Cities in the Pre-Modern Islamic World

The urban impact of religion, state and society

Edited by
Amira K. Bennison and
Alison L. Gascoigne

CITIES IN THE PRE-MODERN ISLAMIC WORLD

This volume is an interdisciplinary endeavour that brings together recent research on aspects of urban life and structure by architectural and textual historians and archaeologists, engendering exciting new perspectives on urban life in the pre-modern Islamic world. Its objective is to move beyond the long-standing debate on whether an 'Islamic city' existed in the pre-modern era and focus instead upon the ways in which religion may (or may not) have influenced the physical structure of cities and the daily lives of their inhabitants. It approaches this topic from three different but inter-related perspectives: the genesis of 'Islamic cities' in fact and fiction; the impact of Muslim rulers upon urban planning and development; and the degree to which a religious ethos affected the provision of public services.

Chronologically and geographically wide-ranging, the volume examines thought-provoking case studies from seventh-century Syria to seventeenth-century Mughal India by established and new scholars in the field, in addition to chapters on urban sites in Spain, Morocco, Egypt and Central Asia.

Cities in the Pre-Modern Islamic World will be of considerable interest to academics and students working on the archaeology, history and urbanism of the Middle East as well as those with more general interests in urban archaeology and urbanism.

Amira K. Bennison is Senior Lecturer in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. She has worked extensively on the history of the Maghrib and Islamic Spain. Her list of publications includes *Jihad and its Interpretations in Pre-Colonial Morocco* (London: Routledge, 2002).

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*Amira K. Bennison and
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CONTENTS

CONTENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

BSOAS   *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
EI 1   *Encyclopedia of Islam*, first edition, Leiden: Brill, 1913.
EI 2   *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition, Leiden: Brill, 1960–2002.
IJMES   *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*
JNES   *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

It is almost impossible to be entirely consistent in the transliteration of Arabic and Persian into English and no solution will suit all readers. We have used the systems of transliteration employed by the *Encyclopedia of Islam* for words, phrases and proper names in these languages, with the exception of ḳ and dj, which we have transliterated as q and j respectively. We have also used transliteration in the case of unfamiliar place names such as Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ and Fīrūzkūh. However, in the case of dynastic names, place names and terms derived from Arabic or Persian, but fairly common in English or rendered in an Anglicised form, e.g. Fatimids, Medina, Shiʿism, we have kept diacritics to the minimum, indicating only the letter ʿayn where appropriate. For occasional place names and terms in Turkish we have adopted contemporary Turkish spellings, e.g. *kala* instead of *qalʿa*.

1

INTRODUCTION

Amira K. Bennison

Cities and the influences that shape them are a topic of endless fascination. Philosophers and thinkers of many persuasions have seen in the city both perfection and degradation. On the one hand, Plato's *Republic* and St Augustine's *City of God* rest upon the assumption that the city is the apogee of human achievement in this life and the next, while on the other hand the biblical image of the whore of Babylon encapsulates all that is negative about urban life. Muslims viewed cities and urban life with similar ambivalence, and a contrast emerges between Muḥammad's archetypal city, Medina, known as 'the illuminated one' (*al-munawwara*), or the philosopher al-Farābī's virtuous city (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*), and the view of the *grand doyen* of Islamic historiography, Ibn Khaldūn, that, despite being essential to 'civilisation', the city was the locus of immorality and corruption. While Cairo is fondly called 'Mother of the World', the city in its generic form is also seen as a seductress, responsible for sapping the manly energies (*muruwwa*) of those men of the desert, mountain and steppe who succumb to its charms. Such polarities reflect the dualism of the early Muslim experience and the long drawn out encounter that occurred between the life-styles of the Arabian peninsula and the sedentary civilisations of the Near East from the rise of Islam in the mid-seventh century onwards.

Muḥammad's choice of one town – Medina – as the site for his perfect community and another – Mecca – as its spiritual epicentre gave cities a quintessential role within the new faith and created an enduring link between urban life and the practice of Islam. However, the specific ways in which Islam influenced urban life from Spain to India, and beyond, are not always easy to elucidate or even identify, and many other factors influenced the material form of cities and the urban culture they sheltered. We would do well to remember that Ibn Khaldūn introduced his discussion of urban life with the statement that 'dynasties and royal authority are absolutely necessary for the building of cities and the planning of towns', and attributed their survival to ecology.[1] He then proceeded to say that Muslims only really started to build cities when 'royal authority' got the upper hand over religion, which previously 'forbade them to do any excessive building or to

waste too much money on building activities for no purpose', thereby suggesting that religion in a narrow sense did not play a major role in the morphology of cities.[2]

Ibn Khaldūn's words bring us to the long, and to some extent ongoing, debate about whether an 'Islamic city' exists or not, a question he would probably have answered in the negative. Although many of the chapters in this volume do refer to the issue directly or obliquely, our purpose is not to sally forth into this theoretical fray: the reductionist implications and Orientalist prejudices upon which the concept of an Islamic city is predicated have been thoroughly exposed elsewhere. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise the assumptions that have informed the study of cities in the Islamic world, with which we all engage, whether consciously or unconsciously, in the course of our work.

Orientalists began to take a concerted interest in the nature of the city in the Islamic world in the early twentieth century when the successes of empire gave European scholars unrivalled access to the object of their interest, while also allowing them to compare the 'Islamic' city, generally called the 'medina', with the 'modern' towns and cities being built alongside them. The cities of antiquity and medieval European cities provided other important points of comparison for Orientalist scholarship of the period. The differences that apparently existed between cities in the Islamic world and their medieval and modern Western European counterparts were then attributed to Islam and the Oriental *mentalité* it was purported to have engendered, without any rigorous definition of what either actually meant.

According to the Orientalist canon laid down by the Marçais brothers and von Grunebaum, the distinguishing characteristics of such cities were: a centrally located great mosque; a spatial market hierarchy in which the most prestigious trades were located closest to the mosque; public baths; a governorial complex; inward-looking residential quarters; and, a wall system. A discursive relationship was established between Islam and such urban characteristics as narrow streets, blind alleys, courtyard houses and a relative lack of open public spaces. The apparent absence of urban corporations of a medieval European type, and thus cities' subjugation to despotic political powers, was similarly attributed to the pernicious effects of Islam. By extension, some scholars, working from the Weberian definition of urban status, questioned the very existence of cities as sociopolitical entities in Islamic lands, thus also implying that it was difficult for Muslims to organise in a democratic manner. Moreover, urbanism during the Islamic era was seen as a regression from the orderly Graeco-Roman city plan that had preceded it, in the same way that Islamic civilisation was seen as regressive in contrast to both Graeco-Roman civilisation and its modern Western European descendant. As André Raymond puts it, the Orientalist concept of the Islamic city was 'fundamentally negative' because

it was based on what that city lacked in contrast to Graeco-Roman and European cities.[3]

Concerns about the validity of this model were raised from the 1960s when Lapidus countered traditional understandings of the 'Islamic city' in his *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*,[4] but the debate reached its height in the late 1980s and early 1990s after Janet Abu-Lughod published her forthright article 'The Islamic city – historic myth, Islamic essence and contemporary relevance' in 1987.[5] Nezar Alsayyad expanded on the argument in the first two chapters of his book *Cities and Caliphs* in 1991,[6] which was followed by André Raymond's article 'Islamic city, Arab city: Orientalist myths and recent views', published in 1994.[7] Despite their differences in approach, these authors broadly agreed that the essential problems in the notion of the Islamic city that had developed during the mid-twentieth century were its Orientalist premises, its ahistoricity and its tendency to present a typology based on a very small number of cities – those of North Africa in the first instance, and those of Syria in the second. The prestige of the scholars involved and the deceptive simplicity of their model had lulled successive generations of academics, both non-Muslim and Muslim, into accepting it without question.

