NEW ADDITIONS TO THE NEW EDITION

In 1958 Creswell's Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture first appeared in print. Almost exactly thirty years later, in 1989, the revised and expanded edition was published by Scolar Press. The primary aim of the new edition was that it should be as comprehensive as possible. Naturally it could not include all the information that the great tomes contained, nor one-tenth of the plates. It did seem appropriate, however, to try and give brief coverage to every monument, so that students could appreciate and have at their disposal the full scope of the larger work. As a result, brief summaries of selected buildings were added, based on Creswell's own accounts. From the two volumes of the first edition of Early Muslim Architecture, published in 1932 and 1940, came the mosque of 'Umar at Bosra, al-Muwaggar, Qasr Bayir, Khan al-Zabib and Umm al-Walid, Manara Mujda, the Alcazaba of Merida, the walls and manar of Susa, the Great Mosque of Tunis and Qasr al-Ashiq. From the first volume of the 1969 edition of *Early* Muslim Architecture came Jabal Says, 'Anjar, Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi and Khirbat al-Mafjar.

But there are, of course, many buildings now known which received no mention in any of Creswell's volumes, because they had not yet been discovered. Archaeological surveys in Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia have brought to light or amplified our understanding of ruins at Qasr Burqu, Qasr Muqatil, the Great Octagon at Qadisiyya, the mosque and palace of Uskaf Banni Junayd, the Darb Zubaydah, Tulul al-Ukhaidir, Zibliyat and Istabulat. Excavation has brought to light the Umayyad complex in Jerusalem, the palaces of Rusafa, the mosque of Susa in Khuzistan, and that of Banbhore in Pakistan, the palace platform of Heragleh, the Great Mosque and other mosques at Siraf, the Qasr al-Jiss at Samarra and the Abbasid palaces at Raqqa. Various other standing buildings have also been discovered and/or published; the Great Mosque in San(a), the ribat at Monastir, the Masjid-i Tarikh at Balkh, the mosques of Shibam in the Yemen, and Fahraj in Iran.

I do not want to dwell on these buildings here and I am well aware that I have simply continued the Creswell tradition by adding them to his text. Indeed I have

somtimes found it appropriate to use his style (his taste for question and answer, for example) so that the book as far as possible remains a unit. It has, however, been much more stimulating to reassess Creswell's discussions and attributions of known buildings in the light of work done more recently. Such reassessments shed light on Creswell's method, and show how techniques he used to prove his points often have to be used again as more evidence becomes available. It is this evidence for redating and reattributing buildings to which I therefore want to turn, and I shall examine it under six headings.

1. Reexamination of a known site. The site of Qastal in Jordan is scarcely mentioned by Creswell, although he knew of it. Talking of extant Ghassanid buildings he notes, "The possible sixth is Qastal, only a few miles from Mshatta, which Hamza al-Isfahani (10th cent.) says was built by Jabala ibn al-Harith." Elsewhere he notes that 'Abbas ibn al-Walid lived at Qastal, records it in passing as a Byzantine fort, refers to the problem of more than one Qastal being mentioned in the texts, and observes that the bayts at Qastal "bear the closest possible resemblance to those of Qasr at-Tuba."

Stern in 1946 had already pointed out more strongly the close resemblance between Qastal and Qasr al-Tuba, and other Umayyad palaces, ⁴ and Gaube in 1977 published a first-hand account of the site in which he was able to prove that Qastal was indeed an Umayyad complex.5 He did so by showing first that the mihrab niche in the second building was not just part of the eleventh- to twelfth-century additional wall, built to support the barrel vault above, but actually existed at the time of the original structure (fig. 1). Hence it proved that the original structure was a mosque. He also showed that the mosque must have been contemporary with the palace, since the stones are of the same size and shape and are laid in the same way. The bayts then fit with those of Qasr al-Tuba, and the palace decoration relates the building to the cruciform structure at Amman. Qastal has therefore been included in the new Creswell volume.

