the southwest

30. Bukhārī 1862, vol.1, p.67, lines 3–6.
31. Bukhārī 1862, vol.1, p.114, line 5, p.115, line 11, p.144, line 6, p.196, line 12, p.305, line 14.
32. Bukhārī 1862, vol.1, p.25, line 8, p.242, line 9, p.251, line 12.
33. Bukhārī 1862, vol.1, p.127, line 11.
34. Hillenbrand 1994, pp.40, 42. Lammens (1911, pp.30–4, 240–50; 1926, passim, esp. pp.65–6) and Pedersen (1989, p.646, cols a–b) are strongly influenced by Caetani's argument but, unlike him, stress that the mosques of Islam, like pre-Islamic sanctuaries (in Islamic tradition), were from the first foci of military, political, and social activity, as well as places of prayer.
35. Creswell 1969, vol.1.1, pp.43–4.
36. *Qurʾān* XXX.53.
37. *Qurʾān* XLIX.4–5.

corner, a smaller portico or *suffa* was built to shelter the poor and homeless Muslims. After the change of the *qibla* in 2/624, the structures within the courtyard were rearranged: the *zulla* was transferred to the south wall, the *suffa* to the northeast corner, and the principal entrance from the south to the north. Onto the exterior of the eastern half of the enclosure were built dwellings for the Prophet's wives, two at first, increasing to nine by the time of his death; none was built onto the western half. Access to these dwellings was only possible from the courtyard.[38]

In four particulars, Caetani's reconstruction of the Prophet's House departs from the ethnographic model upon which it is purportedly based. First, the area of the courtyard is huge, 2,500 square metres, far greater than any purely domestic dwelling is likely to have been, and far greater than the cramped courtyards of the Arab houses that Caetani himself describes.[39] Second, instead of the single entrance of Caetani's *dār*, which typically would have been a bent-entrance to conceal the interior of the courtyard from the street, the Prophet's House has three (and later four) gates. Third, the dwellings of the Prophet's wives open directly onto the courtyard, the public space of the structure, exposing the houses to public gaze.[40] Fourth, Caetani placed the apartments of the Prophet's wives against the *exterior* of the courtyard wall; this is architectural nonsense: the structures surrounding the courtyard should be built against the inside, not the outside, of the enclosure wall.[41] Caetani stitched together a highly selective reading of Islamic tradition and a distorted ethnographic model and, Frankenstein-like, gave life to an architectural monster.

CRESWELL AND THE 'HOUSE OF THE PROPHET'

If Caetani played Frankenstein, Creswell was James Whale, the man who made the picture of the monster. Most students of Islamic art and archaeology are able to reproduce the plan of the Prophet's House published by Creswell in *Early Muslim Architecture* (FIG. 14). Many are familiar with the isometric projections and reconstruc-

38. Caetani (1905), vol.1, pp.377–9.
39. Samhūdī (1868, p.107, lines 9–10 & 1908, vol.1, p.238, lines 12–14) reports a divergent tradition, attributed to Khārija ibn Zayd ibn Thābit, that the courtyard originally measured 70 by 60 cubits (approximately 35 m by 30 m). See Creswell 1969, vol.1, 1, p.7, n.5. Akkouch (1935, pp.387, 391–3) argues that the Prophet enlarged the mosque after the capture of Khaybar in 7/628–9. Hillenbrand (1994, p.39) has already pointed out that the size of the courtyard indicates that it was not that of an ordinary domestic dwelling.
40. The traditionists were apparently uneasy about this unseemly lack of privacy, and report that Umm Salama built a mud-brick wall in front of her house 'to obstruct the gazes of the people', but this story serves principally as a vehicle for the Prophet's condemnation of building: Ibn Sa'd 1904, vol.1, 2, p.181, lines 3–8.
41. Geoffrey King kindly informs me that although compounds with some structures built onto the outside of the courtyard wall are not unknown in Arabian domestic architecture and may be found, for example, at Ha'il, he has never seen a compound resembling the Prophet's House as reconstructed by Creswell.

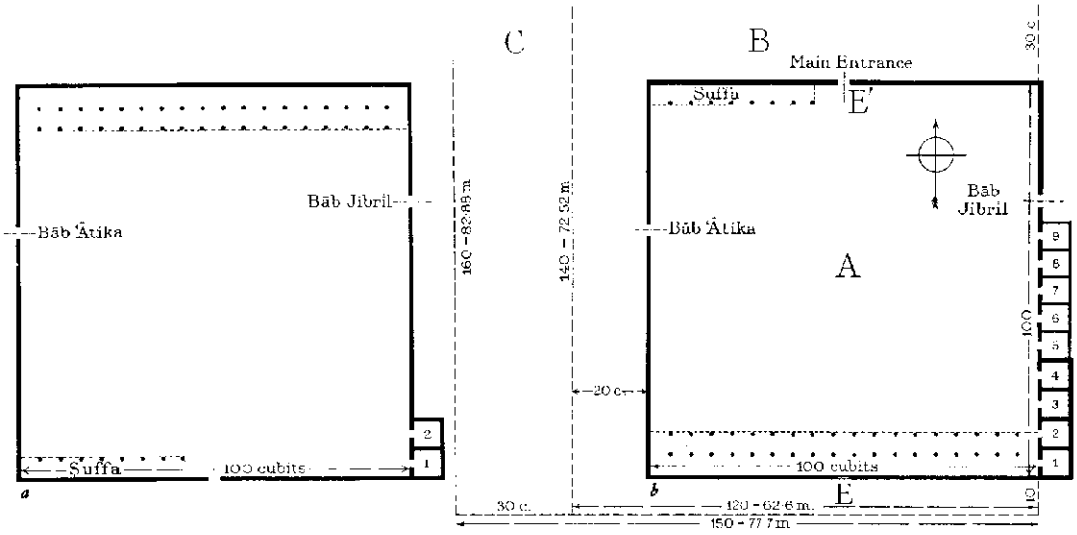
tions of that plan published, amongst others, by Leacroft, Kuban, and Hillenbrand (FIG.15a–c). Some even believe such reconstructions to be based upon archaeological evidence. Only Akkouch, or so it would seem, has critically examined Creswell's sources, and produced his own reconstruction and plan (FIG.16): his argument may be naïve, but it is based upon a scholarly examination of the Arabic sources, and it is shameful that his telling criticisms of Creswell's reconstruction continue to be dismissed, in Sauvaget's words, as 'le point de vue musulman traditionel'.[42]

Creswell's account of the Prophet's House is derived almost verbatim from that of Caetani, except in one important detail. Creswell places all nine of the houses of the Prophet's wives adjoining each other in a line on the exterior of the east wall of the mosque. In a note to the text, he gives the sources for this reconstruction: 'Umarī's *Masālik al-Abṣar*; Samhūdī's *Khulāṣat al-Wafā'* in the Būlāq edition and as 'translated and epitomized by Wüstenfeld';[43] Diyārbakrī's *Ta'rīkh al-Khamis*; and Caetani's account of the Prophet's Mosque in the *Annali dell'Islam*.[44]

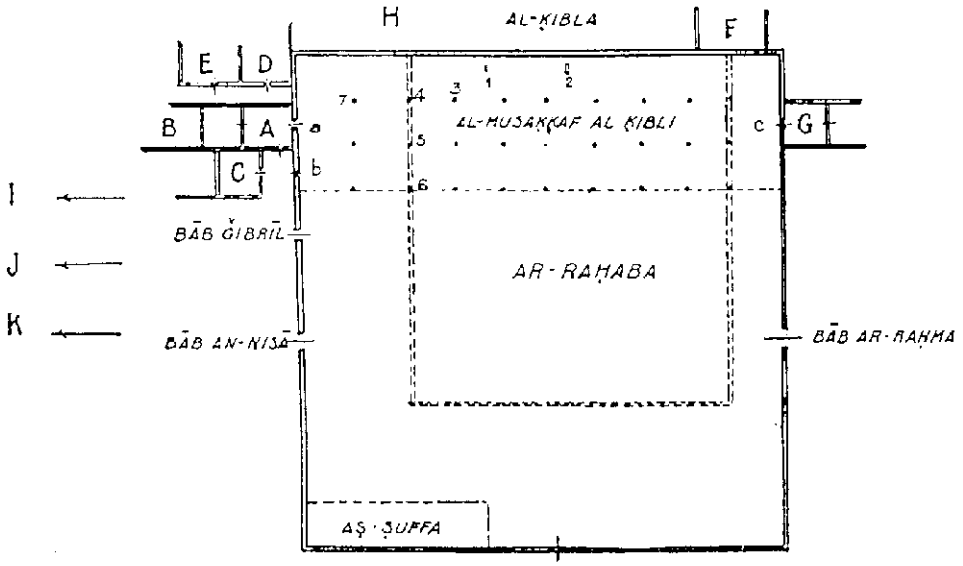
Of the three Arabic sources, two may be swiftly dismissed. The brief and highly synthetic account of 'Umarī (d. 748/1348) contains nothing of direct relevance to the location of the houses.[45] Diyārbakrī (d. 982/1574) transmits only traditions to the effect that the houses were 'spread out' (*mustaṭīra*) to the north, east and south of the courtyard.[46]

The third, Samhūdī (d. 911/1506), is the single most informative source upon the history of the Prophet's Mosque. The full text of his history of Medina was destroyed in the fire of 886/1481, but not before the author himself had made two abridgements: the *Wafā' al-Wafā'*, in which traditions are presented systematically and critically discussed; and the *Khulāṣat al-Wafā'*, a much more synthetic epitome in which Samhūdī does not hesitate to advance his own interpretation of the sources.[47] The *Khulāṣa* reports traditions that place the houses upon all sides of the mosque except the west. Not a single tradition in the *Khulāṣa* places the houses against only the east wall of the enclosure. In the *Khulāṣa*, Samhūdī's own opinion seems to be that the houses were distributed on all three sides except the west or, possibly, upon the north and east sides only.[48] Only in the *Wafā' al-Wafā'*, after reporting the confusing testimony of the scholars of the *sīra* (*ahl al-siyar*), viz. that the houses lay on all sides except the west, whilst their doors opened directly into the mosque and to the

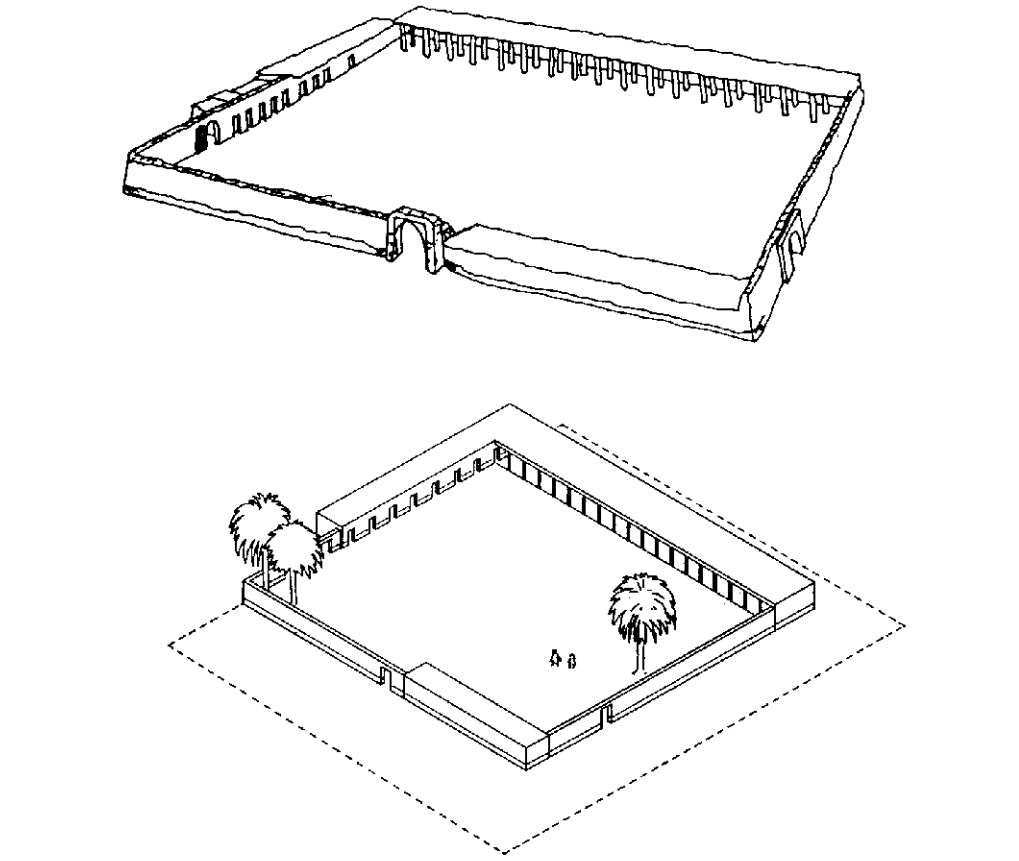
42. Akkouch 1935; Sauvaget 1947, p.7, n.2.
43. Sic! Wüstenfeld's German summary was actually of the *Wafā' al-Wafā'*.
44. Creswell 1969, vol.I.1, p.8, n.1; 'Umarī 1924, vol.1, p.126, line 12 – p.127, line 5; Samhudi 1868, pp.106–9, 126–8, p.143, lines 27–30; Wüstenfeld 1860, pp.60–1, 66–8, 78. Diyārbakrī 1885, vol.1, p.390, lines 3, 8–12, 19–27. Caetani 1905, vol.1, pp.377–8.
45. 'Umarī 1924, vol.1, pp.123–7.
46. Diyārbakrī 1885, vol.1, p.390, lines 19–29.
47. Sauvaget 1947, pp.27–9.
48. Samhūdī 1868, p.126, line 20 – p.127, line 15.