In addition to identifying the range of stereotypes and generalisations apparent in the study of cities and urbanism in the Islamic world, the revisionist works of Abu-Lughod, Alsayyad and Raymond suggest alternative ways in which to approach the vexing subject. Drawing on her experience in India, Janet Abu-Lughod claims that there is a difference between Islamic and non-Islamic urban environments even in regions of similar climate and topography and she puts forward three areas where religion does have an urban impact: the legal distinction Islamic law makes between Muslims and non-Muslims, gender segregation and property rights. Nezar Alsayyad argues for a more geographically and chronologically grounded approach and therefore investigates what he describes as 'Arab Muslim' cities in the first Islamic centuries. André Raymond similarly stresses the importance of historically locating the study of cities, citing as examples evidence that the 'degradation' of the Graeco-Roman street plan pre-dated the rise of Islam, and Ottoman archival materials that act as a 'corrective' to the idea of a 'non-administered city'.[8] In Raymond's opinion the key characteristics of the 'traditional' Arab city are a separation between residential and market areas, and the tendency for confessional or ethnic segregation in residential quarters. He finishes by arguing for:

> the notion of a traditional city marked by 'regional' aspects (Arab in the Mediterranean domain, Irano-Afghan and Turkish), but naturally fashioned in depth by the Muslim population that organised it and lived in it (with its beliefs, institutions, and customs, all profoundly impregnated by Islam).[9]

Arguably the most important recent contribution to the study of cities in the Islamic world is Paul Wheatley's magisterial work *The Places where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh through the Tenth Centuries*, which the author, somewhat self-effacingly, describes as a 'sustained gloss' on al-Muqaddasī's (al-Maqdisī's) geographical work, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*.[10] This work offers an encyclopaedic analysis of the urban networks in each region (*iqlīm*) of the tenth-century Islamic lands, with the exception of Sind, using al-Muqaddasī's geography as a base. As a scholar of comparative urban studies, Wheatley is primarily concerned with the external links between urban settlements and the identification of hierarchies among them, but he also dedicates a substantial chapter to the internal 'fabric' of the city.[11] In this chapter, evidence from cities from al-Andalus to Central Asia highlights the real diversity in urban forms across the region even when viewed at the same historical moment, the tenth century. It is only in his epilogue that Wheatley directly addresses the question of whether a distinct 'Islamic' city existed, and offers a cautious summation of his findings, which stresses again the diversity of urban forms in the Islamic lands, but also the undeniable stimulation to urbanism occasioned by the rise of Islam in the form of the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid empires. He ends by reminding us that whatever our own criteria of judgement may be, from the perspective of a tenth-century Muslim such as al-Muqaddasī, 'religion had come to contextualize virtually all perceptions and expectations of urban life, past, present and future'.[12]

Recognition of the flaws inherent in assuming the existence of a generic 'Islamic' city whose contours are applicable at all times and places has directed the thrust of subsequent scholarship towards further detailed research into the physical shape of cities and their socio-political structures. As Susan Slyomovics and Susan Miller note in the introduction to *The Walled Arab City in Literature, Architecture and History*, which looks at North African cities:

> The search for theoretical insights is important, unfortunately it has taken precedence over the individual case studies needed to conduct basic comparative work. Concentrating on generalities, scholars have lost sight of the importance of discerning how a North African city 'works' both in the present and in the past, and in reality and imagination.[13]

Following on from this caveat, the objective of this volume is to move away from theoretical and typological issues and to approach the subject of the city from a variety of disciplinary perspectives that explore how religion 'contextualised' urban life and form, and how particular urban institutions 'worked' at specific times and places. It draws together research and analysis from the sometimes disparate realms of archaeology, architecture and

history in order to look at cities not simply as physical entities but also as socio-political and literary constructs. We hope that by placing the material findings of archaeologists alongside the city as described and imagined in texts, we can present a more nuanced and complex picture of the interaction between religion and the many other salient factors that contributed to the development of cities in the pre-modern Islamic world.

The volume's remit is broad in both chronological and spatial terms. It looks at the pre-modern city from Umayyad to Ottoman times within a geographic area stretching from the Iberian peninsula in the west to Central Asia and north India in the east (Figure 1.1). It would be impossible to cover such a span exhaustively; therefore it presents snapshots of different cities in various epochs with the aim of studying processes rather than identifying the quintessential characteristics of such cities. The choice of period and the use of the adjective 'pre-modern' are based on the assumption that the rise of the European colonial empires in the nineteenth century and the forms of Western-driven globalisation that followed did transform the urban landscape and raise quite different academic concerns from those relevant to the earlier period. The construction of new colonial cities, the 'ghettoisation' of older indigenous settlements, the modernisation of cities and the concomitant political, social and economic changes that took place make it appropriate to consider the nineteenth century as the end of one era and the start of another. Although some historians of the Middle East follow a European historical chronology according to which the post-1500 era is called 'early modern', in terms of the city it seems more appropriate to consider Raymond's 'traditional city' a feature of the landscape until the nineteenth century at least.

To begin with the Islamic conquests and consider the period from the seventh century AD until the colonial era as a single unit may appear to contravene Alsayyad and Raymond's plea for greater sensitivity to changes occurring over time, and lead us into the trap of accepting without question the Orientalist assumption that Islam had a definitive role in shaping all aspects of urban life. However, the assertion of Muslim political control over numerous urban centres and their creation of new towns does allow us to flag up the Islamic conquests as heralding in a new era despite the often gradual nature of change and the continuities from late antiquity that are indubitably present. Moreover, it is the prerogative of an edited volume to bring together work that might otherwise not be viewed in parallel: we have deliberately sought diversity, temporal and geographical, in order to draw into focus areas of difference as well as similarity, and to present religious and literary ideals that may have had quite wide circulation in space and time alongside real examples of urban conformity, non-conformity and interaction with such ideals. Finally, the study of cities and urbanism in the Islamic world is a recognised field even if some of its ideological antecedents are dubious. For this reason, the volume does not cover cities in the same
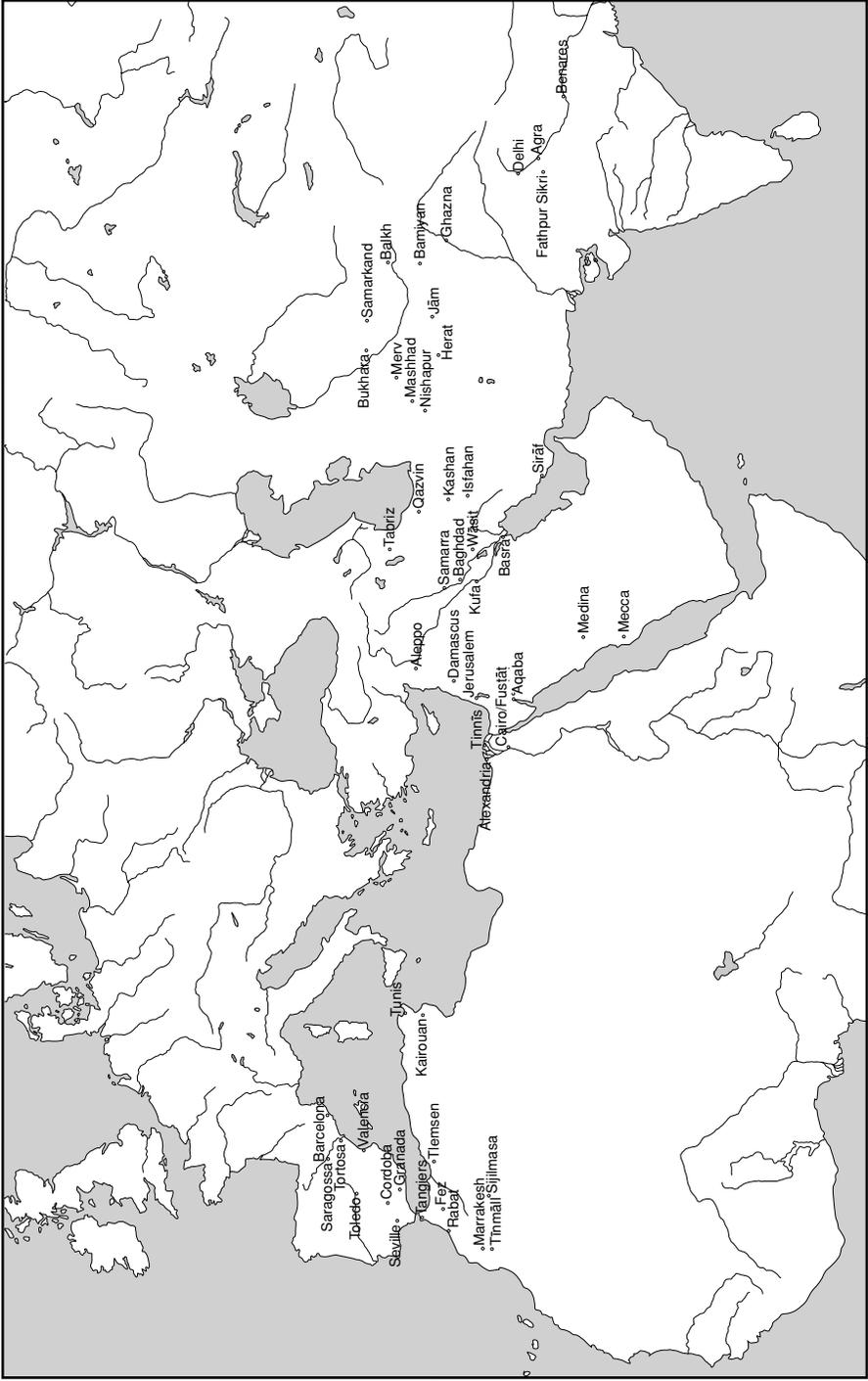
Figure 1.1 Map of the Islamic lands showing the locations of the main centres discussed in the volume. Drawing by Piet Collet.