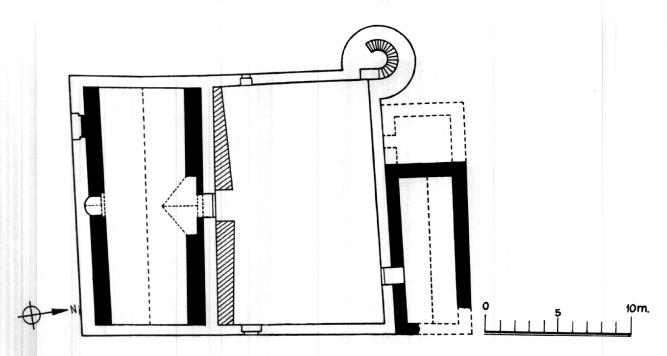


Fig. 1. Qastal, the mosque. Plan. (From Gaube, Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins, p. 93).

2. Architectural forms and their chronology. Creswell was an extremely careful recorder of precise details of architectural structures and forms. He includes, at appropriate places in his work, tables of relevant arch forms, and it is therefore with surprise that one finds cause to contest his views. One such case emerged recently, however, in relation to the Baghdad Gate at Raqqa (fig. 2). In 1978 John Warren published an article pointing out the problem with Creswell's dating of the gate to the reign of al-Mansur. 6 He noted that the Baghdad Gate is located in an addition to the city wall, and that in the gate the four-centered arch is fully developed. At Ukhaidir, on the other hand, which definitely dates from the reign of al-Mansur, "the four-centered arch is rare and tentative, the two-centered arch is dominant, and the vertical semi-ellipse survives." Given that the fully developed four-centered arch first gained an obvious ascendancy at Samarra in the Qubbat al-Sulaybiyah (862), Warren felt that it was much more likely that the Baghdad Gate dated from the second half of the ninth century, or later. He concluded his article "... it seems logical to regard the Gate as a product of the period of prosperity at Raqga in the 10th or even the 11th centuries, when the addition of an outwork to the city wall had conceivably become necessary."

This much later dating for the gate was supported in 1985 by Robert Hillenbrand. He noted the very ambitious vault used in the chamber behind the entrance and stressed the advanced nature of the brick patterns typical of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, not of the eighth and ninth.

3. Understanding a building in its archaeological context. At the time Creswell studied the cruciform building on the citadel at Amman (fig. 3), its archaeological context was completely unknown. Indeed not until very recently has its relationship to its surroundings been unearthed and understood (fig. 4).

Creswell, with only the architectural evidence of the building itself to work with, suggested that it might be Ghassanid, since the plan was almost the same as that of the church or praetorium at Rusafa, minus the apse. "The just perceptibly pointed arches of the liwan suit a sixth- to seventh-century date, and the elliptical form of the squinches certainly gives a very Sasanian effect. Is it not possible that this building, which with its cruciform plan and its four liwans bears such a close relationship to the church of the Ghassanid al-Mundhir, outside the north gate of Rusafa, may also have been erected by him at the end of the sixth century?" It was more appropri-

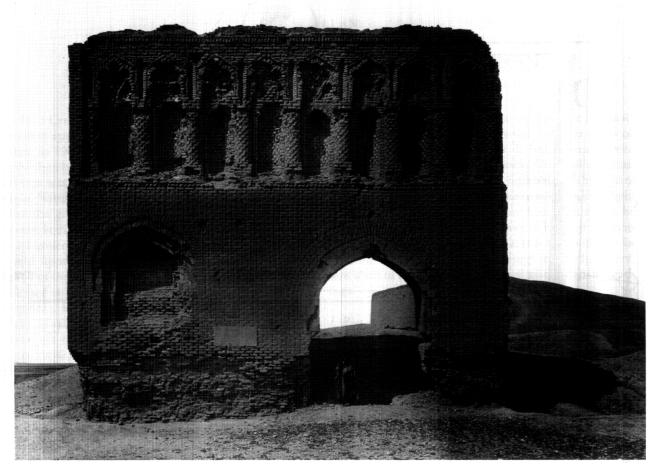


Fig. 2. Raqqa, the Baghdad Gate. (Ashmolean Museum, Creswell Archive.)

ate than Creswell realized to leave his suggestion as a question, for elsewhere he unwittingly contradicted himself. Creswell was certain that the hallmark of Ghassanid buildings was that they were completely Syrian. Thus of Mshatta he wrote, "How could Arabs of Syria, expressly under the protection of Byzantium, have erected buildings with such a strong imprint of Persia and Mesopotamia?" What he failed to see was that this very argument was against Amman, with its counterfeit squinches and its very Sasanian-looking decoration, being Ghassanid.