14. Reconstruction of the plan of 'Muḥammad's House' (after Creswell 1969)
(a) Before change of *qibla*; (b) after change of *qibla*.
A. the Prophet's house; B. enlargement of 'Umar; C. enlargement of 'Uthmān;
(1) (4) rooms of mudbrick, roofed with palm branches and mud; (5) (9) rooms of reeds and mud, roofed with palm branches and mud (Creswell never published the section E–E)



16. Reconstruction of the plan of the Prophet's mosque and his dwellings (after Akkouche 1935).
Houses of: A. 'Ā'isha; B. Sawda; C. Fāṭima; D. Ḥafṣa;
E. Umm Salama (?); F. al-'Abbās; G. Abū Bakr; H. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar.
Gates: (a) Bāb 'Ā'isha; (b) Bāb 'Alī; (c) Khawkhat Abī Bakr.
(1) Prophet's place of prayer (*muṣalla*); (2) his *minbar*



15. Isometric reconstructions of the Prophet's house:
(Top to bottom: after Hillenbrand 1994; Kuban 1974; Leacroft & Leacroft 1976)

west – does Samhūdī cite al-Khaṭīb ibn Ḥamla's comment that this could mean that the houses all lay to the east; a comment not included in Wüstenfeld's summary of the *Wafā'*.[49] Creswell believed that it was the *Khulāṣa* that Wüstenfeld had 'translated and epitomized', while his German summary was in fact of the *Wafā'* alone. Clearly, Creswell confused the two works, or was unaware of the *Wafā'*: in either case, he cannot have known of al-Khaṭīb ibn Ḥamla's comment. In short, as Akkouch so rightly concluded, 'Les logements n'étaient pas tous parallèles à la mosquée et sur un côté';[50] none of the Arabic sources cited by Creswell as his authority for placing all the houses on the east wall of the enclosure supports such a reconstruction. Akkouch's own reconstruction (FIG.16) may or may not be historically accurate, but at least it is based upon the sources. If not from the Arabic sources, whence did Creswell derive the idea?[51]

The only other authority cited by Creswell is the account of the Prophet's Mosque given by Caetani. The crucial passage in the *Annali* is at first sight ambiguous and could easily be misread as saying that all the houses lay against the east wall of the mosque.[52] Creswell made precisely this misreading; yet, although he never states it explicitly, he did have one further reason to place the houses all on the east side of the enclosure.

Creswell quotes at length from the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, who had from al-Wāqidī, an eyewitness account of the mosque immediately before it was destroyed on the order of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz in 88/707. 'Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd al-Hudhalī reports 'I counted nine houses with their chambers (*'addadtu tis'ata abyātin bi-ḥujarihā*)'.[53] Ibn Sa'd, apparently following his source, assumed that these corresponded to one house for each of the Prophet's nine wives, and that these were all the houses. Creswell shared this assumption. Neither takes account of those houses built to the north and south of the mosque, nor those incorporated into the mosque by 'Umar and 'Uthmān.

In *Early Muslim Architecture*, immediately above the quotation from Ibn Sa'd, Creswell published his plans of the Prophet's House (FIG.14). In one (FIG.14b), he shows the building after the change of the *qibla*, and also indicates the enlargements of the courtyard carried out under 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and 'Uthmān. According to the plan, 'Umar extended the mosque 30 cubits to the north, 20 cubits to the west,

49. Samhūdī 1908, vol.1, p.325, lines 16 – 21.
50. Akkouch 1935, p.394.
51. Creswell did not read Arabic and, when published translations, epitomes or secondary accounts were not available to him, he relied upon his Arab students to read Arabic sources for him: Hamilton 1991, p.132.
52. Caetani 1905, vol.1, p.378: 'All of these … dwellings … arose on the eastern side (i.e. half) of the mosque … none was built on the western part' ('Tutti questi … appartamenti … sorsero sul lato orientale della moschea … non ne costruì nessuna dalla parte occidentale').
53. Ibn Sa'd 1904, vol.1, 2, p.180, line 27 – p.181, line 1.

and 10 cubits to the south. Had the houses of the Prophet's wives been built against any of these walls, they would have been destroyed in the enlargement. Since 'Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd saw all the houses in 88/707, they can only have stood against the east wall of the courtyard. This, as much as his misreading of Caetani's account, is why Creswell reconstructed the plan of the Prophet's House with the dwellings all built along its eastern side.

Creswell's reliance upon the testimony of 'Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd, that he saw *all* the houses of the Prophet's wives as late as 88/707, focuses attention upon his reconstruction of the history of the mosque in the interval since the death of the Prophet. In most respects, Creswell's account of the enlargements of the mosque under 'Umar and 'Uthmān adheres closely to the testimony of the sources:[54] the plan of the mosque was not altered by Abū Bakr;[55] it was not until 17/638 that 'Umar demolished the Prophet's Mosque, extended it on three sides to make an enclosure 140 cubits north-south by 120 cubits east-west, and rebuilt it using brick, stone, and timber, as well as palm trunks and branches;[56] 'Uthmān had 'Umar's mosque demolished, enlarged to the north and west to give an enclosure 160 cubits north-south by 150 cubits east-west, and rebuilt it in dressed stone, roofed with teak;[57] neither 'Umar nor 'Uthmān had the mosque extended towards the east. But Creswell does not discuss the traditions, including those reported by Ibn Rusta and quoted below, that claim that the *qibla* wall was moved first by 'Umar to a line later occupied by the southern columns of al-Mahdī's *maqṣūra*, and then by 'Uthmān one bay further south to its premodern position. Nor did he take account of those traditions which specifically contradict his account of the location of at least some of the houses of the Prophet's wives.

Ibn Rusta reports two traditions to the effect that it was 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb who incorporated into the mosque the house of his daughter Ḥafṣa, the Prophet's fourth wife:

> It was reported from 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar ibn Ḥafṣ; he said "Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ... extended the wall of the *qibla* to the columns which are where the *maqṣūra* is today'. Then 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān enlarged it until it reached the present wall. He said 'I heard my father say "When there was need of the house of Ḥafṣa", she said "How am I to make my way to the mosque?" He ['Umar] said to her "We shall give you a house more spacious than yours and make you a better way than yours". And he gave her the compound of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Umar, and it was a *mirbad*."[58]
>
> It was reported from 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sa'd on the authority of his masters that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb extended the wall of the *qibla* to the *maqṣūra*; then 'Uthmān ibn 'Affan extended it to its present position. And he brought into [the mosque] the greater

54. Creswell 1969, vol.1, 1, pp.27–8.
55. Samhūdī 1868, p.131, line 30 – p.132, line 1; Samhudī 1908, vol.1, p.341, lines 1–6, 9–10.
56. Samhūdī 1868, pp.131–4; Samhūdī 1908, vol.1, pp.341–52.
57. Samhūdī 1868, pp.134–7; Samhūdī 1908, vol.1, pp.354–61.
58. For the *mirbad*, see pp.81–85, below.

> part of the compound of 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, that to the south, north and west; and also he brought into [the mosque] the houses of Ḥafṣa bint 'Umar which lay to the south. And the mosque remained in that state until it was enlarged by al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik.

Both traditions locate Ḥafṣa's house some distance south of the mosque. They occur in a passage cited by Creswell, they explicitly contradict his insistence on placing all the houses against the eastern wall of the enclosure, and yet he does not discuss them.[59]

Samhūdī makes the following comment upon the traditions concerning 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's enlargement of the mosque:

> ... some of the chambers of the wives of the Prophet were on the north side [of the mosque] ... 'Umar did not bring any of them in[to the mosque] but, on contrary, al-Walīd brought them in and thus 'Umar left unchanged what was on the north side of [the mosque] standing just as it was, and extended the mosque right up to them.[60]

In other words, Samhūdī believed that some of the houses stood a considerable distance north of the original enclosure so that even after 'Umar had extended the mosque 30 cubits to the north they still lay outside its walls. Again, Creswell cites the pages of the *Khulaṣa* in which this passage occurs, but does not discuss it.[61] Such reports, however, are clearly in conflict with his principal source for the reconstruction of the Prophet's House: 'Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd's claim that he saw *all* the houses of the Prophet's wives in a line along the eastern flank of the mosque as late as 88/707.

To conclude this discussion of the 'House of the Prophet', the following three points make clear that the Arabic sources cited by Creswell as authority for his reconstruction of what he calls Muḥammad's house explicitly contradict that reconstruction:

1. Creswell placed all the houses against the east wall of the courtyard, but most traditions agree that the apartments of the Prophet's wives lay on three sides of the mosque, except the west;
2. Not all the houses were built onto the perimeter wall of the mosque: the house of Ḥafṣa lay well to the south, other houses lay at least 15 m to the north, and Ṣafīya's house lay a considerable distance from the mosque;[62]
3. It follows that, according to the sources cited by Caetani and Creswell, the Prophet's Mosque and the dwellings of his wives did not all belong to a single ensemble, as they believed, but rather comprised at least four, and possibly more, distinct and separate structural units, what the sources call 'his mosque and his dwellings' (*masjidu-hu wa-masākinu-hu*).[63]

59. Ibn Rusta 1892, p.67, lines 3–16.
60. Samhūdī 1908, vol.1, p.350, lines 10–13; see. Samhūdī 1868, p.133, lines 12–13.
61. The passage does not occur in Wüstenfeld's epitome.
62. Samhudi 1908, vol.1, p.326, line 16–end; cf. Bukhārī 1862, vol.II, pp.305–7.
63. e.g. Ibn Hishām 1858, p.338.

MIRBAD, MUṢALLĀ AND MASJID

The demolition of the Caetani-Creswell reconstruction of the Prophet's *House* in the previous section raises the possibility that it may have been the Prophet's *Mosque* that was the prototype of the mosque in Islam. According to Islamic tradition, the structure that eventually became the mosque of the Prophet was, at first, nothing but an open enclosure with an unbroken wall in the direction of the *qibla* (north) and with gates through the other three walls. Could this simple structure have been the origin of the concept of the mosque?

Comparable hypaethral mosques are widely known throughout the Islamic world, and seem to date from the 1st century until today. It is generally assumed that they are simplified versions of grander structures, and this is surely true of modern examples. Ancient hypaethral mosques, by their very nature, are difficult to date without excavation, and I know of none fully and competently excavated.[64] Reports of some of the first mosques to be built in the conquests, such as the earliest mosque at Baṣra, describe them as simple open enclosures, directly comparable to the mosque of the Prophet.[65] An interesting group of hypaethral mosques in the Negev has recently been published by Avni, who suggests that they can be dated to the 7th and 8th centuries AD because they are built on or near settlements of that date (FIG.17).[66] A similar mosque in the Wādī Shīra in the Jordanian Ḥisma was described by Jobling, who dated it upon circumstantial epigraphic evidence to 107/725–26.[67] There is at least a possibility worthy of further investigation that the openness of these apparently early structures was in some way intrinsic to their design. (It is no less possible, however, that such mosques are relatively recent structures in which, for decoration alone, stones bearing pre-Islamic and early Islamic inscriptions are reused. This is certainly the case, for example, with the recent 'tomb-mosques' of the Ahl al-Jabal in the Ḥarra east of the Jabal al-Duruz.)

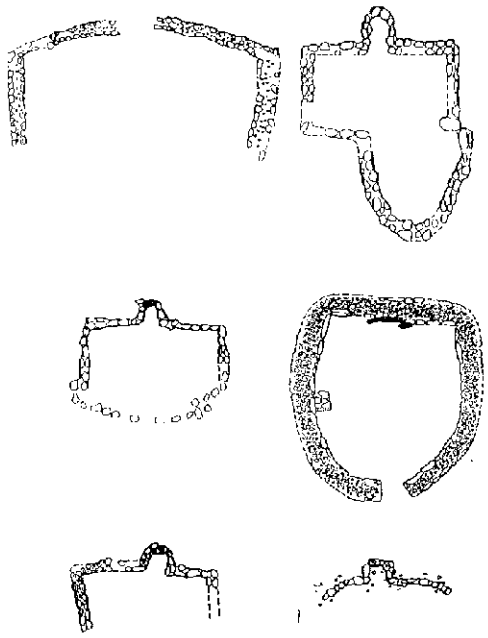
There was little to distinguish the earliest stage of the Prophet's Mosque from the *mirbad* of Sahl and Suhayl that preceded it upon the same site, and that Ibn Zurāra is said to have used as a *masjid* before the *hijra*.[68] This formal similarity between *mirbad* and *masjid* seems to be more than mere coincidence, for several traditions report that, before his mosque was built, the Prophet would pray in *marābid*.[69] There is disagreement as to exactly what purpose *marābid* served: most traditions suggest that they were used as pens for camels, sheep and other livestock. The *mirbad* of Sahl and

64 For a lively discussion of the problem, see Helms 1990, pp.73–82.
65. Balādhurī 1863, pp.346–7; see also Creswell 1969, vol.I: 1, p.22.
66. Avni 1994.
67. Jobling 1989. The inscription is now published: Hoyland 1997b, pp.97–100.
68. For the story in detail, see pp.103–7, below.
69. Bukhārī 1862, vol.1, pp.70, 119; vol.3, p.48. For others, see Wensinck 1936, vol.III, p.211, s.v. *marābid*.