region before the rise of Islam or attempt to make extensive synchronic comparisons with cities in non-Muslim parts of the world.

Two key terms need further elucidation: 'city' and 'religion'. With respect to the former, although Wheatley describes all urban entities as cities, he also recognises the different 'levels' of settlement that existed in a continuum from large villages to substantial conurbations. Arabic speakers, and Muslims in general, used many different terms for urban settlements and associated structures such as forts and citadels. In the early Islamic period, a distinction existed between garrison towns (*miṣr*, *amṣār*) and more fully developed cities (*madīna*, *madīnāt*). Later the term *madīna* was also applied to royal complexes. The term *qaṣr* covered a multitude of units from a luxurious residence or walled palace to a fortified town or village. Terms for frontier settlements such as *ḥuṣn*, *thughr* and *ribāṭ* had similarly fluid meanings that shifted with place and time. We have attempted to convey some sense of this bewildering variety in our choice of urban sites, which include not only familiar metropoli like Cordoba, Cairo and Isfahan but also less well known locations such as Madīnat al-Zahrā', Tinnīs and Fīrūzkūh.

With respect to the latter term – religion – we have opted for a fairly broad definition. It is our contention that to reduce religion to the rather limited building stipulations of the Sharī'a or the ethics of the early community is as misguided as to make Islam the imperative behind every feature of urban life. Nonetheless, it is obvious that 'Islamic' is an overly generic term and too blunt an analytic tool for understanding the shaping of cities. Therefore we have taken religion to mean not a monolithic set of rules, but rather its myriad manifestations, which include not only Sunnism and Shi'ism but the many different 'schools' and 'sects' within them. Religion thus becomes something both generic and specific at the same time: certainly, shared Islamic practices fostered some urban features common to most cities in the *dār al-islām*, but sectarian beliefs often found visual expression in architecture designed to differentiate the cities of one dynasty or regime from another. Although one might consider this a political rather than religious matter, it was not viewed in this light by Muslim patrons such as the Fatimids in Cairo, whose concerted use of public text on buildings and banners reiterated their Ismā'īlī Shi'i beliefs.[14]

Within this general framework, we have taken up three major themes that, broadly speaking, correspond to the book's sections: urban transformations occasioned by the rise of Islam and their conceptualisation by Muslims; the impact of Muslim regimes on urban development; and the ways in which religion may have affected the functioning of public amenities.

The first theme, which is explored in Part I, is the way in which cities evolved in the early Islamic period in terms of both physical transformation and the production of a Muslim urban imaginary, expressed in the common assertion that Islam is an urban religion. Studies of late antiquity and the rise of Islam indicate the high degree of urban continuity as well as change

from the pre-Islamic to Islamic periods, but what has not been fully researched as yet is the exact loci of these two phenomena, and the mechanisms of transformation. There are also disagreements on the implications of research to date. Wheatley does not credit the rise of Islam with a morphological contribution to urban life, but suggests that a 'style of government and a schedule of responsibilities' were exported from the Arabian peninsula.[15] Alsayyad asserts that only early garrison towns, such as Kufa and Basra, can be said to have been created in a way that reflected such an Islamic religious ethos, while the monumental changes that occurred in Damascus with the Umayyads indicated an imperial rather than religious impulse.[16] In Chapter 2, Donald Whitcomb presents a thesis that diverges from those of both Wheatley and Alsayyad by investigating the archaeological evidence for an Umayyad city type in greater Syria. He proposes a distinctive early Islamic urban layout based on pre-Islamic Arabian urban forms in which a key element may have been a *balāṭ*, a term he suggests was derived from the Latin *palatium* or Greek *palation* (palace, governor's residence) and denoted an Umayyad financial/administrative institution.

Chapter 3, written by Simon O'Meara, approaches the issue of the foundation of Islamic cities from the very different perspective of the legends that surround such foundations. Working from the legend of the foundation of the city of Fez upon the ruins of an ancient city called Zef, he argues that there are certain topoi apparent in the foundation myths of Islamic cities, the precedents of which can be found in the *Sīra* or Biography of the Prophet. According to the *Sīra*, Muḥammad engaged in a series of foundational events, including the physical demarcation of space for the first mosques and the metaphysical demarcation of his community's relations with others, the so-called Constitution of Medina. O'Meara argues that the literary depiction of these events provided a series of topoi that appear from an early date in myths related to the foundation of other cities, suggesting that whether or not an Islamic city existed in the material sense, it most certainly existed in the conceptual sense as a constant reiteration of the miracle of Islam.

Part I ends with Chapter 4, which marks a shift to Merv in Central Asia, a city that functioned as an important regional centre for several centuries after the Islamic conquest of the area. The archaeologist Tim Williams presents evidence for the relationship between the pre-Islamic city of Merv and its later Islamic counterpart, Sultan Kala. Using a combination of aerial photography and archaeology on the ground, he reveals how the new city of Sultan Kala developed alongside the pre-Islamic city of Merv and suggests how political and religious factors combined to influence the decision to move from pre-Islamic Merv and the layout of the new city of Sultan Kala in ways that nonetheless reflected local topography.

The book's second theme is the influence of the state upon urban planning and development. While we must be wary of the common but fallacious statement that there is no distinction between religion and politics in Islam,

it is also true that rulers were great town planners in the pre-modern Islamic world and that their perception of the faith and their desire to inscribe it upon the urban landscape could have a significant impact on urban layout and architectural styles. This brings to the fore the variation possible within the broad referent 'Islamic'. The shifting meaning of minarets discussed by Jonathan Bloom in *Minaret: Symbol of Islam* is a cogent example of an Islamic feature that actually had a much more variegated meaning for Muslims themselves, some of whom initially rejected the minaret as a symbol of Islam at all.[17]

These issues are explored in Part II, which looks at the role of particular dynasties in founding and shaping cities as spaces designed to fulfil various political, military and ceremonial functions. It follows a geographical, and roughly chronological, trajectory from eighth-century Umayyad Cordoba in the west to seventeenth-century Iran and India in the east. In Chapter 5, Amira Bennison investigates the changing forms of royal complexes and their relationship to the urban environment in the Islamic west from the early Umayyad period through to the Almohad era. She shows how the Umayyad modelling of Cordoba evolved as the dynasty cultivated a more monarchical identity and the city's population gradually converted to Islam, a process that culminated in the construction of the royal city of Madīnat al-Zahrā' outside Cordoba and the development of a complex ceremonial linking the two cities. The chapter then traces how the subsequent Almoravid and Almohad empires expressed their identities through their approaches to urban planning and ceremonial, which were constructed in a discursive relationship with the preceding Umayyad paradigm, and the changing religious persuasion of the subject population.