The proof of an Umayyad dating has not come, however, from a simple reassessment of the cruciform building's structure and decoration, but from the excavations around it. ¹⁰ These showed (a) that although there is no bonding between the structures of the first and second

enclosures and the cruciform building, and although the north building is demonstrably later than buildings 2 and 3, all these buildings must have been erected within a very short time. This is for three reasons. First, they are stylistically almost identical; second, that style is quite distinctive among the periods represented on the citadel; third, the cruciform building and court 1 have the same dimensions. (b) Various other pieces of evidence then place the whole complex in the late Umayyad period: (1) Umayyad red ware was found in the mortar of building 4 and on the roof of the cruciform building. (2) The broad, slightly pointed tunnel vaults may be compared to those of Mshatta, Tuba, and Ukhaidir. (3) The blind niches are almost identical to those over the portal of the east building at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi. (4) The horseshoe arches of the niches



Fig. 3. Amman, the Citadel. The cruciform building. (Ashmolean Museum, Creswell Archive.)

and the two bands of dogtoothing may be compared to those of the balustrades at Jabal Says. (5) One particular mention of Amman in an early text suggests both a palace and a prison there in the reign of Hisham.

4. The compatibility of archaeological analysis and textual evidence. Here let us consider the history of the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The study of the Aqsa Mosque begins with chapter five of Creswell's second volume of Early Muslim Architecture (1940). There he gave the development of the mosque on the basis of historical texts, distinguishing five periods prior to the Crusaders: Aqsa I, Arculf's mean structure; Aqsa II, built by 'Abd al-Malik, the textual evidence here being supported by papyri; Aqsa III, the mosque reconstructed by al-Mansur following an earthquake; Aqsa IV, more reconstruction by al-Mahdi following another earthquake; Aqsa V, al-

Zahir's work, following yet another earthquake.

He then looked at the work done in the twenties and thirties by the Turkish architect Kemal al-Din, and showed how the drum of the dome and its arches could not be later than 1035. From this he deduced that much of the rest of the building was eighth century on the basis of the decorated consoles of the roof principles. Combining textual and archaeological evidence, he concluded that al-Zahir's mosque was seven aisles deep, but of uncertain width, and that al-Mahdi's mosque was seven by fifteen.

In 1949 Hamilton published his work on the Aqsa Mosque (fig. 5). One can scarcely summarize a book in a sentence, but in essence he identified three distinct periods archaeologically: his Aqsa I included the excavated north wall and the two arcades standing to the east of the dome; his Aqsa II consisted of the dome and

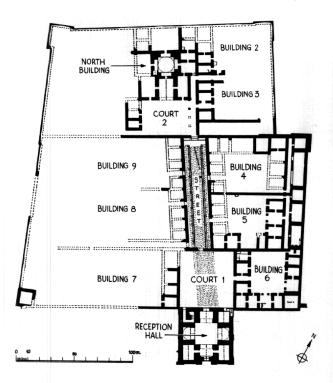


Fig. 4. Amman, the palatial complex on the citadel. Plan. (From Northedge, "Qal'at 'Amman in the Early Islamic Period," 1984.)

the present north wall, plus the transverse arcades east of the dome; his Aqsa III consisted of the present nave structures. He attributes the three to al-Walid I, the Abbasid period, and al-Zahir respectively.

The next Creswell contribution was in the 1958 Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture. Here he added a single page giving details of what had emerged of the Umayyad Aqsa.¹² Five years later, however, Henri Stern published an article arguing an alternative relationship between archaeological evidence and texts.¹³ He drew attention to al-Maqdisi's description of the Abbasid building, leaving the ancient portion of the building around the mihrab "even like a beauty spot, in the midst of the new," and showed that either two particular excavated pier bases which would have supported an arcade running into the wall above the present mihrab could not have been part of the original arcading, or the earliest mosque found is not that of al-Walid I but an earlier one. He offered further architectural evidence to support his view that Hamilton's Aqsa I is probably 'Abd al-Malik's mosque and Aqsa II the mosque of al-Walid.