Suhayl is also described as an area for drying dates, and this explanation is also given of the *mirbad* at Qubā', later a mosque and a rival in 'firstness' to the *Masjid al-Nabīy*.[70] The dictionaries specify that this latter meaning is peculiar to the dialect of Medina, equivalent to the Yamanī *misṭaḥ* and the *jarīn* of Najd. Lane cites Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim as his authority that both *mirbad* and *jarīn* are the Ḥijāzī equivalents for the *andar* of Syria and the *baydar* of Iraq.[71] The primary meaning of *andar*, *baydar* and *jarīn* is a threshing-floor for wheat and other grains, which suggests a tentative link between the *mirbad* and the threshing-floor. *Jarīn*, *misṭaḥ* and *mirbad* all convey the idea of flat, smooth surfaces and it is possible, of course, that *marabid* were particularly well-suited as places of prayer because they had clean, level floors.[72] In addition, threshing floors would often have been located on high places to catch the breeze, and high places were often sacred sites in ancient Semitic religion. Thus, it would be possible to advance what Wensinck calls a rationalistic explanation for the use of such open enclosures as places of prayer.[73]

Such a rationalistic explanation cannot fully account for the rich associations of *masjid* and *mirbad* which may be observed at both Mecca and Medina. When Ishmael first arrived in Mecca, he built a dwelling on the spot later occupied by the Ka'ba and 'built a circular hedge of doom palms around it and turned it into an enclosure for his sheep'.[74] The Ka'ba itself, as built by his father Abraham, is said by tradition to have been nothing more than an open enclosure surrounded by a dry-stone wall the height of a man.[75] At Medina, as will be discussed in detail below, Muslim traditionists stressed that the mosque of the Prophet, like the Jewish Temple, was founded on a threshing-floor/drying-floor, and emphasised the point by comparing the *zulla* of the mosque to the 'booth of Moses'. This booth would seem to associate the Ark of the Covenant (which was eventually placed in the Temple founded on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite) with the Sukkōt booths built (on the anniversary of the consecration of the Temple) to celebrate the Jewish harvest festival. There are other indications that the mosque at Medina perpetuated the association of the site with the celebration of the fruits of this earth: the *rawḍa* or 'meadow' of the Prophet which lay between the tomb and the *minbar*; the 'garden of Fāṭima' (*bustān al-sayyida Fāṭima*) in the courtyard of the mosque; and the terms for the courtyard (*al-raḥaba*) and for the enclosure around the tomb of the Prophet (*al-ḥijar*), which both have the primary meaning of a pen for animals or a place for drying dates.[76]

70. Lecker 1994, pp.79–80, 93–4.
71. Lane 1863, p.1010, s.v. *mirbadun*.
72. See also in Epigraphic South Arabian words from the root *SLḤ*, perhaps cognate with *ŠLḤ* (= Arabic *SLḤ*, whence *muṣallā*), probably connoting 'to cover with flat stones or plaster': Beeston 1982, p.142, s.v. *SLḤ*.
73. Wensinck 1917.
74. Ibn Khaldūn 1858, vol.II, p.216, lines 12–14.
75. Azraqī 1858, p.106, lines 10–11. Ṭabarī 1879, vol.I, p.1130.
76. *Al-raḥaba*: Samhūdī 1908, vol.I, p.238; cf. Lane



17. Plans of hypaethral mosques in the southern Negev highlands (after Avni 1994)

In his article on the *muṣallā*, Wensinck suggested that such associations with the fruits of the earth might be the common thread linking these two open enclosures, *masjid* and *mirbad*, to the third, *muṣallā*.[77] The *muṣallā* is often a large, empty, square enclosure provided with multiple entrances and an unbroken *qibla* wall.[78] All that distinguishes the *muṣallā* from the *mirbad* and from the typical hypaethral mosque is its much greater size. At Medina, the Prophet is said to have used a *muṣallā* which lay southwest of the town for celebrating the two *'īd*s; on both occasions, the Muslims were preceded to the *muṣallā* by Bilāl, bearing the *'anaza* or spear, which was set in the ground as the Prophet's *sutra*. Some traditions identify the Prophet's *muṣallā* with the mosque of Qubā' which, like the Prophet's Mosque, is said to have been originally a *mirbad*. It may be that traces of an ancient relationship between the *mirbad* and the *muṣallā* survived until recently in Morocco, where the extra-urban *muṣallā* was often a threshing-floor,[79] and where *'anaza* referred to an external *miḥrāb* in the courtyard of a mosque or in a *muṣallā*.[80]

Wensinck suggested that in pre-Islamic times, several rites, including sacrifice,

1863, p.1051, col.c – p.1052, col.a. *Al-ḥiẓār*: Samhūdī 1868, p.144, last line; p.145, lines 1–2; cf. Lane 1863, p.596, s.v. *ḥiẓāma, ḥaẓīratun*.

77. Wensinck 1917.

78. Hillenbrand 1992, p.660, col.a.

79. Doutté 1908, p.462.

80. Miles 1954, p.482, col.b, citing an inscription of 524/1130 from the *'anaza* in the courtyard of the mosque of al-Qarawīyīn, Fez (= *Répertoire* 1931, vol.VIII, no.3031).

had been performed in an open enclosure, known variously as *mirbad*, *masjid* and *muṣallā*, and sought the association between such rites and the enclosures themselves in the special connection of the latter, in their guise of *marābid*, with the fertile earth.[81] As it stands, and with particular reference to pre-Islamic Arabia, Wensinck's hypothesis is supported by too little evidence to be more than intriguing, but three points are worth stressing.

First, the fruits of this earth and of paradise figure largely in the *Qur'ān*, and are explicitly associated with the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*. The just will be rewarded with heavenly fruit.[82] God alone causes the fruits of this earth to grow.[83] 'They are amongst the 'signs' [*āyāt*] to those who believe, or have knowledge or wisdom.[84] The fertility of the dead earth is a sign of the resurrection to come.[85] Abraham prays that God may grant 'fruits' to the people of His *Bayt*.[86]

Second, hypaethral temples were a feature of ancient south Arabian religious architecture,[87] and, as we have just seen, Islamic tradition suggests that open agricultural enclosures had a special religious significance in pre- and early Islamic times. Islamic tradition may also preserve fragmentary details of pre-Islamic hypaethral cults. For example, when the Azd and Ghassān went on pilgrimage to the idol of Manat near Qudayd, 'they would not go under the shelter of a roof until they had completed it'.[88] Other traditions associate open shrines with sacrifices of crops and cattle,[89] and with prayers for rain, *ṣalāt al-istisqā'*.[90] The Prophet sacrificed in the *muṣalla* at the *'id al-kabir*, and, when he led the *ṣalat al-istisqa'*, he did so not in the covered mosque but in the open *muṣallā* or upon the summit of Abū Qubays.[91] In 17–18/638–9, when 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb led the Medinans in *ṣalāt al-istisqā'*, he conducted the congregation out of the Prophet's Mosque and into the countryside.[92] The idea that rogations for rain had to be made under the open sky survived into medieval and modern times, and the tombs of saints who had the prerogative of *istisqa'* have an opening in their domes.[93]

Third, the poets celebrated the power of successive Umayyad caliphs to bring rain and to restore fertility to the earth. That this is more than empty panegyric is demonstrated by reports that the caliph himself led the *ṣalāt al istisqā'*.[94] This suggests

81. Wensinck 1917.
82. *Qur'ān* II.25, XIII.35, XXXVI.57, XXXVII.42, XXXVIII.51, XLIII.73, XLIV.55, LII.22, LV.52, LV.54, LV.68, LVI.20, LVI.32, LXXVII.42.
83. *Qur'ān* XIV.32, XXIII.19, XLI.47, LV.11–12, LXXX.24–31.
84. *Qur'ān* VI.90, XIII.3, XVI.11, XVI.67, XVI.69, XXXV.27–28.
85. *Qur'ān* XXXVI.33–34, VII.57–58.
86. *Qur'ān* II.126.
87. Schmidt 1987, p.79.
88. Azraqi 1858, p.73; cf. Fahd 1968, pp.123–6.
89. Ibn Hishām 1858, p.53; cf. *Qur'ān* VI.137.
90. Ibn al-Kalbi 1924, p.8. For *istisqā'* see: Fahd 1974b; Goldziher 1906, pp.308–12.
91. Bukhārī 1862, vol.I. pp.256, 261; Ibn Sa'd 1904, vol.I. 1, p.54. Cf. Fahd 1974b, p.270, cols a–b; Wensinck 1917, pp.7–9.
92. Ṭabari 1879, vol.I, pp.2575–6.
93. Fahd 1974b, p.270, col.b.

why Umayyad patrons were so ready to take over from pre-Islamic Christian and Jewish culture the celebration in art of the fruits of this earth. The theme dominated the mosaic pavements of churches and synagogues throughout Palestine and Transjordan in the 5th–7th centuries, but reappears in the Umayyad mosaics of Qaṣr al-Ḥallabāt, Qaṣṭāl, Quṣayr 'Amra and Khirbat al-Mafjar, and in the floor-fresco of Gaia from Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī.[95] In the audience hall at Khirbat al-Mafjar, pride of place is given to an enigmatic image of a sprouting fruit and a knife, which may be linked to both the fruit and knife common in church pavements and to the ethrog and lulab ubiquitous in synagogue art; the latter, of course, belong to the celebrations of Sukkōt.[96]

This excursion from *masjid* to *mirbad* to *muṣallā* has raised the possibility that there may be a formal connection between ancient hypaethral enclosures associated with the celebration of the fertile earth and the Islamic mosque, but the link is at best tenuous and, in the absence of better evidence, it would be most unwise to place too much weight upon it. There are, in fact, good reasons to believe that, at the time of the Prophet, the mosque must have been a more complex structure than a simple hypaethral enclosure aligned upon a *qibla*. These reasons will be explored in the next two sections; for the moment, it seems probable that if the hypaethral enclosure really was one of the formal ancestors of the Islamic mosque, then it was a distant one, and must be located in a time long before the rise of Islam.

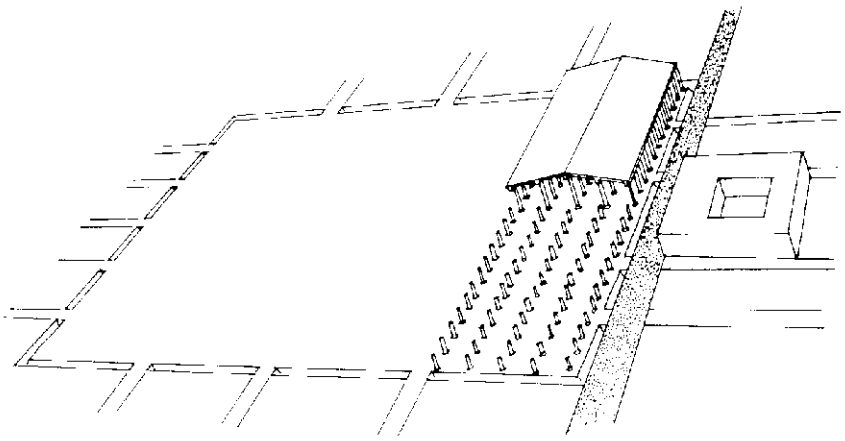
PRIMITIVE ISLAM AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE MOSQUE

Creswell's conviction that the courtyard of the 'House of the Prophet' was the origin of the mosque led him to envisage its early development as an evolutionary process driven by the functional needs of the early Muslims. The starting point was the empty courtyard. First, the sun beating down on the faithful at prayer created the need for shade, the roofed *zulla* that was the germ from which the prayer hall grew. Next, at the other end of the courtyard, the lack of shelter for the homeless *muhājirūn* gave rise to the *suffa* which, in time, became the *riwāq* of the mosque. Then, paving was introduced lest the actions of the faithful, clapping the dust off their hands after prayer, be mistaken for an intrinsic part of the new liturgy. And so on, until he had drawn a crude cartoon-strip of tent-dwelling savages discovering for themselves the most basic structural elements: walls, roof, paving, etcetera. This was what Creswell called 'Primitive Islam', the absence of all architectural knowledge amongst the

94. Crone & Hinds 1986, pp.8–9, 35; Ringgren 1959, p.740.

95. Christian and Umayyad pavements: Piccirillo 1993. Ḥallabāt: Bisheh 1993. Khirbat al-Mafjar: Hamilton 1959, pl.xcixa. Qaṣr al-Ḥayr: Schlumberger 1986, pl.35. See also Raby, below, p.127.

96. Johns forthcoming a.



18. Reconstruction of Kufa I and the *Dār al-Imāra* (after Hillenbrand 1994)

bedouin Arabs before they came into contact with real architecture in the lands that they were to conquer from the Byzantines and the Persians. Fundamental to Creswell's notion of 'Primitive Islam' was his insistence, against all the evidence, even after it had been drawn to his attention, that Arabia at the rise of Islam did not possess 'anything worthy of the name of architecture'.[97]

Barbara Finster and Geoffrey King have thoroughly criticised Creswell's gross underestimation of the importance of pre-Islamic Arabia to the development of early Islamic architecture.[98] Here, I wish merely to point out that if the townsmen of the Ḥijāz were not tent-dwelling bedouin, and if the Ḥijāz was not an architectural desert, then both Creswell's crude caricature of 'Primitive Islam', and his cartoon-strip reconstruction of how the Arabs discovered architecture, from the tent to the Dome of the Rock in two short generations, become highly suspect.

To take one familiar example: the widespread and persistent architectural ensemble of the mosque with the *dār al-imāra* against its *qibla* wall is first attested by the historians at Kūfa in 17/638 (FIG.18). According to what should clearly be regarded as a folktale, the dimensions and shape of the mosque at Kūfa were determined by an archer shooting arrows towards the four cardinal points, and the *dār al-imāra* was subsequently built against the *qibla* wall because its treasury had been robbed and it was hoped that the proximity of the mosque would thereafter protect it.[99] Creswell employed this folktale to historicise his cartoon-strip account of

97. Creswell 1969, vol.1.1, pp.10–11.
98. Finster 1973, King 1991.
99. Balādhurī 1863, p.276; Ṭabarī 1879, vol.1, pp.2488–9, pp.2491–2.

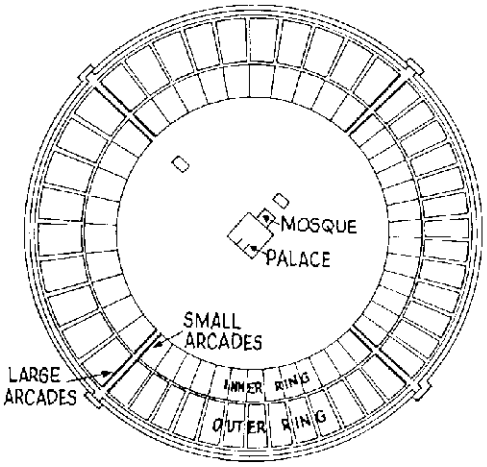


Figure 19. Baghdad, Lassner's reconstruction of the round city of al-Manṣūr (after Creswell & Allan 1989).