In Chapter 6, Jonathan Bloom explores the state contribution to urban construction in the case of Fatimid Cairo. He takes issue with the dominant assumption in the secondary literature, that al-Qāhira was a capital city from its inception, by deconstructing later Fatimid accounts to show how it actually began as a garrison town (*miṣr*) with no particular ceremonial function. It was the failure of the Fatimids to conquer the entire *dār al-islām* that obliged them to make the city their capital and slowly transform it into a ceremonial centre. His account shows the shifting implications of the state's religious orientation: at the outset, the Fatimids were differentiated from the population on ethnic and religious grounds as an Ismāʿīlī Berber force of occupation, and therefore sought to protect themselves in a walled camp. However, as they became more secure and accepted the eastward limits of Fatimid expansion, the public display and attempted propagation of their religious beliefs became more pronounced.

Moving eastwards, David Thomas presents an archaeological look at the Ghurid summer capital of Jām/Fīrūzkūh located in modern day Afghanistan (Chapter 7). The most prominent feature of this site, located in an inaccessible mountain region, is its huge tiled minaret, which suggests a settlement of

some symbolic significance. Although it is difficult to prove definitively that Jām is Fīrūzkūh, it is undeniably a Ghurid site that reflects the needs of a dynasty of nomadic origin who resided in their cities for only part of the year but nonetheless wanted to make an urban mark on the landscape. It thus presents a rather different model of urbanism from other Central Asian sites, such as Merv discussed in Chapter 4, which had pre-Islamic origins and were inhabited for much longer periods.

Part II finishes with Chapter 8, which compares two later cities from the Indo-Iranian part of the Islamic world, seventeenth-century Isfahan and Fathpur Sikri. Stephen Blake explains how both Safavid Isfahan in Iran and Mughal Fathpur Sikri in northern India were constructed by rulers who were engaged in major projects to reform or restructure their respective empires. He then suggests how the location and form of these imperial cities reflected the administrative changes their founders were making but also their attitudes towards religion. In the case of Akbar in India, Fathpur Sikri, located in the vicinity of the shrine of the Chishtiyya brotherhood, functioned as a temporary capital while the changes Akbar was making took root. In Iran, Shāh ‘Abbās's development of a new imperial-religious nexus in Isfahan coincided with his successful reshaping of the Safavid state, and the city became a permanent capital.

The volume's third theme is the role played by specific institutions in urban life, and whether Islam affected the understanding of that role to any extent. The focused studies of different public amenities in Part III show that whether institutions were explicitly religious, such as mosques and mausolea, or what we might perceive as social, such as hospitals and cisterns, their role was understood through the prism of Islam, giving meaning to the concept of an Islamic city as a cultural if not as a physical space.

In Chapter 9, Alison Gascoigne considers the crucial issue of water supply through a detailed archaeological study of the cisterns and water facilities of Tinnīs in the Nile delta, and reference to medieval Arabic accounts. Provision of free water was considered an Islamic duty. However, the peculiar situation of Tinnīs, a city on an island in a brackish lake, put fresh water at a high premium, creating tensions between Muslim attitudes towards charity and the practical exigencies of the situation. The evidence also suggests a shift from public to private ownership over time, a feature recognised for other areas of Islamic social and economic life.

In Chapter 10, Athena Syrakoy looks at the *māristān* (hospital) constructed in Granada under state auspices in the mid-fourteenth century. Archaeological and topographical analysis of the hospital's form and location are given meaning by a detailed examination of the historical circumstances of its foundation – the era of the Black Death. Comparison between the foundation of a hospital in Christian Valencia and the Granadan example illustrates the radically different implications the same institution could have, depending on religious context.

Nicholas Warner's contribution, Chapter 11, investigates the form of Riḍwān Bey's complex near Bāb Zuwayla in Cairo, which included religious, commercial and residential elements. Riḍwān Bey was a powerful official who led the pilgrimage caravan from Cairo to Mecca in the mid-seventeenth century, and his complex was located on the route of the lavish procession of the caravan as it started its journey. By elucidating the relationship between the commercial complex and the pilgrimage procession, Warner sheds light upon the multifaceted relationship between commerce and piety in an early modern Muslim city, and the longevity of certain issues within Islamic urbanism.

On the one hand, these chapters suggest the richness of urban experience in the pre-modern Islamic world and the danger inherent in over-generalising such experiences. On the other, they also suggest the pervasive power that religion in its myriad forms possessed in shaping the urban environment or at least in explaining its shape. State, society and environment naturally played their part too but the state frequently operated using religious rationales of one sort or another, and social services were also understood through the lens of faith. Moreover, Muslims themselves often pictured their cities in an idealistic, if not sacred, way, looking back to Medina and other evocative urban sites as the ultimate expression of the destiny of humankind.

Notes

1 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. F. Rosenthal, abridged by N. J. Dawood. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005 edn, pp. 263, 264.
2 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 271.
3 André Raymond, 'Islamic city, Arab city: Orientalist myths and recent views', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 21: 1, 1994, 3–18, p. 6.
4 Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.
5 Janet Abu-Lughod, 'The Islamic city – historic myth, Islamic essence and contemporary relevance', *IJMES* 19, 1987, 155–76.
6 Nezar Alsayyad, *Cities and Caliphs: On the Genesis of Arab Muslim Urbanism*. New York, London and Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991, pp. 2–6, 11–41.
7 See note 3 above.
8 Raymond, 'Islamic city, Arab city', pp. 10–11.
9 Raymond, 'Islamic city, Arab city', p. 18.
10 Paul Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh through the Tenth Centuries*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. xiv.
11 Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together*, pp. 227–326.
12 Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together*, p. 337.
13 Susan Slyomovics (ed.), *The Walled Arab City in Literature, Architecture and History: The Living Medina in the Maghrib*. London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001, p. 2.

14 See Irene Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
15 Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together*, p. 327.
16 Alsayyad, *Cities and Caliphs*, pp. 44–76, 78–103.
17 Jonathan Bloom, *Minaret: Symbol of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Part I

THE GENESIS
OF 'ISLAMIC' CITIES

2

AN URBAN STRUCTURE FOR THE EARLY ISLAMIC CITY

An archaeological hypothesis

Donald Whitcomb

> The newly created urban map provided a landscape on which these complicated political, religious, and military agendas could be integrated and expressed.[1]

The study of early Islamic cities has suffered from self-imposed limits and has even been challenged as an empirical subject of research. The weight of traditional definitions originates in a preoccupation with the medieval and pre-modern cities of the Middle East and idealising models based on descriptions of these cities. New trends in recent years include a tremendous concentration of scholarly interest in late antiquity, with reassessments of many assumptions. Among these assumptions may be counted the primacy of literary resources research, especially when the chronological lacunae may be taken to cast doubt on historical constructs in the foundations of Islamic civilisation.