This view led to a strongly worded couple of para-



Fig. 5. Jerusalem, the Aqsa Mosque. Umayyad arcades. (Ashmolean Museum, Creswell Archive.)

graphs in the 1969 edition of Early Muslim Architecture, headed "Hamilton's Vital Discovery":

During the works of 1938–42 when the plaster was stripped off, Hamilton was able to confirm that the remains of a mosque earlier than al-Mahdi's existed] ... for he found that the masonry of the spandrels of the transverse arches was not bonded into the masonry of the spandrels of the first longitudinal arcade to the east of the dome. This is not the case with the second arcade, for here the transverse arches spring from the same support as the arches to north and south, so he concludes that it had suffered more from the earthquake and had been rebuilt by al-Mahdi. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this discovery, for it proves that the transverse arches, and the two dome-bearing arches of which they take the thrust, are later than al-Walid's work, and consequently that al-Walid's mosque cannot have had a great dome. Will it be believed that this vital and absolutely decisive discovery is completely ignored by Stern in his article on the Aqsa Mosque, because he wants to believe that al-Walid's structure had a wide central aisle, ending in a great dome? . . . He does not discuss Hamilton's discovery or dispute its significance, he simply ignores it, and consequently arrives at impossible and untenable conclusions in his analysis of the mosque.¹⁴

Working on the Aqsa mosque ten years ago I came to the conclusion that Stern was actually right, and I rewrote the chapter on the Aqsa Mosque accordingly. Robert Hamilton had been working on the same theory and supplied me with a much better argued and written discussion, which is now appended to Creswell's in the new edition. But even here the story does not end. Julian Raby in an article to be published next year suggests that the literary evidence is still not at one with the archaeological. He shows that Aqsa I is in all probability the remains of the original mosque built by 'Umar, and that Aqsa II is the mosque begun by Abd al-Malik as part of his grand design for the Haram al-Sharif, and completed in al-Walid's reign. Thus, sixty years after Kemal al-Din started working on the archaeology of the Agsa Mosque, the efforts of the various architectural historians and archaeologists have been rewarded. By careful collation of archaeological data and literary evidence we can trace the development of the building and understand its importance for the history of Islamic architecture.

5. Different interpretations of the same textual evidence. The most obvious example of this phenomenon is the plan of the Round City of al-Mansur, of which of course no archaeological trace remains. The primary source for the Round City is the History of Baghdad written by Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 1071) though Ya^cqubi's Geography (891) also contains important information. Argument about the plan focuses on two main points: the tāgāt al-sughrā (the little arcades) (figs. 6-7), and the palace of al-Mansur (figs. 8-9). According to al-Khatib, 15 "Into the [third] fasil open the gates of certain streets and in front of one is the Little Arcade ... by which one passes into the circular area in which are the palace and the mosque." Ya^cqubi says, 16 "When one comes out from the Arcades one comes into a court, then to a long passage consisting of a vault of brick, which had iron doors when one went out into the Great Rahaba" (i.e., the great central area). On the analogy of the Court of Honor at Ukhaidir and the walls of the zivadas of the Great Mosque of Samarra, Creswell restores the little arcades as a blind arcade on half-round piers as shown on the plan, facing into the great central area. Lassner,17 however, drew attention to a fact mentioned by Creswell for which Creswell's plan makes no provision, namely that surrounding the central court were the residences of al-Mansur's younger children, his servants in attendance, the slaves, the treasury, the arsenal, the diwan of the palace personnel, the public

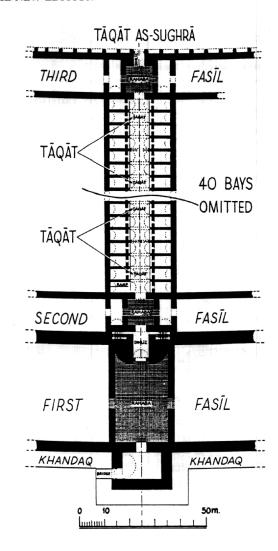


Fig. 6. Baghdad, the arcades (tāqāt). Creswell's version.

kitchen, and various other government agencies. He concludes that these must have formed a ring of buildings between the third fāṣil (intervallum) and the central court itself.