'Primitive Islam', according to which 'two trivial facts – viz. the marking out of the mosque by arrow-casts and a burglary' are supposed to have produced by purest chance the architectural group that located the throne room of the caliph or his representative on the *qibla* of the *jāmiʿ* mosque.[100]

Once again, the very sources cited by Creswell in support of his argument in fact contradict it. Thus, for example, Balādhurī reports that Ziyād ibn Abīhi moved the *dar al-imara* at Baṣra from the Dahnā' to abut the *qibla* wall of the mosque because it was unseemly that the *imām* should have to pick his way through the congregation on his way to the *miḥrāb*.[101] No 'trivial fact' at Baṣra, then, but an expressive political gesture. Exactly the same gesture that can be seen, but on an imperial – even cosmological – scale, in al-Manṣūr's Baghdad (FIG.19) where the caliph's palace was located at the very centre of the Round City, with the *qubbat al-khaḍrāʾ* directly behind the *miḥrāb* of the *jāmiʿ* on the line of the *qibla*.

What is more, there are hints in Islamic tradition that this architectural ensemble may have had pre-Islamic antecedents. At Mecca, the *Dār al-Nadwa*, the palace built for Quṣayy ibn Kilāb and 'the only place where Quraysh could settle their affairs', lay on the north side of the *masjid* of the Kaʿba; that is, on the side of the pre-Islamic *qibla*.[102] At Medina, at least some of the domestic apartments of the Prophet were attached to his mosque, and several traditions locate the apartments of ʿĀ'isha, in which the Prophet himself is said to have dwelt most of the time, against the *qibla*

100. Creswell 1969, vol. 1.1, pp.24–6.
101. Balādhurī 1863, p.347.
102. Ibn Hishām 1858, pp.80, 83, 323; Paret 1954.

wall.[103] The association of the *jāmi'* and the *dār al-imāra* in early Islam thus seems to have continued an established pre-Islamic architectural tradition, and was anything but the chance result of 'trivial facts'.

It is just such 'trivial facts' as the sun on the backs or the dust on the hands of the earliest Muslims that Creswell employed to reconstruct the evolution of the mosque, bit by bit, from the empty courtyard of the 'House of the Prophet'. And yet, not only was the starting point for the development of the mosque in Islam patently a far more complex structure than the empty hypaethral enclosure which Creswell imagined to be the height of architectural endeavour amongst the primitive bedouin of Arabia, but also Creswell's deterministic evolutionary process driven by functional need, not human will, cannot adequately account for the rapid and universal establishment of the concept of the mosque within one or two generations of the *hijra*. Such reservations are upheld by what is, in all probability, the earliest evidence for the mosque in Islam.

MOSQUES IN THE QUR'ĀN

The origin of the mosque was not a question that Islamic tradition considered especially important or interesting. Islamic tradition never once suggests that the mosque – *al masjid* – was a specifically Muslim creation, nor that the Prophet was its creator.[104] Passages in the *Qur'ān* were interpreted as references to pre-Islamic mosques, and Muslim scholars simply accepted that the first mosque in Islam, whichever that was, belonged to a tradition of mosque-building that went back to Abraham, if not to Adam.[105] There is some discussion of which was the first mosque *in Islam*; most authorities report that the first Muslims prayed and even conducted the Friday prayer in *masājid* before the *hijra*, and that the Prophet himself founded *masājid*, including the mosque at Qubā', during the *hijra* to Medina, before his she-camel led him to the site of the *Masjid al-Nabiy*.[106] Thus, Islamic tradition is for once unanimous that the structure built for Muḥammad at Medina in the year 1 (2/622–3) was a *masjid*.

In part, of course, this unanimity can be attributed to the ambiguity of the term *masjid*. In mature Islam, the word comes to mean both the distinctively Islamic architectural form of the mosque and, much more generally, any place of prayer,

103. See above, pp.79–80.
104. Pedersen 1989, p.644, col.a.
105. Pedersen 1989, p.644, col.b–p.645, col.b. Although Abraham is generally held to have built the Ka'ba, some authorities (Ṭabarī 1879, vol.1, pp.176–8; Ya'qūbī 1883, vol.1, p.3; Tha'labī 1906, p.23) prefer Adam, to whom is also attributed a mosque in Ceylon (Ibn Khaldūn 1858, vol.II, p.229, lines 6–8). See also Wensinck 1924, pp.589–90.
106. e.g. Balādhurī 1863, p.2. Ibn Hishām 1858, pp.333–8. Ibn Sa'd 1904, vol.1.2, p.2. Bukhārī 1862, vol.1, pp.132–5. Pedersen 1989, pp.646–7. Lecker 1994, pp.71–146, esp. pp.63, 78–80 & nn.13–16. See also below, pp.91–92.

monumental or not, including structures that did not conform to the type of the Islamic mosque. As late as the 8th/14th century, Ibn Khaldūn could still use *masājid* to refer to Persian fire-temples (*buyūt al-nār*), to Greek temples (*hayākil*), and to 'the houses of the Arabs (*buyūt al-'arab*) in the Ḥijāz which the Prophet ordered destroyed on his raids'.[107] This ambiguity requires a short investigation into the meaning of *masjid* in the time of the Prophet.

The etymology of *masjid* is far from straightforward. In the medieval Arabic dictionaries, *masjid* is explained as a noun of place (*maṣdar mīmīy*), derived from the verb *sajada*, 'he prostrated himself', and meaning 'a place of prostration'. It is highly probable, however, that *masjid* was borrowed directly from Aramaic as an isolated noun, and so was not at first associated specifically with prostration. The word *msgd'* appears in the Elephantine Papyri as early as the 5th century BC in an oath sworn 'by the Temple (*bmsgd'*)',[108] and the verb *sgd* appears in the Aramaic version of *Book of Aḥiḳar*, also from Elephantine, when Aḥiḳar bows down (*sgd/t/*) and makes obeisance before the Assyrian king; in the same text, Esarhaddon's courtiers are 'those who bow down' (*sgdwhy*).[109] But only the noun *msgd'* (variants *msgd*, *msgdy'* and *mšgd'*) occurs in Nabataean inscriptions of the 1st century AD, where it has the specific and apparently exclusive meaning of a stele, statue, or altar dedicated to a god.[110] Similarly, only the noun *ms'gd* appears as a loan-word in Epigraphic South Arabian, with the inferred meaning 'praying-place, oratory'.[111] Very few of the twenty-eight occurrences in the *Qur'ān* of the word *masjid*, or of the plural *masājid*, reveal anything about the practices followed in mosques. Nonetheless, it is striking that *masjid* is never linked with the verb *sajada*, 'he bowed down', nor with its parts. On the contrary, three principal verbs describe the activities performed in mosques: *dhakara*, to commemorate (the name of God);[112] *qāma*, to stand (before God), and *da'ā*, to call upon (Him).[113] This may, perhaps, reflect the independent entry of *masjid* into Arabic.

Turning from the noun *masjid* to the verb *sajada* and its parts, extremely few of its

107. Ibn Khaldūn 1858, vol.II, p.229, lines 8–15.
108. Sachau 1911, no.33, papyrus 32, pp.118–19, pl.32; Ungnad 1911, no.33, papyrus 32, p.50; Cowley 1923, no.44, pp.147–8; but see Porten & Yardeni 1989, vol.II, pp.146–7, B7.3: 'by H[erem] the [god] in/by the place of prostration'.
109. Cowley 1923, p.212, lines 13 & 10 respectively. See also Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995, vol.II, pp.775–6.
110. Cantineau 1930, vol.I, pp.43, 88, vol.II, p.116. Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995, vol.II, p.663. *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* 1889, part 2, vol.I: no.161, pp.190–3 (= Cooke 1903, no.97, pp.249–51); no.176, pp.204–5; no.185, pp.209–10 (= Cooke 1903, p.238); no.188, p.212 (= Cooke 1903, p.238); no.190, p.213 (= Cooke 1903, p.238); no.218, p.256 (= Cooke 1903, no.92, pp.238–9 & Jaussen & Savignac 1909, vol.I, no.39, pp.204–6, 417, pl.XLI; Cooke 1903, no.101, pp.254–5; Jaussen & Savignac 1909, vol.I, no.82, p.223: *msgd[y']'*.
111. Beeston 1982, p.125.
112. *Qur'ān* XXII.40: *yudhkaru fī hā smu llāhi*.
113. *Qur'ān* VII.29: *aqīmu wujūha-kum 'inda kulli masjidin wa-d'ū-hu*.
114. For example, *Qur'ān* IV.102. For *sujūd*, see the articles by R.Tottoli cited in Tottoli 1998, p.405, n.1.

sixty-four occurrences in the *Qur'ān* refer explicitly to *sujūd* as part of Muslim ritual.[115] Indeed, in the vast number of cases, as Abdelkader Tayob has recently observed in a perceptive study, the *mufassirs*' tidy distinction between 'prostration of honour' (*takrīm*) and 'prostration of worship' (*'ibāda*) cannot be sustained; there is what he calls a 'juxtaposition of power and submission in prostration'.[116] In about a third of the occurences, there is no clear distinction between *sujūd* to God and prostration before His human agents. There are no less than twenty references to the prostration of the angels to Adam, and the theocratic foundation of the caliphate is laid when God announces to the angels, 'I will create a *khalīfa* on the earth', and then orders them to 'prostrate themselves before Adam (*usjudū li-Adam*)'.[117] The inseparability of *sujūd* to God and to His deputy on earth is thus the concomitant of the indivisibility of *islām* to God and to the Prophet. What are the implications of this for our understanding of the role of the *Masjid al-Nabiy* in the early Muslim community?

Twenty of the twenty-eight Qur'ānic occurrences of the word *masjid* refer to specific mosques but, intriguingly, none refers to the *Masjid al-Nabiy* itself. They include: fifteen to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*,[118] presumably the Meccan sanctuary,[118] including one in antithesis to *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*, traditionally identified with what later becomes *al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf* in Jerusalem;[119] one historical reference to *al-masjid* which, from the context, clearly refers to the Jewish Temple;[120] one reference to a *masjid* built over the Tomb of the Seven Sleepers;[121] and the pair of the *masjid al-ḍirār* and the *masjid al-taqwā*.[122] The last reference is of particular interest to this discussion.

The two mosques appear in the latter part of *Sūrat al Tawba*, which appears to be largely concerned with the raid on Tabuk in the late summer of 9/630. The relevant passage reads:

> And as for those who chose a mosque out of opposition and disbelief, in order to cause dissent among the believers, and as a place of watching (or of ambush) on behalf of those who earlier made war against God and His messenger, they will surely swear: 'Our intention was nothing but good'. God bears witness that indeed they are liars. Never stand there. / A mosque founded on reverential fear ('piety') from the first day is more worthy that you should stand in it …
>
> *(wa- lladhina ittakhadhū masjidan ḍirāran wa-kufran wa tafrīqan bayna l-mu'minina wa-irṣādan li-man ḥaraba llaha wa-rasūla-hu min qablu wa-la-yaḥlifunna in aradnā illa l ḥusna wa llāhu yashhadu inna hum la kadhibuna / lā taqum fī-hi abadan la-masjidun ussisa 'ala l taqwa min awwali yawmin aḥaqqu an taquma fi-hi …).*[123]

115. Tayob 1993, p.231 *et pass.*
116. *Qur'ān* II.30–34 (see also, VII.11–12, XV.29–33, XVII.61, XVIII.50, XX.116, XXXVIII.73–75). Crone & Hinds 1986, pp.4–5.
117. *Qur'ān* II.144, II.149, II.150, II.191, II.196, II.217, VIII.34, IX.7, IX.19, IX.28, XXII.25, XLVIII.25, & XLVIII.27.
118. But *Qur'ān* II.196 raises the possibility that the whole town of Mecca is intended.
119. *Qur'ān* XVII.1.
120. *Qur'ān* XVII.7.
121. *Qur'ān* XVIII.21.
122. *Qur'ān* IX.107–108.
123. *Qur'ān* IX.107–8.

Without exegesis, the passage is obscure: some who pretended to be followers of the Prophet deliberately selected a mosque with the evil intention of dividing the community, and to be a watching-place, or possibly an ambuscade, on behalf of old enemies of the Prophet. The exhortation never to stand in their mosque implies that this is exactly what some of the Muslims did.[124] Instead, they are encouraged to worship in 'a mosque founded on *taqwā*'; a term which seems to be generic,[125] although it is tempting to identify this with the *Masjid al-Nabiy*.[126]

The incident of the *masjid al-ḍirār* has been extensively discussed by Michael Lecker, who makes a strong case that it is an authentic incident from the life of the Prophet.[127] His careful analysis concentrates upon four main traditions which, although they contradict each other on many points of detail, are nonetheless all composed around a common core. The *masjid al ḍirār* is identified with the mosque built by members of the 'Amr ibn 'Awf at Qubā' on the southwestern outskirts of Medina. All accounts agree that it was intended for one of the leading Medinan opponents of the Prophet, Abū 'Āmir 'Abd 'Amr ibn Ṣayfī ibn al-Nu'mān, of the Banū Ḍubay'a ibn Zayd, a subdivision of 'Amr ibn 'Awf. Abu 'Āmir is generally known as al-Rahib, usually translated, perhaps loosely, as 'the Monk', but he is also called al-Yahudī, 'the Jew'.[128] He is identified as a *ḥanīf*, and is portrayed as defending the traditional *ḥanīfiya*, the *dīn Ibrahim*, against the innovations of Muḥammad;[129] the Prophet called him 'al-Fāsiq', 'the Sinful'.[130] The sources cannot agree as to why the Banū 'Awf built their mosque: their alleged motives range from a desire not to walk too far to pray,[131] to pious envy of the builders of another mosque,[132] to their reluctance to pray in a *mirbad* where a donkey had once been tethered,[133] to an openly aggressive plot to build a secure fortress for Abū 'Āmir, whence he could appeal to the Byzantine *qayṣar* for troops to drive Muḥammad and his followers from Medina.[134] But what is absolutely clear in all accounts is the rivalry, not just between Abū 'Āmir and the Prophet and between the Banū 'Awf of Qubā' and the Muslims, but also between their respective mosques. One account has Abū 'Āmir

124. Indeed, many accounts insist that the Prophet initially approved of the foundation of the *masjid al ḍirar*: see Lecker 1995, p.75.

125. For the surprising conclusion that *taqwā* here means *istiqā'*, see the sources discussed by Lecker 1995, pp.63–4 & nn.47–50.