The present study seeks to establish a set of topographic features to replace traditional models, to describe an Arabian urban tradition which came to characterise an early Islamic urban complex. Part of the methodology employed will be an examination of the patterns to be found in archaeological evidence, an interpretation of cumulative examples that may be antithetical to the concept of archaeology as employed by many historians. Thus the study of the so-called desert castles of Bilād al-Shām (greater Syria) is approached from an assessment of formal patterns, setting aside traditional art historical evaluations. These monuments are extraordinarily important for the generation of hypotheses on their functional rationale; in the present case, that they were all constructed as incipient urban entities. Structural elements are visible in these places that may be sought in more recognisable cities: such elements are bathhouses, gates, palatial or – better – administrative structures, mosques and residential elements.[2]

A basic hypothesis is that such elements were recognised aspects of urban planning inherited by the early Islamic state, and further that this inheritance

15

was not directly that of the Hellenistic/Roman world but derived from the urban civilisation of south Arabia. This was an Arabian concept of urbanism that proved appropriate as the material referent for the theocratic state that began in the Hijaz in the early seventh century AD. The existence of a distinctive 'Islamic city' from the beginnings of Islam relies on specific archaeological characteristics, which are amplified through the interpretation of 'contemporary' literary evidence for corresponding societal constructs.

Baths as urban elements

The bathhouse may be considered as a primary urban element in the early Islamic city, one that grafts a Hellenistic technological apparatus on to a new functional (and perhaps ideological) rationale. While one finds baths in extra-urban situations – for example, in the Negev[3] – within cities baths seem to be located to a consistent pattern. One of the earliest seems to be the bath at Kurnub (Mampsis), which appears to have been constructed in the middle Nabataean period and to have continued in use through the Byzantine and early Islamic periods (Figure 2.1).[4] The Kurnub bath is located near the north (main) gate; south of it is the 'citadel' (administrative complex)

Figure 2.1 Plan of the city of Kurnub (Mampsis); after Negev, *Mampsis*, plan I (see note 4).

with the cathedral. These elements are all on the east side of the settlement; the west part is primarily residential, with a second, later church.

The plan of the walled settlement of Kurnub may be superimposed on the northern quadrants of 'Anjar. The bath is again in the north-east sector just north of the palace area and mosque. Near the bath is the north gate, a relative position that suggests that this approach may have been the most important at 'Anjar. Not only is there a good approximate fit, but one sees a possible division between the residential area in the western half and other elements in the eastern half. The city of 'Anjar has been recognised as an early Islamic foundation, with its classicising elements representing a late exemplar of western urban tradition.[5] The close comparison with the plan of Kurnub suggests that an underlying pattern may be present.

If one compares Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, Khirbat al-Mafjar, and Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī, one will notice that the bath for each of these complexes bears a constant relationship in distance and direction to the 'palace' (or administrative centre, see below; see Figure 2.2). The bathhouse is located to the north at 20–25 m distance. The third of these examples, Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī, has another element, the large enclosure or *madīna*, according to Grabar. One should note that the relationship of these architectural units was not explored by Grabar, except in the context of the encompassing hydrological system.[6]

The bath, palace, and large enclosure at Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī form a pattern less fully reproduced in the other desert castles. This becomes clear when it is superimposed on a plan of 'Anjar and Kurnub (still holding a constant north and scale). The large enclosure fits over the north-west residential quarter (and its street), the place possibly related to a partly excavated official quarter, and the bath in a close relative location. This suggests that the planning of these Umayyad complexes was not random but in accord with a consistent plan, a conceptual model for urban organisation.

The baths and palace

The test of a hypothesis is its applicability. One may turn to consider the Umayyad development in Jerusalem (Figure 2.3). Study of these architectural elements has focused on the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqṣā mosque, with obvious justification. Rosen-Ayalon has clearly pointed out the axial relationship of these monuments to each other and to the structures discovered south of the temple platform.[7] The principal building (the largest and best preserved) has been described as a palace or *dār al-imāra*. If there is a constant of distance (20–25 m) and direction (north north-east) for the relationship between palace and bath, one may expect building IV to have a bath. In a recent popular description of these structures, Ben-Dov claims the discovery of hypocausts, a caldarium of over 100 m^2, and a *dīwān* (claimed to be similar to Khirbat al-Mafjar), in the expected location.[8] There remain
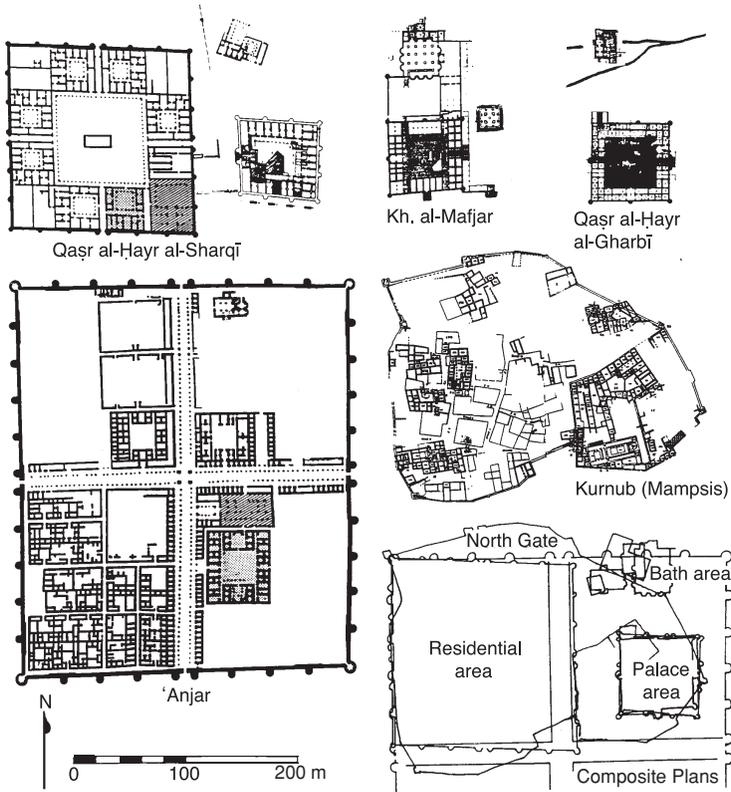
Figure 2.2 Comparative plans of Kurnub, with 'Anjar, Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī, and Khirbat al-Mafjar. Each is at the same scale and north orientation, and then superimposed with coinciding 'palace' areas.

the further implications of this model. Was the principal gate of the Islamic city to the north? Was the residential area to the west of the bath/palace complex? Finally, did the Umayyads graft a traditional Arab urban plan on to the abandoned eastern sector of this holy city? One may turn to a more detailed investigation of the palace element of the early Islamic city.

The *balāṭ* as an urban element[9]

Al-Muqaddasī gives the following synonyms for Jerusalem: Bayt al-Maqdis, Ilya or al-Balāṭ.[10] For Le Strange and other commentators, this last name means the 'imperial residence' or 'court', derived from the Latin *palatium*.[11] A second, equally plausible etymology is from the Greek *platea*, signifying an open, paved court. The name 'Bayt al-Maqdis' would seem a remembrance of the Temple, likewise 'Ilya' is derived from the palatial complex of Herod;
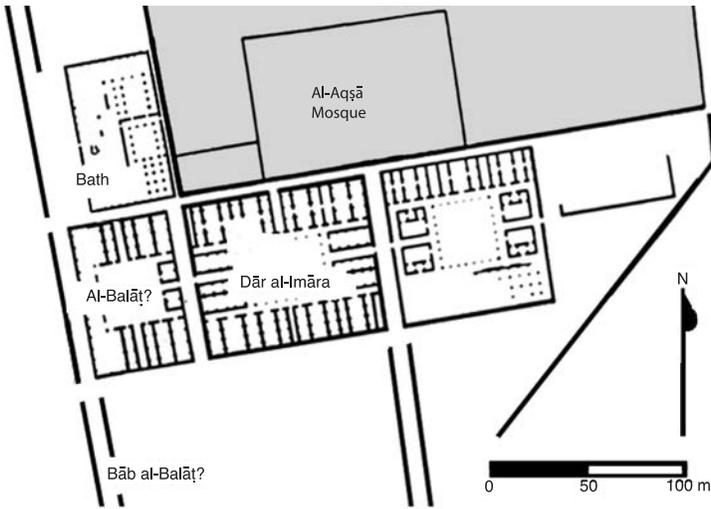
Figure 2.3 Plan of the area south of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem; after
M. Ben-Dov, *Historical Atlas of Jerusalem*, New York: Continuum, 2002,
p. 176.

therefore, one may suggest that the referent for al-Balāṭ is more than a paved
area and more likely to have been a 'palace'. Furthermore, the great geo-
grapher may have had historical phases in mind, a Jewish Bayt al-Maqdis,
a classical Ilya and finally an Islamic al-Balāṭ. Happily, the location and
characteristics of al-Balāṭ are confirmed through recent archaeological
discoveries.