In support of this interpretation he cites a passage in Tabari, which mentions that the gates of the chambers of a group of al-Mansur's generals and scribes opened onto the court (raḥbah) of the mosque: here raḥbah not ṣaḥn is used and must therefore refer to the great court surrounding the mosque and other central buildings. Tabari also relates how the Caliph's uncle 'Isa ibn 'Ali complained about having to walk from the gate of the central court to the palace, and suggested that he might

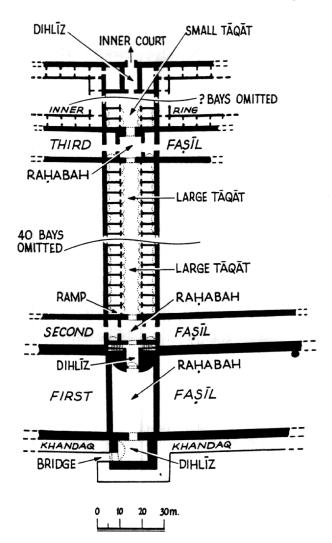


Fig. 7. Baghdad, the arcades (tāqāt). Lassner's version.

instead hitch a ride on one of the beasts that entered the courtyard. The Caliph was astonished to find out that such traffic was entering his personal domain, and gave an order for the people (residing in the ringed area) to shift the gates (which opened onto the court) so that they faced the intervalla of the arcades ($t\bar{a}q\bar{a}t$). No one was permitted to enter the courtyard except on foot. Markets were then transferred to each of the four arcades (previously occupied by guards) and remained there until the Caliph, fearful of the security problem they posed, removed them from the Round City. Lassner concludes:

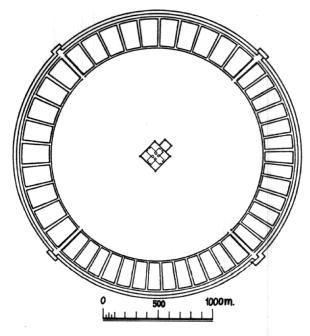


Fig. 8. Baghdad, the round city of al-Mansur. Creswell's version.

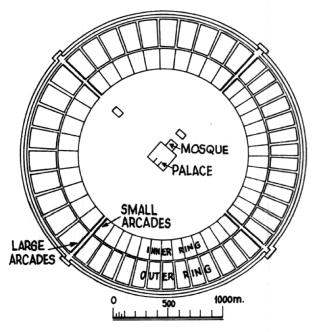


Fig. 9. Baghdad, the round city of al-Mansur. Lassner's version.

The existence of a ringed structure provides for a lengthening of the main gateways leading to the Caliph's palace, thereby leaving sufficient space for the second series of arcades. The small arcades which framed the inner ring are presumably identical in structure with the large unit that framed the residential quadrant: both are situated along the same access leading to the great central court. The distinction between the two arcades is then in the number of arches, rather than the position and function.

As to the palace, Creswell's paragraph, based on al-Khatib, reads as follows:¹⁸

al-Mansur's palace was known as the Palace of the Golden Gate. It was a square of 400 cubits a side, and lay in the middle of the 'Round City'. There was an $\bar{\imath}w\bar{a}n$, that is to say a tunnel-vaulted hall open at one end, measuring 30 cubits deep and 20 cubits wide, with a room at the back, 20 cubits square and 20 cubits high, covered by a dome. Above this was a second roof, of the same area and height, also covered by a dome. This was the celebrated Green Dome, on account of which the palace was also known as al-Qubbat al-Khadra. The total height was 80 cubits.

It will be observed that Creswell never interprets this in writing as a four-iwan building of cruciform plan, and there is nothing in al-Khatib's account to give this impression, since only one iwan is specified. It is hardly surprising therefore that Lassner follows Grabar and draws it as a single-iwan palace. But Creswell's drawing of the palace plan follows Herzfeld and assumes it to be a cruciform four-iwan building on the analogy of the Dar al-Imara of Abu Muslim at Merv.

Similar problems arise when we turn to the mosque of al-Mansur (figs. 10–13). I will not quote the relevant

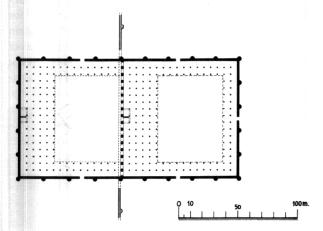


Fig. 10. Baghdad, al-Mansur's mosque. Plan. Creswell's reconstruction.