126. Lecker (1995, pp.94–100) argues forcibly, but not altogether convincingly, that the *masjid al-taqwā* was the mosque of Quba'. See also Lecker 1995, pp.78–80.

127. Lecker 1995, pp.74–146.

128. Lecker 1995, pp.88, 131

129. Ibn Hishām 1858, pp.411–12.

130. Lecker 1995, p.124.

131. Lecker 1995, pp.87–91: commentary of Muqatil ibn Sulaymān.

132. Lecker 1995, pp.76–80: report attributed to Sa'id ibn Jubayr.

133. Lecker 1995, pp.80–85: report attributed to 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr. As has already been observed, the mosque at Quba' was founded on the site of a *mirbad*: see also Lecker 1995, pp.93–4.

134. Lecker 1995, pp.85–86 (report attributed to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, d.73/692–3; or to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbas, d.68/687–8; & pp.145–6, n.239 (commentary of 'Abd al-Jabbār).

build himself a mosque — presumably but not inevitably the *masjid al-ḍirār* specifically as a stage for his propaganda against the Prophet.[135] The incident of the *masjid al-ḍirār*, as expanded in some of the earliest *Sīra* literature, thus portrays the Prophet and Abū ʿĀmir as rival leaders of opposing communities, each with its own *masjid*, which is not just a gathering place for the community, but also a symbol of its autonomy, and of the authority and legitimacy of its leader. The destruction of the *masjid al-ḍirar* was a defeat both for Abū ʿĀmir, and for his followers who stood in it; a victory both for Muḥammad, and for the Muslims who stood in 'the mosque founded on reverential fear'.

The compilers of the *Sīra* thus had a clear view of what the inseparability of *sujūd* to God and to His Prophet meant for the *masjid*. Elsewhere, it is reported that the first followers of the Prophet were known as 'the People of the Mosque'. When the poet ʿAbbās ibn Mirdās was sent by his father to worship Ḍamāri, the tribal idol of the Banū Sulaym, a voice from within it said: 'Tell all the tribes of Sulaym that Ḍamāri has perished, but the People of the Mosque live on (*qul li l qabāʾili min sulaymin kulla hā awdā ḍamāri wa-ʿāsha ahlu l-masjidi*).'[136] But the identification of the Muslims as the *ahl al-masjid* is originally Qur'ānic, for the Muslims are there referred to as the people (*ahli-hi*) of the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*.[137]

We must also look briefly at references in the *Qur'ān* to *masājid* in general. Most significant, here, are those passages which suggest that the early Muslims had several mosques: one, which regulates the conduct of Muslims 'in retreat in the mosques' during the fast, surely refers to physical structures.[138] Several passages suggest that the Muslims laid claim to more pre-Islamic *masajid* than the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*: other gods but the One — od were worshipped in *masājid*;[139] polytheists serve in the *masājid* of God, but should not do so;[140] and Muslims wishing to commemorate God's name in *masājid* might be impeded from doing so.[141] The last of these passages would seem, from the context, to refer to Christians and Jews, and raises the question, also relevant to the mosque built for Abū ʿAmir 'the Monk', of whether the *masajid* belonging to

135. Lecker 1995, pp.82, 145–6, n.239.

136. Ibn Hishām 1858, p.813. There is no indication in the text which mosque was intended, the *Masjid al-Nabiy*, the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*, or some other mosque

137. *Qur'ān* II.217. See also a description of the Banū Ḥanash as the *ahl al masjid* of the mosque of Qubā' cited by Lecker 1995, p.119.

138. *Qur'ān* II.187: *wa-la tubāshirū-hunna wa antum ʿākifūna fi l masājidi*. See also *Qur'ān* VII.29–31, IX.17–18, LXXII.18.

139. *Qur'ān* LXXII.18: *wa anna l masājida li-llāhi fa-lā tadʿū maʿa llāhi aḥadan*, 'the mosques belong to God alone, so do not invoke any with God'.

140. *Qur'ān* IX.17-18: *mā kāna li l mushrikīna an yaʿmarū masājida llāhi … innamā yaʿmuru masājida llāhi man āmana bi-llāhi*, 'It is not for polytheists to tend the mosques of God … Only he who believes in God shall tend the mosques of God'.

141. *Qur'ān* II.114: *wa-man aẓlamu mimman manaʿa masājida llāhi an yudhkara fi hā smu-hu*, 'and who does greater wrong than he who forbids [entrance to?] the mosques of God lest his name should be commemorated there'. The next verse suggests that Christians and Jews are here intended.

different religious communities could be distinguished from each other. That this was indeed the case is suggested by the appearance of *masājid* at the end of a list of different types of places of worship – *ṣawāmiʿ*, *biyaʿ*, *ṣalawāt*, and *masājid* – which seems to imply some sort of differentiation.[142] At the same time, however, the *Qur'ān* uses the word *masjid* of so many different sanctuaries that it is unlikely that it was yet associated with any particular architectural type.

This short discussion of mosques in the *Qur'ān* has helped to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the term *masjid*. It has shown that although *masjid* can indeed mean any place of prayer and need not imply a built structure, still less the architectural type of the Muslim mosque, the word was commonly used to refer to pre-Islamic places of worship and, in the *Qur'an*, is most commonly used of specific pre-Islamic sanctuaries. During the life of the Prophet, the Muslim community already possessed and laid claim to more mosques than the *Masjid al-Ḥarām* and the *Masjid al-Nabīy*. Although the physical characteristics of early Islamic mosques are not described in the *Qur'ān*, it seems that they could be distinguished in some way from other types of religious buildings, some of which were associated with Jews and Christians. If the *mufassirs*' account of the *masjid al-ḍirār* is accepted, then the mosque (or mosques) of the Prophet acted as an architectural symbol of his authority, a weapon in the war against all who challenged it. In the Prophet's Mosque, from its very beginning, there was no separation of divine and earthly authority.

Seen in this light, the lack of interest shown by early Muslim writers in the origins of the mosque becomes easier to understand. What drove the the first Companions out of Mecca to pray in the surrounding ravines (*shiʿāb*) was not that the *masjid* had yet to evolve or to be created, but rather that they had been instructed to withdraw from the polytheists in the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*.[143] The *Qur'an* associated the *Masjid al-Ḥaram* with Ibrāhīm, and thus revealed the primordial origins of the mosque.[144] But the *Qur'ān* also revealed that the Muslims had themselves possessed several *masajid* from the earliest days of the community. Like Islam itself, the *masjid* was aboriginal.

THE CONVERSION OF THE MOSQUE

The preceding discussion of the mosques of the *Qur'ān* has raised the possibility that the earliest mosques in Islam included *jāhilī* mosques that had simply been converted to Islam. There is a useful parallel for this sort of conversion. Trombley has recently studied the Christianisation of Syria in Late Antiquity, as part of a much

142. *Qur'ān* XXII.40.

143. Ibn Hishām 1858, p.166; Ṭabarī 1879, vol.I, p.1169. See also *Qur'ān* XI.94.

144. *Qur'ān* II.125–127, III.96–97. These passages, of course, refer not to *al-Masjid al Ḥarām* but to *al-bayt*, almost universally understood as *al-Bayt al-Ḥarām*, the Kaʿba at the centre of *al Masjid al-Ḥarām*.

broader discussion of the Christianisation of Hellenic religion.[145] The process of acculturation that he describes bears many resemblances to the Islamicisation of Arab society as reported in the Islamic historical tradition. His account of *Ritenchristianisierung* includes, for example, the Christianisation of incubation and of rogationary prayers for rain, which may be compared, respectively, to the Islamicisation of *istikhāra* and *istisqā'*.[146] His discussion of the conversion of pagan temples into Christian churches is therefore of potential relevance to this inquiry.[147]

Trombley argues that temple conversions – 'the demolition or partial dismantling of a sacred edifice and its modification into a church or martyrion' – were 'the logical consequence of the theological tendency to recategorize pagan deities into destructive *daimones*'.[148] On the borders of Arabia, the demotion of deity to demon was still common in the early 6th century. At 'Izrā in the Ḥawrān, for example, an inscription of 515 celebrates the transformation of a pagan sanctuary into a church dedicated to St George:

> The abode of demons has become the house of God. The light of salvation shines where darkness caused concealment. Where sacrifices to idols occurred, there are now choirs of angels. Where God was provoked, now He is propitiated.[149]

Exactly the same theological tendency to reclassify *jāhilī* gods and goddesses (sing. *ilāh*, *ilāha*) as malicious demons (sing. *shayṭān*, *shayṭāna*; sing. *jinnī*) is encountered in Islamic tradition. In an account of the expedition sent by the Prophet to destroy the shrine of al-'Uzza at Nakhla, the great *jāhilī* goddess appears to Khālid ibn al-Walid as a demon (*shayṭana*) in the form of 'an Abyssinian woman with dishevelled hair [sic, but see note] and her hands placed on her shoulders, gnashing and grating her teeth … [He] dealt her a blow which severed her head in twain, and lo, she crumbled into ashes'.[150]

The authority for this transformation of *jāhilī* deity into Islamic demon is Qur'ānic. In the *Qur'an*, the word *shayṭān* occurs six times in the indefinite with the apparent meaning of 'a demon'; in the plural, *al-shayaṭīn* occurs eighteen times and always denotes malicious beings of some sort, although it is seldom clear whether humans or *jinn* are intended.[151] In one instance, however, *shayṭān* clearly refers to a *jāhilī* deity;[152] *al-jinn* is twice used in a similar way.[153]

145. Trombley 1993.
146. Fahd 1974a; Fahd 1974b.
147. Trombley 1993, vol.i, pp.10 – 47.
148. Trombley 1993, vol.i, p.108.
149. Waddington 1870, vol.iii, no.2398, pp.569 – 70. Prentice 1908, no.437a. Trombley 1993, vol.i, p.104, vol.ii, pp.359 – 63.
150. Ibn al-Kalbī 1952, p.21 (= Ibn al-Kalbī 1924, pp.25 – 6). Her hair was not 'dishevelled' but bristling, fluffed-up, *hīg* hair (reading: *fa-idha huwa bi-ḥabashiyatin nāfishatin sha'ru-hā*, perhaps as may be seen on rock-carvings of dancing-girls; it recalls the 'hairy demons' (*ṣe'irim*) of the Old Testament: e.g. Leviticus XVII.7; cf. Robertson Smith 1894, pp.120 – 1. For Islamic demons, van Vloten 1893 conveniently summarizes the account of Jāḥiẓ in *al Ḥayawān*.
151. Fahd 1996; Rippin 1996. Fahd's assertion that 'There are numerous passages where *shayāṭīn* denotes the deities of paganism' is to be treated with care.
152. *Qur'ān* IV.117.
153. *Qur'ān* VI.100 & XXXIV.40 – 1.

Muslim scholars went one step further than the Christian opponents of paganism; not only did they reclassify *jāhilī* deities as malicious demons, but they also reclassified idol-worship as a rite which had developed out of the aboriginal religion of Abraham, but had subsequently been perverted. Thus, by the 3rd/9th century, both *jāhilī* idols and, indeed, the very practice of idol-worship had been incorporated into Islamic sacred history. According to Ibn al-Kalbī, from earliest times, every pre-Islamic descendant of Ishmael who performed the *ḥajj* would carry away a stone from the Ka'ba and:

> erect that stone and circumambulate it in the same manner he used to circumambulate the Ka'bah, seeking thereby its blessing and affirming his deep affection for the Holy House ... In time, this led them to the worship of whatever took their fancy, and caused them to forget their former worship.

In this way, the Arabs grew:

> passionately fond of worshipping idols. Some of them took unto themselves a temple around which they centred their worship, while others adopted an idol to which they offered their adoration. The person who was unable to build himself a temple or adopt an idol would erect a stone in front of the sacred House or in front of any other temple he might prefer, and then circumambulate it in the same manner in which he would circumambulate the Sacred House ... The Arabs were wont to offer sacrifices before all these idols, baetyls and stones. Nevertheless, they were aware of the excellence and superiority of the Ka'bah, to which they went on pilgrimage and visitation. What they did on their travels was merely a perpetuation of what they did at the Ka'bah, because of their devotion to it.[154]

Thus, Arab idolatry, like Judaism and Christianity, was accommodated within Islamic sacred history as a perversion of the aboriginal religion of Abraham, and the idols themselves were converted back into the stones of Abraham's Ka'ba.

If, with the coming of Islam, *jāhilī* deities became mere demons, and the rites observed at their shrines were revealed to have been but perversions of rituals once practised by aboriginal Muslims at the Ka'ba, it should have been relatively easy to convert the pre-Islamic religious buildings of Arabia into Islamic mosques. This, of course, is exactly what is said to have happened at Mecca. Tradition reports that the Prophet expelled from the shrine, and then destroyed, the 360 idols, but then purified the sanctuary and converted its *jāhilī* rites back to the *dīn Ibrāhīm*.[155]

But what of other shrines? Was there a widespread Islamicisation of *jāhilī* sanctuaries on the Meccan model? We have already seen that several passages in the *Qur'ān* suggest that the early Muslims laid claim to more pre-Islamic *masājid* than

154. Ibn al-Kalbī 1952, pp.4, 28–9 (= Ibn al-Kalbī 1924, pp.7, 33). Cf. Ibn Hishām 1858, pp.51–2.

155. For a radical reinterpretation of this traditional account, see Hawting 1982 with comprehensive bibliography.

the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*.[156] There are a few other references to the conversion of *jāhilī* sanctuaries into Islamic mosques: for example, Ibn al-Kalbī mentions the idol-block [*ṣakhra murabba'a*] of Allāt 'in the place of the left-hand side of the minaret of the present-day mosque of Ṭā'if', and the white quartz idol of Dhul-Khalaṣa, 'now the threshold of the gate of the mosque at Tabāla'.[157] If these *are* temple-conversions, then they are alone in the whole *Kitāb al-Aṣnām*; but it would also be possible to argue that these idols were incorporated into mosques either as stones of the Abrahamic Ka'ba reconverted to Islam, or as trophies symbolizing the victory of Islam.