The gates along the southern wall of Jerusalem are named by al-Muqaddasī,
beginning in the south-west and proceeding counter-clockwise: (1) the Bāb
Ṣahyūn, (2) the Bāb al-Tīh (or al-Nīh, associated with the Nea church),
(3) the Bāb al-Balāṭ, (4) the Bāb Jubb Irmiyā and finally (5) the Bāb Silwān,
the last probably near the south-east corner of the city.[12] The precise location
of these gates has been debated by Tsafrir and Bahat; the curious feature
remains that, while each of the other walls of Jerusalem has only one gate, the
south has five gates.[13] This concentration of gates suggests that al-Muqaddasī
is listing toponyms and not necessarily functional gates; if there were a
principal southern gate, one might suggest the 'central' Bāb al-Balāṭ.

The importance and relative location of the Bāb al-Balāṭ has taken on
a more vivid meaning since the excavations, between 1968 and 1978, of
an 'administrative compound' consisting of 'six large palaces [with] wall
paintings, stucco, and vast dimensions'.[14] Rosen-Ayalon has shown that this
palatial complex fits with the plan of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf and original
al-Aqṣā mosque;[15] its date should be at least to the time of ʿAbd al-Mālik

and more likely to Muʿāwiya. These Umayyad buildings continued well into the ʿAbbasid period and may have still been extant in al-Muqaddasī's day (as indicated by stratified ceramics).[16] The name al-Balāṭ was applied to Jerusalem not out of some antiquarian interest but in the recognition of monumental elements added during the early Islamic period.

Urban examples of the *balāṭ*

The palaces of al-Balāṭ in Jerusalem were located immediately south and south-west of al-Aqṣā mosque. It is therefore curious that the area immediately south-west of the mosque of the Prophet in Medina is also called al-Balāṭ. The derivation of the name in this case is generally attributed to the second etymology, the Greek *platea* meaning a paved square or roadway.[17] Thus, al-ʿAli describes 'the grand pavement "Balat Al Aʿdham" between the mosque and the musalla'.[18] He goes on to note that this same area originally belonged to ʿUmar and that 'Muʿāwiya bought it and made it a bureau and a treasury'.[19] Furthermore, nearby was *al-ḥiṣn al-ʿatīq* (the old fortress), which served as the governor's residence and the police prefecture. It thus seem reasonable to assume that the original usage of the term *balāṭ* in Medina was to describe an 'administrative complex' composed of palatial buildings. These urban elements were located south-west and on the *qibla* side of the mosque, the traditional location of the *dār al-imāra*. One may note also that two structures are described: Muʿāwiya's bureau and treasury, and the governor's residence and guard house (*al-ḥiṣn al-ʿatīq*).

In both Jerusalem and Medina, the *balāṭ* seems to have been founded early in the Umayyad period, possibly as early as the caliphate of Muʿāwiya. When Muʿāwiya made Damascus the Umayyad capital, he is said to have created a governorial centre, the Qubbat al-Khaḍrāʾ, possibly on the foundations of a Byzantine palace south of the mosque. Another structure at this time was the Dār al-Khayl, most probably an administrative complex rather than simply a stable as its name suggests. If this building was south-west of the mosque, its area may have been the Ḥārat al-Balāṭa, (Balāṭa quarter) known from later sources.[20]

Archaeological evidence for a *balāṭ*

These examples suggest that the *balāṭ* may have acquired a locational and functional identification at least by the time of Muʿāwiya, and a meaning distinct from the *dār al-imāra*. An indication of these functions may be found in the excavations of late Byzantine Caesarea Maritima. The Temple Mount held a large domed building, possibly an octagonal martyrium, constructed in the mid-sixth century.[21] South of this structure was a bath, and a complex that Holum suggests may have been the governor's palace or *praetorium*.[22] Part of this complex was described as an 'archives building',

an open courtyard house with benches and mosaic floors (Figure 2.4). The mosaics are simple geometric patterns with inscriptions: those in the waiting rooms entered from the street quote Romans 13: 3 – If you would not fear the authority, then do good [and you will receive praise from it]. The remaining rooms mention individuals associated with a *skrinion* or bureau responsible for revenues.[23] The building would seem to be a tax office associated with audits, appeals and records, used in the late sixth and possibly into the early seventh century.

This example from Caesarea Maritima may be compared with a structure excavated by Nassib Saliby in Damascus.[24] This building has a series of rooms arranged around a courtyard, the floors of which are decorated with multicoloured stones and mosaic (Figure 2.5). The largest room excavated has a geometric pattern and inscription very similar to those of Caesarea. The inscription in this case may be translated 'God is one, who protects all those who enter this place and those who stay in it'.[25] The inscription seems possibly more Islamic than earlier and suggests a public place. Perhaps more interesting is the location, south-west of the Umayyad mosque in the area known as the Ḥārat al-Balāṭa, as mentioned above.[26]
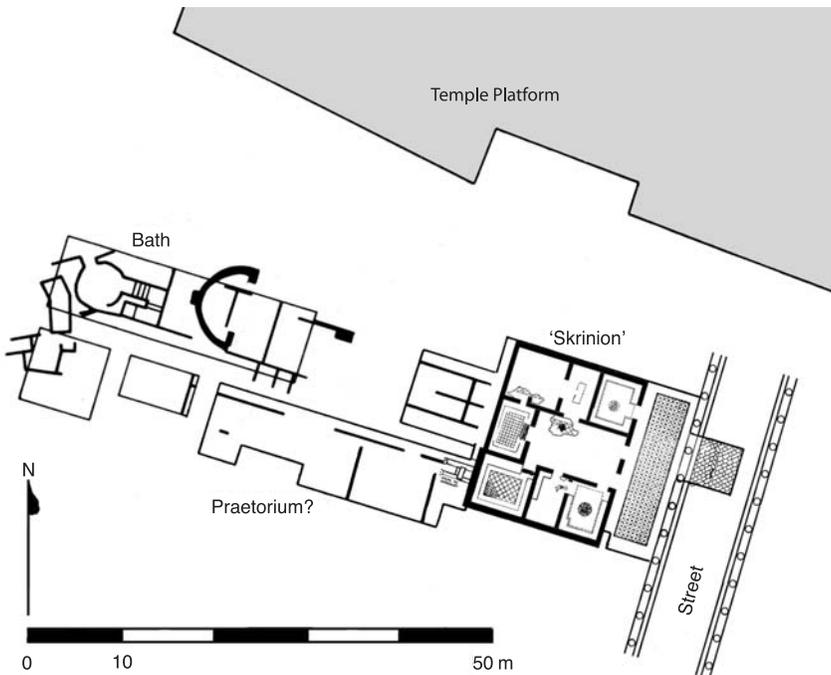
Figure 2.4 Plan of the area south of the Temple Platform of Caesarea Maritima; after Holum, 'Inscriptions from the imperial revenue office' (see note 22), Figures 1 and 2 combined.
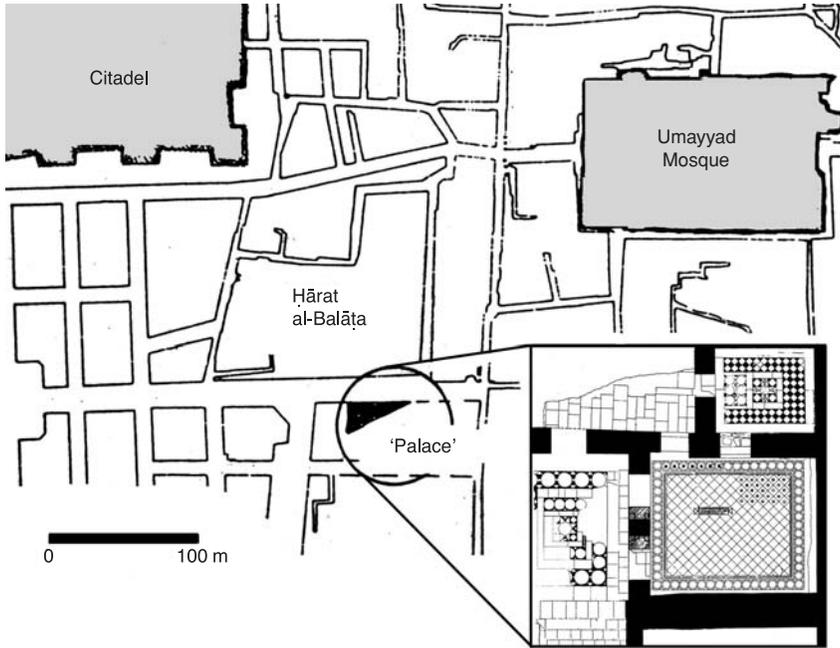
Figure 2.5 The 'palace' area of Damascus; after Saliby, 'Un palais Byzantino-Omeyyade' (see note 24), Figure 1, with Figure 2 as an inset.