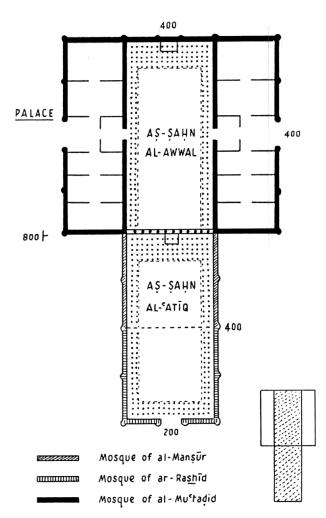


Fig. 11. Baghdad, the enlargement of al-Mansur's mosque according to length. (After Lassner.)

passage from al-Khatib here as it is too long. Let me simply say that Creswell took the simplest solution to the enlargement of the mosque by al-Mu^ctadid billah in 893–94. He writes: "Let us cut arches in the back wall [of al-Mansur's mosque] ... and add a duplicate of the first mosque, minus the northeastern riwāq, which obviously is not needed, and transfer the miḥrāb, pulpit and maqṣūra to the new mosque, in accordance with al-Khatib." Lassner, however, does a much more thorough job on the textual evidence. He points out, for example, that al-Khatib's text says that the mosque of al-Mansur was not only rebuilt but enlarged by Harun al-Rashid. Hence the approximate doubling of the mosque size by al-Mu^ctadid billah was not a doubling of al-

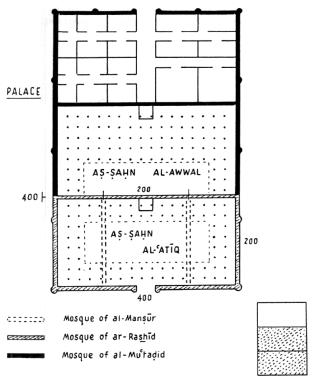


Fig. 12. Baghdad, the enlargement of al-Mansur's mosque according to width. (After Lassner.)

Mansur's mosque but a doubling of Harun al-Rashid's mosque. There are consequently three different mosques to be considered, not two, as Creswell seems to suggest. Lassner also points out there were three possible ways for Harun al-Rashid to have enlarged al-Mansur's mosque: he could have lengthened it, widened it, or a mixture of both. Lassner is happiest with the last possibility, which would have provided for either a square, or a rectangle of an acceptable ratio presumably 2:1 or 3:2. He writes: "Since the theoretical possibilities are limited by the size of the adjoining palace $(400 \times 400 \text{ [cubits]})$, the most acceptable rectangle would be 375×250 cubits, that is to say, an enlargement of 25 cubits for each side, and 175 cubits in the length, resulting in a ratio of 3:2." The mosque of al-Mu^ctadid billah would then have measured 750×250 , a ratio of 3:1. If, on the other hand, Harun al-Rashid had enlarged al-Mansur's mosque to a square structure 300 × 300 cubits, al-Mu^ctadid billah's mosque would have had a ratio of 2:1, which might have been more acceptable.

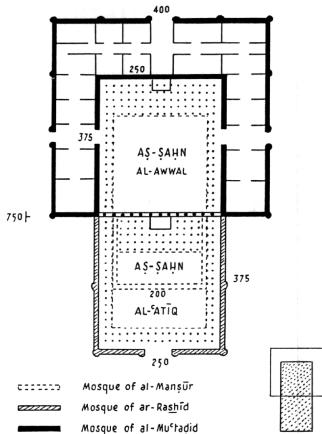


Fig. 13. Baghdad, the enlargement of al-Mansur's mosque according to width and length (rectangular). (After Lassner.)

6. Seeing buildings in the context of wider situations. (a) Geographical: One of the reasons suggested by Gaube²¹ for refusing a Ghassanid attribution for the cruciform building in Amman was that the Ghassanids never wielded power west of the 200 mm. rainfall area, except in the Golan and Lejah, two areas unsuitable for agriculture. He sees Syria as four distinct geographical districts: the Mediterranean belt, the mountain belt, the Inner Syrian farming belt, and the desert belt, and focuses on the interaction of the latter two, where farmer and city dweller are in contact with and challenge the nomads. Every extension of the farming belt to the east is an infringement of the sphere of existence of the nomads; every narrowing of it has far-reaching consequences on the sedentary population.

Only twice in Syrian history before the ninteenth cen-

tury have the peasantry been able to push further towards the east at the expense of the nomads — in the late Byzantine (fourth-sixth century) and the early Islamic (seventh-eighth century) periods. At all other times the frontier between the two groups has remained virtually the same, running along the line where rainfall, or lack of it, separates desert from arable land.