A degree of caution is necessary here because no systematic catalogue or study has yet been made either from written sources, or from the archaeological and ethnographic record, of pre-Islamic sanctuaries converted to Islam. That said, my distinct impression is that Muslim writers, apparently against the testimony of the *Qur'ān* itself, believed that the first Muslims did not generally convert *jāhilī* sanctuaries into Islamic mosques. This is unexpected: either pious Muslims in the 2nd and 3rd centuries had forgotten (or chose to ignore) that many *jāhilī* sanctuaries had been converted into Islamic mosques, or such conversions were truly rare. I cannot resolve the enigma, but I point it out as a promising subject for further research.[158]

To dispel that rather inconclusive note, it is worth repeating that there is ample Qur'ānic authority for the conversion of *jahilī* shrines; that the theological preconditions were fully satisfied; and that the *Masjid al-Ḥaram* stood as a supremely conspicuous example of both the possibility and the legitimacy of such conversions. This justifies pursuing the quest for the pre-Islamic models for the concept of the mosque.

THE FAMILY OF THE MOSQUE: SYNAGOGUE, CHURCH, AND BAYT AL-'ARAB

In the centuries immediately preceding Islam, different Near Eastern religious building types made use of a peristyle forecourt giving onto a covered space, arranged symmetrically about the central axis of the complex. They may therefore be briefly reviewed in search of the origins of the concept of the mosque.

In its final phase (245–256), the synagogue at Dura-Europos was a rectangular enclosure, divided into a forecourt with a single colonnade on three sides, and an assembly hall (FIG. 20). In the middle of the west wall of the hall, a niche directed the worshippers towards both the Torah-scrolls and, approximately, Jerusalem.

156. *Qur'ān* II.114, IX.17–18, LXXII.18.

157. Dhul-Khalaṣa: Ibn al-Kalbī 1952, p.16 (= Ibn al-Kalbī 1924, p.14); Fahd 1968, pp.61–8, esp. p.62, n.5. Allat: Ibn al-Kalbī 1952, p.36 (= Ibn al-Kalbī 1924, p.31); Fahd 1968, pp.11–20, esp. p.120 & n.5.

158. That a number of *jāhilī* fortresses (sing. *ufum*, *ḥiṣn*) were transformed into mosques after Islam (see Lecker 1995, pp.16–17) might suggest that, here at least, something other than *sacred* space was being converted.

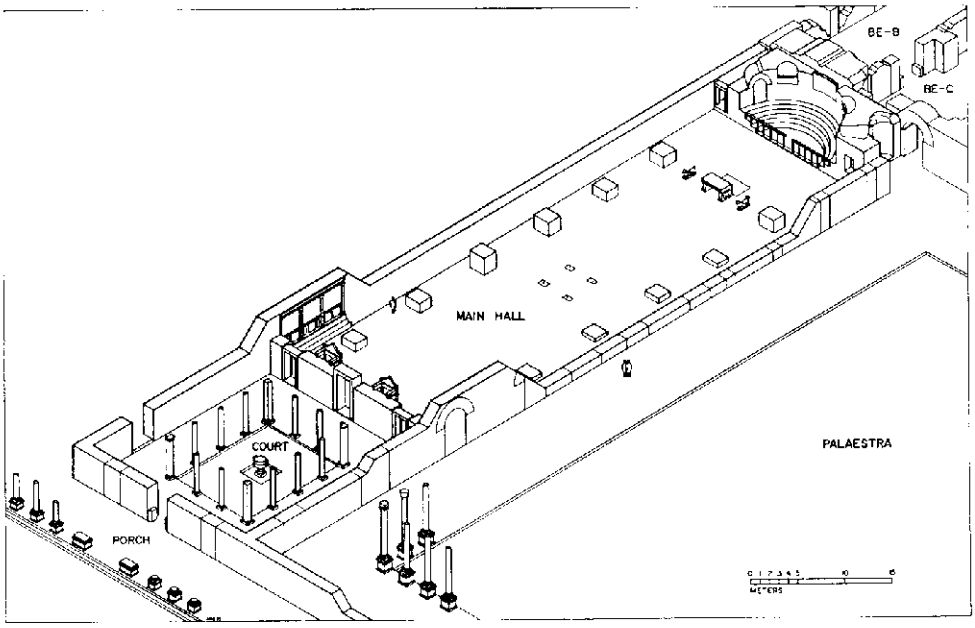
20. Plan and isometric reconstruction of the synagogue at Dura-Europos (after Kraeling 1956)

Immediately, to the right of the niche, against the west wall, was the five-stepped 'seat of honour'. In the northwest corner of the forecourt was a water-source, presumably for ritual ablution.[159]

The formal parallels between the synagogue at Dura-Europos and the mature stage of the mosque are immediately apparent: orientation upon a direction of prayer (*qibla*); the Torah-niche (*miḥrāb*); the 'seat of honour' (*minbar*); the ablutions-facility in the forecourt (*mīḍa'a*); and, most important here, the arrangement of the whole complex (hall, *ḥaram*, and axial peristyle forecourt, *ṣaḥn*).[160] Some or all of these features are found in other Diaspora synagogues, such as Priene[161] and Sardis (FIG.21),[162] in the synagogue at Jerash[163], and at Beth Alpha near Scythopolis in Palestine.[164]

The feature of greatest potential significance to this search for a model for the concept of the mosque is obviously the axial peristyle forecourt. But this was the exception, not the rule, in synagogue architecture. It occurred earlier and more regularly in the Diaspora than in Palestine. In Palestine and Arabia, it seems to

159. Kraeling 1956, pp.3 - 33, 255 - 60; Seager 1992.
160. Lambert 1930.
161. Kraabel 1995, pp.107 - 9, also cites earlier bibliography: axial forecourt (no colonnade), orientation, torah-niche, ablution basin.
162. Kraabel 1995, pp.101 - 6, also cites earlier bibliography: axial peristyle forecourt, apse (west), aedicula for Torah scrolls added to east end (orientated on Jerusalem) in final stage (4th century), ablutions fountain in centre of forecourt. See also Seager 1992.
163. Kraeling 1938, pp.234 - 41: axial peristyle forecourt, rectangular apse orientated on Jerusalem.
164. Sukenik 1932: axial forecourt (no colonnade), apse and Torah-shrine oriented on Jerusalem.

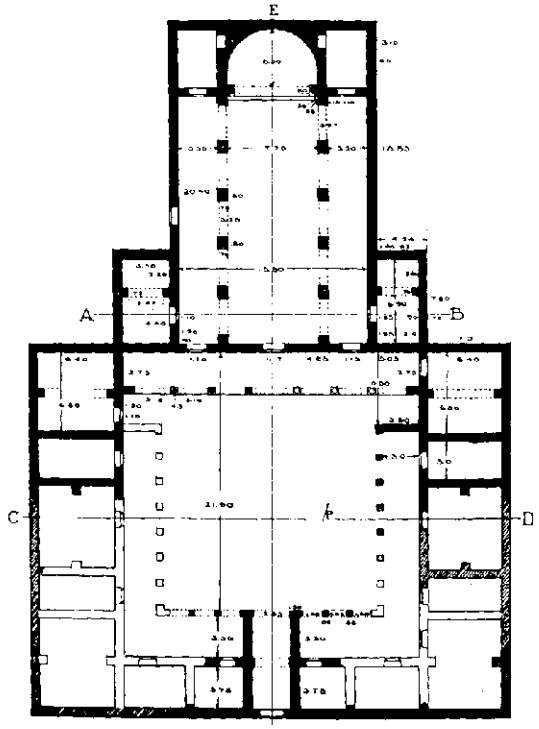


21. Isometric reconstruction of the synagogue at Sardis (after Gutman 1981)

have occurred in those regions where traditions of Roman public building were strongest.[165] Although it has been said that the combination of assembly hall and courtyard was 'an almost invariable feature of [the] synagogues [of Galilee]',[166] the claim is doubly misleading. First, the presence of courtyards has been generally inferred on the model of Capernaum, but there is no archaeological evidence that most synagogues really did have adjoined courtyards.[167] Second, as the example of Capernaum illustrates, courtyards for which there is archaeological evidence are usually attached to one of the sides of the assembly hall, and are thus neither axial nor forecourts.[168]

At about the same time that some synagogues combined an apsidal hall with a colonnaded forecourt, so that both elements were arranged symmetrically about the direction of prayer along the central axis of the complex, many churches developed a similar arrangement (FIG.22). The basilical church with atrium became a widespread and standard form during the fourth century. A glance at the plan of the final (4th-century) stage of the synagogue at Sardis (FIG.21) demonstrates its formal similarity to this type of church. Indeed, the architectural layout of the synagogue and the church may occasionally be so similar that only artefactual evidence can distinguish one from the other: what was once regarded as the synagogue at Stobi is now identified as a

165. Seager 1992, pp.97–8. Meyers 1976.
166. Avi-Yonah 1961, cols. 176–7.
167. Seager 1992, p.94.
168. Seager 1992, pp.93–5. Capernaum: Corbo 1970.



22. A 5th-century basilical church with atrium: Buṣra (Syria), al-Dayr (after Butler 1907, IIA, pp.79–81)

church,[169] while the 'house-church' at Priene has become a synagogue.[170]

Whether the synagogue with axial peristyle forecourt influenced the development of the basilical church with atrium, or vice versa, or whether each influenced the other, need not concern us here: scholars are divided as to whether the two developments are interrelated or merely analogous.[171] It is far more important to recognize that the development of both building types was informed by a common concern to emphasise the direction of prayer; a point of obvious relevance to the Islamic mosque, to which I shall return at the end of this section.

Thus far, I have considered the possible influence upon the concept of the mosque of synagogues and churches built in the lands that were to be conquered by Islam, but what of Arabia? No archaeological evidence has yet been found to indicate what the synagogues of the Arabian Peninsula before Islam might have looked like.[172] We are better informed about the churches of pre-Islamic Arabia. The basilical

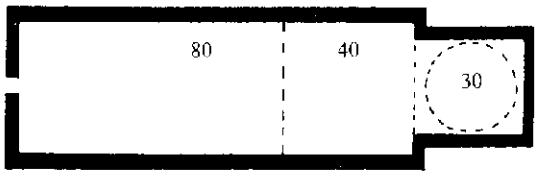
169. Kraabel 1995, p.112.
170. Kraabel 1995, p.107.
171. Kraeling 1956, p.21, n.91. Seager 1992, pp.97–8.
172. Literary evidence attests to their existence: for example, see the Medinan synagogues in the story cited by Lecker 1995, pp.41–2.

church with atrium occurred widely throughout the *limes Arabicus*, and may well have been carried beyond the frontier by Christian Arabs, although none is yet known. The recently discovered churches at al-Quṣūr (Faylaka), al-Jubayl, and Ṣīr Banī Yas attest rather to the dominant influence of the Nestorian church in the Gulf.[173] In the Yemen, the church built at Ṣanʿā' by Abraha, and called al-Qalīs (i.e. *ecclesia*), seems to attest to direct Byzantine influence (FIG.23). The basilical nave and domed sanctuary seem to have referred to the Church of the Nativity and to the Holy Sepulchre. The nave and sanctuary were decorated with mosaics, which may confirm the presence of the Byzantine craftsmen reported by Ṭabarī.[174] Al-Qalīs stood within a massive enclosure, but may have been a *ḥaram* on the Arabian model, rather than an axial forecourt.[175]

Synagogues and churches were not alone in employing a peristyle forecourt axial to the covered space. This arrangement may be found, too, in the *buyut al-ʿarab*, the pre-Islamic temples of Arabia, both north and south. To begin in the south; it has long been recognised that the temple at al-Ḥuqqa offers a strikingly close formal parallel to what I am calling the concept of the mosque (FIG.24);[176] to Ḥuqqa can now be added others such as Waddum Dhū-Masmāʿim and the tomb-temple at al-Masājid (FIG.25).[177] These temples are separated from the rise of Islam by a chronological gap that may be as wide as half a millennium and which current archaeological research is not yet able to bridge.[178] It is now clear, however, that the 7th-century Ḥijāz was not the architectural desert envisaged by Creswell but, on the contrary, lay on the northwestern edge of an architectural koine centred in the Yemen which stretched as far as Sassanian Iran and Abyssinia.[179] In this context, it is intriguing that the term *MSʿGD* is attested in Epigraphic South Arabian.[180]

At the other end of the Peninsula, as we have already seen, the Aramaic word (*msgdʾ*), from which the Arabic *masjid* is likely to derive, occurs with some frequency in Nabataean inscriptions of the 1st century. Although continuity of terminology need not indicate continuity of architectural form, this nonetheless directs the search for possible prototypes of the mosque towards Nabataea.[181] The meaning of the term *msgdʾ* in Nabataean inscriptions indicates not a built place of worship, but a stele,

173. Al-Quṣur: Bernard, Callot & Salles 1991; Bernard & Salles 1991. Al-Jubayl: Langfeldt 1994. Ṣīr Banī Yās: King 1997. For Christianity in the Arabian Gulf, see Potts 1990, vol.II, pp.150–3, 240–63, 328–47.
174. Ṭabarī 1879, vol.I, p.935.
175. Azraqī 1858, p.89. Cf. Serjeant & Lewcock 1983, pp.44–65.
176. Rathjens & von Wissman 1932, pp.25–75. Serjeant 1959, pp.452–3.
177. Schmidt 1982a; Schmidt 1982b; Schmidt 1982c.
178. Al-Ḥuqqa was destroyed by volcanic activity no earlier than the 3rd century: Rathjens & von Wissman 1932, pp.14–16. Current research: Doe 1983; Ansary 1981; King 1991; Keall 1995.
179. Creswell 1969, vol.I.1, pp.3–5; Grabar 1985. Finster 1973; Finster 1991. King 1991; see also Lammens 1922, p.184.
180. Beeston 1982, p.125, s.v. *SʿGD*.
181. I owe this observation to Gerald Hawting.