There remains the question of when this term entered Arabic topographic usage and its meaning. An interesting observation was made by Shahid on a description of the Church of the Holy Mother of God in Zafar, in ancient south Arabia. This church is provided with a topographic note stating that it is in the middle of the *dana plateia*, usually thought of as 'the wide street'. However, Shahid suggests that *dana* is actually the Himyarite palace of Raydān in Zafar and amends *plateia* to *palation*, placing the church within the palace complex.[27] For contemporary Greek usage of *palation*, one may turn to Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, which gives a main definition of an imperial residence or court, followed by its use for residences of non-Roman kings and for royal palaces in general. Another use is for a governor's residence, for which an example is found in the *Acta Pilati*.[28]

Spatial patterns in the early Islamic city

Archaeological research in the 'Aqaba region has revealed the remains of the early Islamic city of Ayla in the heart of the modern city.[29] This town was occupied from about AD 650 to the arrival of the Crusaders in AD 1116, a period of *c*.450 years. The archaeological evidence of this period provides

important information on the sequence of cultural changes between late antiquity and the formation of early Islam. The interpretative understanding of archaeological evidence suggests a foundation from the time of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and an opportunity to test this proposed model for the spatial pattern of the early Islamic city.

Enclosed within the shell of a pseudo-legionary camp (not unlike Lajjūn in Jordan or Babylon in Egypt), one would expect to find the structural elements necessary for urban entities: bathhouses, gates, the palatial or better administrative structures, mosques and residential areas. The city of Ayla is oriented with corners to the cardinal directions; however, the north-east gate appears to be associated with the direction of Syria and hence acts as a functional 'north'. As luck would have it, there is no evidence for the location of a bathhouse at 'Aqaba, though some reports during building of the Corniche road suggest that hypocausts might have been found east of the Syrian Gate. During the 1995 season of excavations, a large building, decorated with external pilasters, was found just north-east of the Central Pavilion. If this was the administrative structure or 'palace' of Ayla, its location would be the predicted distance and direction from the putative bath and north gate (Figure 2.6). This topographic configuration would
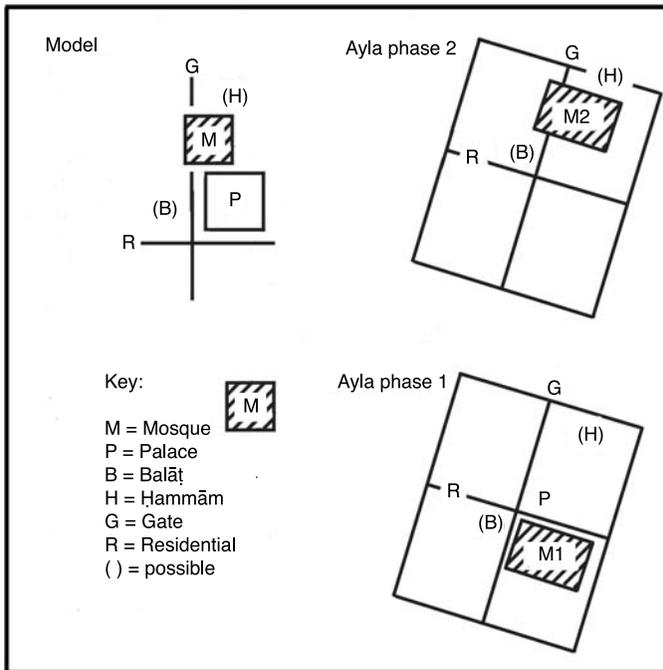
Figure 2.6 A model for proposed configurations of early Islamic Ayla ('Aqaba in Jordan).

correspond to the axial relationship of the Ayla congregational mosque, excavated in 1993, and the palace structure mentioned above. The model would predict a *balāṭ* or financial offices, located in the unexcavated area west of the palace.

Nothing is ever completely straightforward, even in the best of models. The mosque excavated in 'Aqaba is a secondary structure, belonging to the 'Abbasid period (after the mid-eighth century), which imitates the original congregational mosque. The Umayyad mosque, which was probably that founded by 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, is not beneath the later mosque and has not been found. Another pattern may be postulated: location of the palace on the *qibla* side of the mosque appears to have been an innovation of the caliph Mu'āwiya (*c*.680). Before this time, the palace seems to have been either north or east of the mosque, possibly in imitation of the locational relationship between the house of the Prophet and the mosque (*ḥaram*) in Medina. This pattern would suggest that the first mosque at Ayla should be found south of the palace building. The area has not been excavated but lies in the path of the wadi; if the wadi is a fault formed in the 748 earthquake, then there was an ample reason for abandoning its first location and building an imitation on solid ground to the north of the palace.

Conclusions

The Muslim conquest initiated a conscious attempt to recreate specific morphological features that constituted an urban pattern characteristic of western and south-western Arabian culture. The institutional components of this south Arabian city were adapted to the religious, administrative and commercial needs of the new Islamic polity, a transformation that set a trajectory for medieval cities throughout the Middle East (and perhaps even Europe of the early Middle Ages). Thus an Arabian concept of urbanism lies at the foundation of the early Islamic city; the existence of a distinctive 'Islamic city' from the beginnings of Islam begins to take form with specific archaeological characteristics. This hypothesis is derived from 'Aqaba and other urban plans and can be tested on other sites in Arabia and the Levant.

This very brief description of a model of the early Islamic city has an obvious function in providing an empirical basis for understanding Ayla or other archaeological sites. Perhaps of more interest is the strong indication that, among other aspects, the early Islamic city was a ritual city; rather like Persepolis, the ritual city is a functional framework that has underpinned urbanism since very early times. One may trace this phenomenon from the ancient Near East to its late antique manifestations in south-west Arabia. In this sense, the early Islamic city was an oriental phenomenon, one of cultural continuity that absorbed varied tribal and ethnic identities into the Islamic community (*umma*). This was an Arabian concept of urbanism that

proved appropriate as the material referent for the theocratic state that began in the Hijaz in the early seventh century.

Notes

1 Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City in Fatimid Cairo*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994, p. 51.

2 While this is a contextual analysis of topographic features, certain fundamental aspects will not be considered at this stage. The source and role of hydrological development are crucial to the existence of any city. Perhaps just as important is the character of the agricultural hinterland, which, while basic to the definition of any particular city, will be assumed as a constant in the present analysis. A background to this hypothesis may be found in Donald Whitcomb, 'Islam and the socio-cultural transition of Palestine, early Islamic period (638–1099 CE)', in T. Levy (ed.), *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*. London: Pinter, 1995, 488–501; Donald Whitcomb, 'Urbanism in Arabia', *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 7, 1996, 38–51; Donald Whitcomb, 'Hesban, Amman, and Abbasid archaeology in Jordan', in L. E. Stager, J. A. Greene and M. D. Coogan (eds), *The Archaeology of Jordan and Beyond: Essays in Honor of James A. Sauer*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraun, 2000, 505–15.