(b) Political: Gaube is also concerned with the political situation at particular moments and how such situations would have reacted with cultural activities. If we turn to Kharana (fig. 14), Creswell gave four reasons why he believed it dated from the Persian occupation of 614–628.²² (1) It is fortified, while all other Umayyad palaces have purely ornamental fortifications. (2) Its masonry is like that of the Sasanian palace at Damghan. (3) It has the only true squinches in Syria. (4) It has triple engaged columns without capitals, which is also a Persian feature.

Gaube, however, sees immediate historical difficulties in this interpretation:²³ the Persian occupation of 614–28 was primarily for plunder and the destruction of the agricultural economy. In his estimation it was therefore quite unlikely that the Persians would have stopped to build forts on the edge of the desert. On that basis he notes that the arrow slits are in any case impractical, since they are mostly at quite the wrong height for archers. They must therefore be ornamental, or for ventilation, or a combination of both. He also

notes the Syrian bayts, and questions why a Persian conqueror should have used them. The political situation is therefore the springboard for a different attribution for the building.

- (c) The wider culture of a given dynasty: The more buildings we can attribute to the Umayyads, the more we can say what their characteristics, as a general rule, are. Creswell, working in his day, did not have such an advantage: he was much more involved in increasing the number of attributions. It is sometimes useful to make sweeping generalizations, and I shall suggest one here — that a building with a combination of Syrian and Persian features, in which the Syrian features predominate, is typical of Umayyad Syria. And I am sure that most Islamic art historians, faced with a hitherto unpublished building from Syria with a combination of Syrian and Persian characteristics, will start from the assumption that it is Umayyad until it can be proved otherwise. Whether we are right in doing so is another matter, but the possibility is certainly part of the post-Creswellian period.
- (d) The personalities of patrons: Creswell certainly used historical texts to attribute particular buildings to particular individuals, but it was largely on the basis of very factual information in whatever text he was reading. Hamilton's approach to Khirbat al-Mafjar was quite different. A reader of early Arab poetry, he noticed that the personality of Walid II, his frivolity and

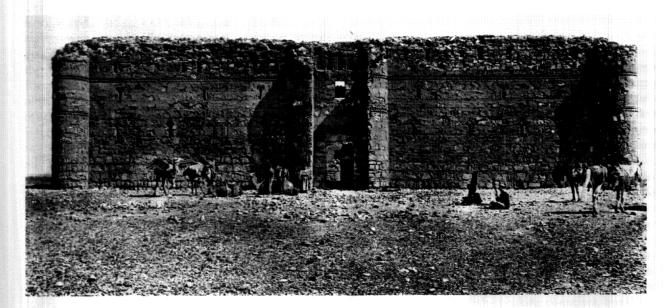


Fig. 14. Kharana, façade. (From Jaussen and Savignac, Les châteaux arabes, 1922).

his love of wine, fitted with certain idiosyncratic features in the building, and his most recent work is about the social life of the Umayyads, into which particular facets of the architecture can then be fitted.²⁴

I was sorely tempted, as I worked on the revision of Creswell, to look more at the personality of al-Walid I. Here was the man who stamped Islam most forcibly on the consciousness of Syria and Arabia. He completed his father's work in Jerusalem with the Agsa Mosque; he gave Damascus a mosque of enormous dimensions, decorated with the largest area of mosaic ever known; he gave Medina its first great religious structure, and he substantially enlarged and embellished the Great Mosque in San^(a). He created, if you like, a north-south architectural axis. Add to that his desert palaces, and here to my mind we have the Umayyad caliph with the greatest sense of history. Surely here there is an opportunity for creative research, for setting al-Walid alongside his great architectural achievements, in the context of his political power, his pastimes, and his culture pur-

It is in fact this movement outwards from the monuments to the personalities of their patrons, to the political history of the day, the full cultural setting of the dynasty, the historical geography of an era, then the movement backwards to the monuments, that I have missed, working in Creswell's footsteps. His mind was set on establishing the origins of forms, the first uses of particular structures, always moving inwards. It is a road which leads into pure architecture, but perhaps to us in the 1980's and 1990's it is a claustrophobic road, in which we find ourselves increasingly hemmed in by details and minutiae. Its great merit, however, is that it contains all the architectural information which our generation needs to expand the horizons of Islamic architectural history. As a result, Islamic architecture in the post-Creswellian era, through the extraordinary endeavors of Creswell himself, can be put at the service of this wider perspective.

Ashmolean Museum Oxford, England

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