23. Serjeant's reconstruction of Abraham's church of al-Qalīs at San'ā' (after Serjeant & Lewcock 1983). The measurements are given in *dhirā'* (= 0.48 m). The walls were 6 *dhirā'* thick.

statue, or altar dedicated to a god.[182] In much the same way, the *ka'ba* of Dhu'l-Sharā at Petra, seems to have been an idol-block, not a building.[183] As to the temples themselves, in some in the Ḥawrān – that of Ba'l Shamīn at Shi' (late 1st century BC), and those at Sūr and Saḥr – the cella is positioned approximately in the centre of a rectangular peribolos, the front half of which is occupied by an axial peristyle forecourt (FIG.26).[184] The forecourts have benches arranged around three sides under the roof of the colonnade, and Foerster therefore argues that they were the prototype for the assembly hall of the Galilean synagogue, and that the cella was similarly transformed into the Torah-shrine 'which was conceived as a miniature temple, an imitation of the Temple in antiquity'.[185] It seems preferable, however, to regard both the Nabataean temple forecourt and the Galilean assembly hall as independently related to the large family of Hellenistic-Roman public assembly halls with benches: the forecourt at Shi' is called a *theatron* in the Nabataean foundation inscription.[186]

In short, some pre-Islamic temples in both Nabataea and the Yemen, some synagogues especially in the Diaspora, and basilical churches with atria, all bear a more or less distinct formal resemblance to what I am calling the concept of the mosque, in that an axial peristyle forecourt leads to the covered space at the rear of the complex. But even when the formal resemblance is extraordinarily close, as it is in the Dura-Europos synagogue, it does not necessarily demonstrate a direct connection; indeed, in that particular case, chronological and geographical distance clearly preclude it. As for other synagogues, the type with axial peristyle forecourt is too rare, and generally occurs too early and too far away in the Diaspora, to have influenced the development of the mosque. Similar considerations must, for now, rule out the

182. Sourdel 1952, pp.105–6. But see note 110 above.
183. Epiphanius 1915, vol.II, pp.286–7 (51:22.9–10), but following the reading of Oehler 1860, pp.354–5. The report is discussed in Johns (forthcoming b) with full bibliography.
184. Butler 1907, pp.365–85 (Shi'); pp.428–30 (Sūr); pp.441–3 (Saḥr). Cf. Sourdel 1952, pp.100–4.
185. Foerster 1981.
186. Littmann 1904, pp.85–90; Littmann 1934, pp.76–7.

pre-Islamic temples of Nabataea and the Yemen. Future archaeological discoveries may, of course, bridge these gaps.

The case of the atrium church is rather different. In the first place, it was undeniably well-placed in space and time to have influenced the early development of the mosque. In the second, that is precisely what it did. Many Umayyad mosques were built by Christian masons and decorated by Christian craftsmen who had learnt their trade in the churches of Syria. Many churches were converted into mosques. Later writers, such as Muqaddasī, claimed that 'Abd al-Malik and al-Walīd had intended their religious monuments to outshine the churches of Syria.[187] But could the basilical church with atrium have been the prototype of the concept of the mosque? It is simply the wrong shape. In the church, the central axis is typically three or four times longer than the width of the structure. In the mosque, the length and width of the structure are typically equal, or nearly so; unlike the church, the mosque may be wider than it is long. These strikingly different proportions constitute one of the chief characteristics which distinguish the mosque from the church.

That none of the *bayt al-ʿarab*, the synagogue, and the church seems to have been the immediate ancestor of the concept of the mosque, but that all shared the arrangement of the axial peristyle forecourt, serves to focus attention upon the architectural function of that common feature. First, although in each the courtyard was used for different purposes, in all it acted as a zone of transition between the public street and the sacred space at the far end of the enclosure. Second, by emphasising the axial symmetry of the complex, the forecourt contributed to the architectural pointers that orientated the congregation towards the direction of prayer. The courtyard of the mosque also performed precisely these functions. The mosque therefore seems to belong to what is best regarded as a family of religious building types widespread throughout the Near East in the centuries preceding Islam.[188] That family – and, indeed, the conversion of its members to Islam – seems to be recognised in a passage in the *Qurʾān* justifying war against the enemies of Islam: 'For had not God driven back one group of people by means of another, there would surely have been torn down *ṣawāmiʿ* [retreats of Christian hermits?], *biyaʿ* [Christian churches or Jewish synagogues?], *ṣalawāt* [places of prayer], and *masājid*, in which the name of God is abundantly commemorated'.[189] The precise relationship of the mosque to the other members of this family cannot now be reconstructed, but the family resemblance is readily apparent.

The attribution of the concept of the mosque to a Late Antique family of reli-

187. Muqaddasī 1877, p.159.

188. The idea is not a new one: see Lambert 1950 & 1956.

189. *Qurʾān* XXII.40: *wa-lawlā daf ʿu llāhi l-nāsa baʿḍa-hum bi-baʿḍin la-huddimat ṣawāmiʿu wa-biyaʿun wa-ṣalawātun wa-masājidu yudhkaru fī hā smu llāhi kathīran.*

gious building types has not, however, brought us any closer to identifying the immediate origins of that concept. This line of inquiry peters out in the absence of archaeological evidence for the mosque in the Ḥijāz during the *jāhilī* and Prophetic periods. That all my attempts to trace the evolution of the mosque have ended in failure, persuades me to retrace my steps and pick up a thread left hanging towards the beginning of this article, when it was suggested that the crucial question is whether the mosque gradually evolved from pre-existing architectural forms, or whether it was created by the new Islamic elite.

THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE

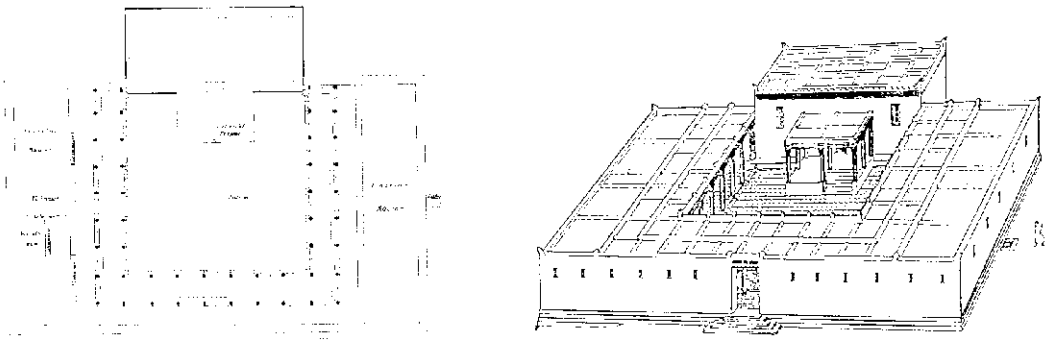
Although the Prophet's House can not have been the origins of the mosque, it remains possible that the Prophet's Mosque was the prototype of the mosque in Islam. If so, as we have already seen, it is likely to have been a much more elaborate structure than the empty hypaethral courtyard described by Islamic tradition. In other words, we have yet to explore the possibility that the Prophet created the concept of the mosque.

There is broad agreement in Islamic tradition as to the main points of the story of the foundation of the Prophet's Mosque. On entering Medina, the Prophet gave free rein to his camel until she stopped and 'knelt at the door of the mosque [*barakat 'inda bābi l-masjidi*]'. This was a *mirbad* owned by the orphans Sahl and Suhayl. Their guardian, As'ad ibn Zurara, had used the enclosure as a *masjid* for prayers and Friday congregation before the *hijra*. The Prophet summoned the two boys and offered to buy the *mirbad*. They sought to make him a present of it, but he refused and eventually bought it from Ibn Zurāra who compensated his wards. The Prophet then began to build his mosque.[190] This story echoes other foundation myths: the choice of site by the Prophet's she-camel recalls the role of animal guides in the foundation of many cities, including Antioch, Rome, Thebes, and Troy. But the story is also a calque upon the foundation of the Temple in Jerusalem (the *masjid* of *Qur'ān* XVII.7).

According to II Samuel 24, Satan tempted David to conduct a census of the people of Israel, against God's will. God punished him by sending a plague borne by an angel. In the middle of the destruction of Jerusalem, God stayed his hand 'and the angel of the Lord was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite'. God then commanded David to erect an altar on the threshing-floor. David sought to buy it from Araunah who thereupon offered it as a gift; David refused, and eventually succeeded in purchasing it. David built an altar on the site, and it was here that Solomon later constructed the Temple.[191]

190. Samhudi 1868, pp.106–8; Samhūdī 1908, vol.1, pp.229–33.

191. II Samuel 24, I Chronicles 21, II Chronicles 3.



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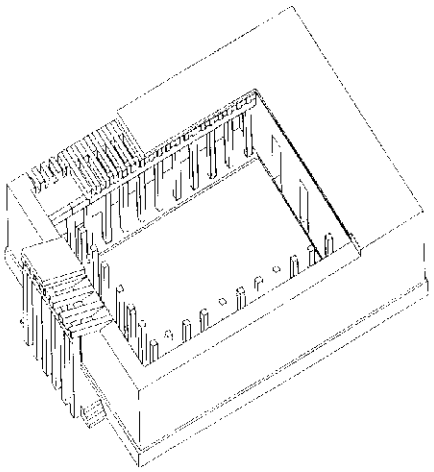

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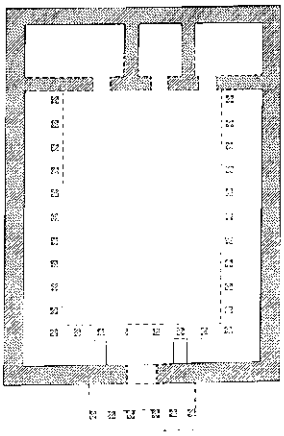

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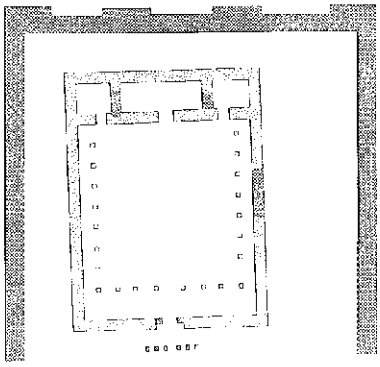

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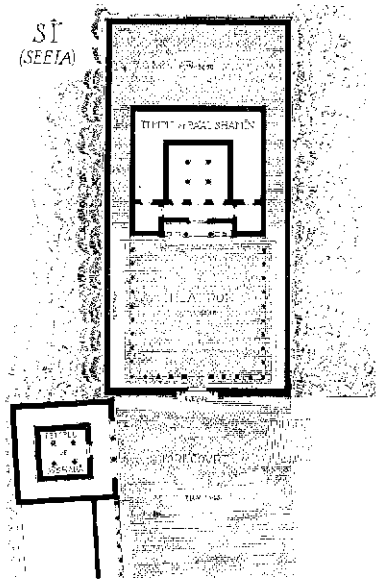

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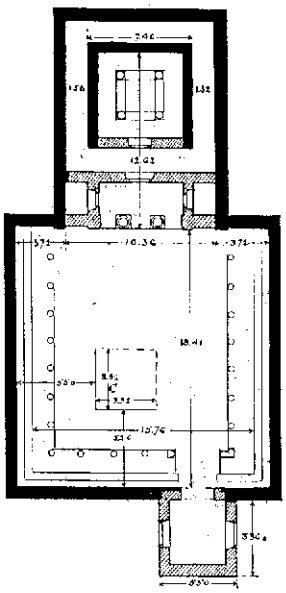

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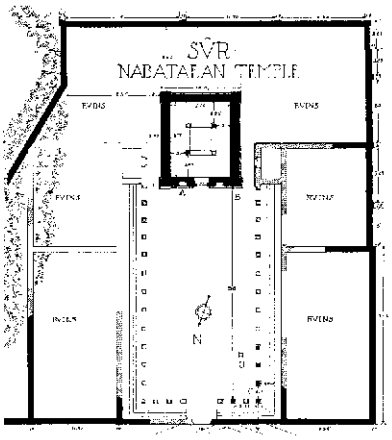

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24. Plan and reconstruction of the temple at al-Ḥuqqa (after Rathjens & von Wissman 1932)
25. South Arabian temples from Yemen (after Schmidt 1982 a–c):
(a–b) plan and isometric reconstruction of temple at Waddum Dhū Masmā'im;
(c) plan of tomb-temple at al-Masājid.
26. Nabataean temples from the Ḥawrān (after Butler 1907):
(a) Sī', temple of Ba'al Shamīn; (b) Salḫ; (c) Sūr.

This story was known to the collectors of traditions about the Prophet's Mosque, and a version of it appears in the accounts of the enlargement of the mosque under 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Significantly, in this version, David eventually purchases the site of the Temple not from Araunah but from two orphans, the counterparts of Sahl and Suhayl in the traditions concerning the foundation of the *Masjid al-Nabīy*.[192]

There are thus four striking similarities between the foundation stories of the Temple (as retold in Islamic tradition) and of the Prophet's Mosque:

1. the site was chosen by a divinely-inspired guide and not by the human founder (the angel of the Lord; the Prophet's she-camel);
2. it was previously an agricultural enclosure [*goran*; *mirbad*];
3. it was owned by two orphans (i.e. according to the Islamic version of the story of David; Sahl and Suhayl);
4. from whom, but only after a struggle, the founder succeeded in purchasing it.[193]

The dimensions of the Prophet's Mosque may also be significant. Although Samhūdī does report a divergent tradition, attributed to Khārija ibn Zayd ibn Thābit, that the mosque originally measured 70 by 60 cubits, most authorities agree that the enclosure measured 100 cubits square.[194] These were the dimensions of the court of Solomon's Temple as given in Ezekiel XL:47.

Another Islamic tradition concerning the construction of the Prophet's Mosque refers not to the foundation of the Temple by David but, indirectly, to its dedication by Solomon. The tradition describes the building of the *zulla* as follows:

> 'The columns were of palm-trunks and the roof of palm-fronds. And it was said to him [the Prophet], 'Why do you not roof it [i.e. properly]?'. And he said, 'It is a booth like the booth of Moses made of twigs and grass: the affair [i.e. the end of the world] will happen sooner than that (*'arīshun ka-'arīshi Mūsā, khushaybātun wa thumamun. al-sha'nu a'jalu min dhālika*)'.[195]

This tradition has been studied by Kister, who observes that it must have been widespread as early as the late second or early 3rd century.[196] It contains a reference to Leviticus XXIII, Moses declaring the Feasts of the Lord, and precisely to the Feast of the Tabernacles (Sukkōt), the Jewish Harvest Festival. The ephemeral booths or tabernacles constructed on this festival both celebrate the harvest and commemo-

192. Samhudi 1868, p.132, lines 19–23; Samhūdī 1968, vol.I, p.342, line 15 – p.345, line 10.

193. The story also bears strong similarities to the story of the purchase of the cave of Machpelah at Hebron by Abraham in Genesis 23.

194. Samhūdī (1868, p.107, lines 9–10 and 1968, vol.I, p.238, lines 12–14). See also note 39 above.

195. Ibn Sa'd 1904, vol.I, 2, p.2.

196. Kister 1962.

rate the booths in which the Israelites dwelt during the Exodus.[197] In addition, because Solomon chose the Feast of the Tabernacles for the dedication of the Temple, the booths also refer to the encaenia. Moreover, just as the Islamic tradition contains an eschatological reference, so does the feast of Sukkōt have special eschatological significance.[198]

That the traditions surrounding the foundation of the Prophet's Mosque contain a reference to the foundation of the Temple is apparently confirmed by the fact that, according to most accounts, the mosque was founded on the anniversary of the Dedication of the Temple. For example, following the chronology given by Ibn Isḥāq, the Prophet left Mecca on Friday 9 Rabīʿ I and, after three nights in the cave on Mount Thawr, reached Qubāʾ on the following Monday 12 Rabīʿ I. After resting there four nights, he set out for Medina on Friday 16 Rabīʿ I (28 September 622, Julian). He prayed at midday in the Wādī Rānūnāʾ, and it was in the late afternoon or evening that his exhausted camel knelt down at the spot where the Prophet ordered the mosque to be built. In this account, the days of the week do not correspond to the date of the month; thus, 16 Rabīʿ I fell on Monday, not Friday. Assuming that Ibn Isḥāq mistook the date but not the day, and intended the Prophet to arrive in Medina on the Friday, this would have corresponded precisely to the anniversary of the Dedication of the Temple on 15 Tishri (25 September, Julian), which began at sunset on 13 Rabīʿ I.[199]

The traditions surrounding the foundation and construction of the Prophet's Mosque thus contain the fragments of an artful literary confection closely modelled upon accounts of the foundation and dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem. This elaborate version is clearly early, and must predate the versions given by Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Saʿd; they or their sources suppressed, or more probably failed to recognize the reference to the foundation of the Temple embedded in the Islamic narrative. With its strong eschatological vein and its preoccupation with the Temple, the original version could well belong to the time of ʿAbd al-Malik, to the mid 70s/690s.

The fact that the only accounts of the construction of the Prophet's Mosque to have survived are based upon an elaborate literary confection which is apparently Marwānid in date does not necessarily mean that they are without historical content. There is, however, a far stronger reason for doubting the historicity of the account of the Prophet's Mosque given by Islamic tradition. It is the objection raised by Caetani, that the mosque could not have sprung fully-formed from the Prophet's

197. That the structure had to be ephemeral may explain why the mosque was said to have been built of mud-brick, a material, as King has pointed out (1989, pp.75–76), that was foreign to Medina where stone was the usual medium of construction.

198. Shaefer 1993a & Shaefer 1993b; but see also Rubenstein 1996.

199. Ibn Hishām 1858, pp.328–37. For uncertainties over the precise date of the *hijra*, see Akkouch 1935, p.384; Rubin 1995, pp.190–4.

head on the very first day that he set foot in Medina. To believe that the Prophet had the foreknowledge, before the formation of a Muslim community, to build a structure large enough to accommodate a congregation of some 3,000, and before the development of the Islamic rite, to create an architectural form which, with only minor modifications, would fulfil all the liturgical needs of mature Islam, requires an act of faith of which I am incapable. (Others will certainly disagree, and not just those who see the hand of God in historical processes, for one student of comparative religion has already pointed out to me that it is precisely the founders of new religions who create, *ex nihilo*, grandiose new structures – scriptural, liturgical, and architectural.)

It remains possible, of course, that the Prophet *did* build the mosque that became the prototype for the mosque in Islam, but that he did so, not on the first day that he arrived in Medina, but very much later, after the Muslim community had grown large and after there had developed the essential components of the Islamic rite; for example, after the victory at Ḥunayn. This Prophet's Mosque could have survived just long enough to have served as the prototype for the first mosques to be built in the conquests, before it was demolished and rebuilt by 'Umar. Islamic tradition, admittedly, contains nothing that might support this hypothesis; indeed, there is nothing in tradition to suggest that the Prophet's Mosque was so specially revered that it could have served as the model for the mosque in Islam.

Given the rudimentary design and humble fabric of the Prophet's Mosque, it could not have been its architecture or its decoration that would have caused it to be adopted as the model for the mosque in Islam; rather, it would have been its association with the Prophet. It is thus highly peculiar that, despite the obsessive search for *awā'il*, tradition makes no attempt to identify the Prophet as the creator of the mosque. Moreover, there is little suggestion, at least not until it was rebuilt by al-Walīd, that the fabric of the Prophet's Mosque was regarded with any special reverence, still less as the prototype of the mosque in Islam.[200] What is more, tradition betrays no embarrassment that the early caliphs treated the Prophet's Mosque with complete disregard. First 'Umar completely demolished, enlarged and rebuilt the *Masjid al-Nabīy*, replacing the palm-trunks with columns of timber and mud-brick. Then 'Uthmān destroyed 'Umar's mosque, and built his own in cut stone and plaster. It was only when al-Walīd completely demolished and rebuilt the Prophet's Mosque for a third time that voices were raised in protest, although at the destruction not of the mosque but of the *ḥujurāt*. The sacralisation of the *Masjid al-Nabīy* thus seems to belong to the Marwānid process of commemoration of the Prophet examined below by Barry Flood.

200. Pedersen (1989, p.648, col. a) claims that Ṭabarī 'expressly emphasised' that the plan of Kūfa I was 'an exact reproduction of that of the mosque in Medina'. Ṭabarī does no such thing, neither at the point cited by Pedersen – Ṭabarī 1879, vol.1, p.2489, lines 4 ff. – nor, so far as I can see from a thorough reading of the English translation, elsewhere.

There are, in short, strong reasons to doubt that the original *Masjid al-Nabiy* in Medina could have served as the model for the mosque in Islam. While these by no means rule it out completely, they do incline me to suspect that the plan of the Prophet's Mosque, as reported in the written sources, may have been reconstructed retrospectively in the 2nd or 3rd century by pious traditionalists who took as their model the mosques in which they themselves were accustomed to pray.

UMAR IBN AL-KHAṬṬĀB AND THE CONCEPT OF THE MOSQUE

The concept of the mosque was not the product of gradual evolution after the *hijra*, but was created or adopted by the Muslim elite as the template for the religious architecture of Islam. While it remains possible that the *Masjid al-Nabiy* was the model for this concept, there are reasons to doubt the accuracy of the description of the Prophet's Mosque given by Islamic tradition. That the concept of the mosque was not yet established during the lifetime of the Prophet is indicated by those passages in the *Qur'ān* which suggest that the word *masjid* was not yet associated with a particular architectural type. In this context, it is surely not insignificant that the *Qur'ān* makes no explicit reference to the *Masjid al-Nabiy*. If the Prophet was not himself the creator or the adopter of the concept of the mosque, surely it must have been a caliph, but which?

Archaeological evidence comes too late to do more than suggest that the concept was probably established before the accession of the Umayyads: it certainly dictated the plan of Wāsiṭ in 84/703, and may have been followed at Kūfa in 50/670 and at the Aqṣā in the early 40s/660s. The earliest written evidence for the mosque in Islam, independent of Islamic tradition, is the 7th-century Georgian pious tale, republished by Flusin in *Bayt al Maqdis* 1, which places the construction of the first Aqṣā mosque in the patriarchate of Sophronius, who died on 11 March 639 or 640.[201] If this Aqṣā mosque – the Georgian text uses the Arabic word *midzgitha* – followed the concept of the mosque – and it must be stressed there is no evidence that it did – then the choice of caliphs is narrowed to two: Abū Bakr and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

Abū Bakr is said to have had a *masjid* outside his house at Mecca before the *hijra*, and to have renewed the worm-eaten palm-trunk columns in the Prophet's Mosque, but he does not otherwise feature in Islamic tradition as a builder of mosques.[202] In complete contrast, 'Umar is portrayed as an almost obsessive mosque-builder. He is said to have enclosed the *ḥaram* at Mecca, to have rebuilt the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, to have built the first *Masjid al-Aqṣā*, to have commanded and supervised

201. Flusin 1992.

202. Ibn Hishām 1858, p.246. Samhūdī 1868, pp.131–4. Samhūdī 1908, vol.1, p.341.

from afar the foundation of mosques in the *amṣār*, including Baṣra, Kūfa, and Fusṭāṭ, and in the conquests, including Alexandria, Damascus, Madā'in, and Mosul: in addition, popular tradition ascribes to him literally hundreds of mosques, probably more than to any other figure except the Prophet himself.

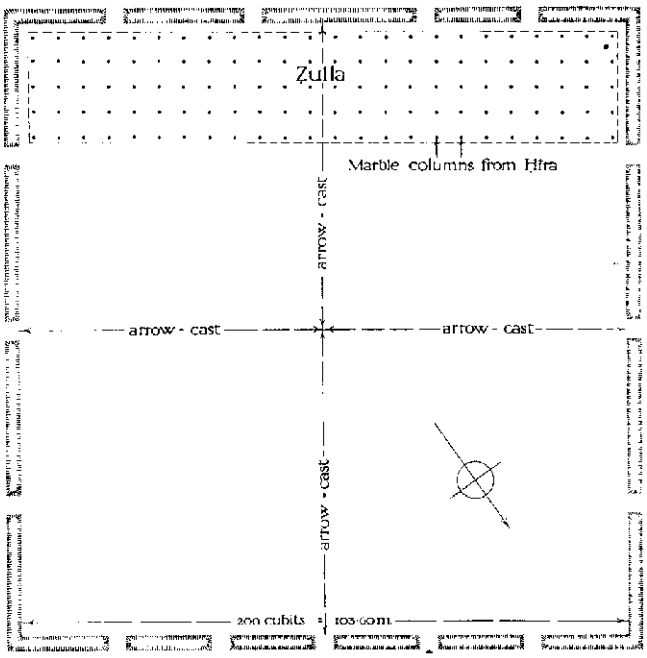
This image of 'Umar the Mosque-builder is sustained by the following passage in Ṭabarī's *History*. After describing the foundation of the first mosque at Kūfa in 17/638 according to 'Umar's instructions, Ṭabarī continues, apparently in his own voice: *wa-ka-dhālika kānati l-masājidu mā khalā l-masjida l-ḥarama fa-kanu la yushabbihūna bi-hi l-masājida ta'ẓīman li-ḥurmati-hi*; which Juynboll translates 'In the same manner, other mosques were laid out, except the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*; in those days they did not try to emulate that out of respect for its holiness'.[203] In other words, Ṭabarī believed that the caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb decreed that all congregational mosques should be laid out according to a common standard. Given our present ignorance of the archaeology of the mosque before the 80s/700s, this is our best evidence for the origin of the concept of the mosque.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, it may help to give a brief summary of this long article. Before the end of the 1st century, the mosque had spread thoughout the conquests. Despite the many variations in plan, elevation, construction, and decoration, which tend to reflect the indigenous traditions of the conquered cultures, all congregational mosques conformed to a common standard that I have called the concept of the mosque. There is firm archaeological evidence that all congregational mosques were built according to this concept by the 80s/700s, and there is less reliable evidence that this standard was already in use at Jerusalem in the 40s/660s and at Kūfa in the 50s/670s.

Creswell believed that the Islamic mosque was the product of 'trivial facts', of a casual process of evolution starting with the open courtyard of the Prophet's House in Medina. The critical analysis of Creswell's reconstruction of the Prophet's House demonstrates that the origin of the mosque in Islam cannot have been that simple domestic courtyard. Islamic tradition is clear that the Prophet built a mosque for the early community, and an analysis of the mosques of the *Qur'ān* suggests that, during the lifetime of the Prophet, the mosque was already an established institution that could be distinguished from other types of religious buildings. The *Qur'ān* uses the word *masjid* of so many different sanctuaries, however, that it seems unlikely that it was yet associated with a particular architectural type.

203. Ṭabarī 1879, vol.1, p.2489; Ṭabarī-Juynboll 1989, p.69.



27. Kufa I (after Creswell)

Faint traces of the prehistory of the mosque are dimly perceptible before Islam. The open enclosure aligned upon a *qibla* seems to have been intrinsic to the concept of the mosque, and may, conceivably, be traced back to an ancient tradition of hypaethral enclosures associated with the veneration of the fertile earth. On firmer ground, the concept of the mosque clearly belongs to a family of Late Antique religious buildings, including the church, the synagogue, and the Arabian temple, all of which arranged a colonnaded courtyard and a covered sanctuary symmetrically about a central axis. It is not yet possible to demonstrate when, where, or how the mosque became clearly distinguished from other members of this family. But it is clear that, some time after the *hijra*, probably after the death of the Prophet and before the accession of the Umayyads, the concept of the mosque was adopted as the common standard to which all congregational mosques were built.

The description of the Prophet's Mosque given by Islamic tradition is of a building which conforms to the concept of the mosque, and it remains possible, if unlikely, that the *Masjid al-Nabiy* determined that common standard. But there are strong reasons to doubt that this was so, and to suspect that the description of the original *Masjid al-Nabiy* may have been composed retrospectively by pious Muslims who took as their model the mosques in which they themselves were accustomed to pray, long after the Prophet's Mosque had disappeared under the successive reconstructions by 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and al-Walīd.

On the contrary, there is what appears to be explicit testimony that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb decreed that all congregational mosques should be constructed in the manner of the mosque built at Kūfa in the year 17/638 (FIG.27). In the absence of archaeological evidence for the crucial formative period, this is the most likely moment at which the concept of the mosque was removed from the family of Late Antique religious buildings in which it had hitherto developed, and was established as the common standard for the religious architecture of Islam.