3 These were first noted by C. L. Woolley and T. E. Lawrence in *The Wilderness of Zin*. London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1914.

4 Avram Negev, *The Architecture of Mampsis, Final Report 2: The Late Roman and Byzantine Periods*, QEDEM Monographs 27. Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988.

5 The best summary of the myriad explanations of this site is R. Hillenbrand, ''Anjar and early Islamic urbanism', in G. P. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins (eds), *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Leiden: Brill, 1999, 59–98; see also Jean Sauvaget, 'Remarques sur les monuments omeyyades I: Chateaux de Syrie', *Journal Asiatique* 231, 1939, 1–59.

6 Oleg Grabar et al., *City in the Desert: Qasr al-Hayr East*, 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.

7 Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, *The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharif: An Iconographic Study*, QEDEM Monographs 28. Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1989.

8 M. Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem*. Jerusalem: Keter, 1982, pp. 316–17.

9 As Sourdel has noted, this meaning seems to have changed over time, and in general usage comes to mean a colonnaded part of a mosque. Dominique Sourdel, 'Balāṭ', *EI* 2, vol. 1, 987 (cf. É. Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l'Égypte, écrite en arabe par Taki-Eddin-Ahmed-Makrizi*, 4 vols in 2. Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1837–45, vol. 2: 1, 1842, p. 277, n. 3). Thus it is used in a tenth-century description of the mosque of Medina as an 'aisle'. See N. N. N. Khoury, 'The meaning of the great mosque of Cordoba in the tenth century', *Muqarnas* 13, 1995, 80–98, pp. 90, 98, n. 66.

10 Shams al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Maʿrifat al-Aqālīm*, M. J. de Goeje (ed.), Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum 3. Leiden: Brill, 1906/1967, p. 30, citations under 'Iliya' and 'Bayt al-Maqdis', with 'al-Quds' in apposition; curiously he does not use al-Balāṭ in his description of the city; S. D. Goitein, 'Jerusalem in the Arab period (638–1099)', *The Jerusalem Cathedra* 2, 1982, 168–93.

11 Guy Le Strange, *Description of Syria, Including Palestine*. London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1896, p. 34.

12 This methodology is consistent in all lists given by this geographer.

13 Yoram Tsafrir, 'Muqaddasi's gates of Jerusalem – a new identification based on Byzantine sources', *Israel Exploration Journal* 27, 1977, 152–61; Dan Bahat, 'Les portes de Jérusalem selon Mukaddasi: Nouvelle identification', *Revue Biblique* 93, 1986, 429–35.

14 Dan Bahat, 'Jerusalem', *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* 3. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 224–38, p. 237.

15 Rosen-Ayalon, *al-Haram al-Sharif*.

16 Prag, personal communication. This argumentation follows the theory of Bahat, 'Portes de Jerusalem'; the objections raised by Wightman do not successfully challenge this interpretation of the Bāb al-Balāṭ and its palaces. G. J. Wightman, *The Walls of Jerusalem: from the Canaanites to the Mamluks*, Mediterranean Archaeology Supplement 4. Sydney: Meditarch, 1993, p. 241.

17 F. Giese, 'Balāṭ', *EI* 1, vol. 1, 615–16.

18 Saleh Ahmed al-'Ali, 'Studies in the topography of Medina (during the 1st century AH)', *Islamic Culture* 35: 2, 1961, 65–92, p. 80.

19 al-'Ali, 'Medina', p. 79.

20 N. Elisséeff, *La description de Damas d'Ibn 'Asakir*. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1959. Another possible example is from Tunis, founded about the same time (698); in the plan of the *madīna* or old city, one finds the district on the *qibla* side of the great mosque named Sūq al-Blāṭ. Besim Salim Hakim, *Arabic-Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles*. London: KPI, 1986, pp. 120–1.

21 J. Magness, 'Late Roman and Byzantine pottery, preliminary report, 1990', in R. L. Vann (ed.), *Caesarea papers*, Journal of Roman Archaeology supplement 5. Ann Arbor, MI: JRA, 1992, 129–43.

22 Kenneth G. Holum, 'Inscriptions from the imperial revenue office of Byzantine Caesarea Palaestinae', in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research*, Journal of Roman Archaeology supplement 14. Ann Arbor, MI: JRA, 1995, 333–45, 'Field C', pp. 333–5.

23 Holum, 'Inscriptions from the imperial revenue office of Byzantine Caesarea Palaestinae', p. 341.

24 Nassib Saliby, 'Un palais Byzantino-Omeyyade à Damas', in C. Castel et al. (eds), *Les Maisons dans la Syrie antique du IIIe millénaire aux débuts de l'Islam*. Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1997, 191–4.

25 Saliby, 'Un palais Byzantino-Omeyyade', p. 193.

26 The parallel of the bureau with a palace may suggest that the *balāṭ* may have functioned as the location of the *dīwān*.

27 Irfan Shahid, 'Byzantium in south Arabia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33, 1979, 23–94, pp. 46–7.

28 G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961–8, p. 998, b. I am endebted to T. Dousa for this reference.

29 Donald Whitcomb, 'Excavations in Aqaba, Jordan, and a model of the early Islamic city', *Adumatu* 1, 2000, 62–5.

THE FOUNDATION LEGEND OF FEZ AND OTHER ISLAMIC CITIES IN LIGHT OF THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET

Simon O'Meara

Early and medieval Muslim claims that biblical and antique sites lie at the foundations of a number of Islamic *madīna*s have received academic consideration.[1] By contrast, the legends narrated of these and other *madīna*s at the moment of their foundation or Islamic re-foundation have received almost none.[2] This is an oversight, for although medieval Arab authors often show a fascination for the marvellous and unusual, and thus cannot always be relied on for objectivity, the contrived, semi-literary elements, or topoi, shared by a number of these legends indicate more than just heightened imagination. As will be argued in this chapter, they indicate a ritual re-enactment of a Prophetic foundation paradigm, and suggest that for at least some Muslims, whether or not an ideal Islamic city existed physically, it existed conceptually as a recurring expression of the alleged miracle of Islam. In the first part of the chapter, I shall refer to the foundation legends of Fez, Wāsiṭ, al-Rāfiqa, Madīnat al-Zāhira, Kairouan, Baghdad and Samarra, to demonstrate that such shared topoi exist. I shall start with the Fez legend, on account of its length, and then make comparisons with the other legends. In the second part, I shall examine the possibility that a paradigm from the Life of the Prophet, or *sīra*, informs the topoi's existence. Because the term 'legend' will subsequently be differentiated from that of 'myth', I shall define the former. While its meaning in the chapter broadly follows ordinary usage, namely a story 'associated with some particular place or culture-hero',[3] specifically, it follows the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski:

> [Legends] refer to subjects intensely stimulating to the natives; they are all connected with activities such as economic pursuits, warfare, adventure, success in dancing and in ceremonial exchange. Moreover, since they record singularly great achievements in all

such pursuits, they redound to the credit of some individual and his descendants or of a whole community; and hence they are kept alive by the ambition of those whose ancestry they glorify.[4]

Legends of foundation

In the earliest extant histories of Fez, the fourteenth-century AD *Rawḍ al-qirṭās* and *Zahrat al-ās*, a nearly identical legend is recorded regarding the *madīna*'s foundation by a descendant of the Prophet, Idrīs b. Idrīs b. 'Abd Allah (d. AH 213/AD 828).[5] The politically motivated and historically inaccurate attribution of this foundation to him, not his father Idrīs b. 'Abd Allah (d. 175/791), is not of concern here.[6] Of issue instead are the contrived elements of the account that indicate the legend was most probably forced to conform to a prior model. These topoi are four: the elevated and then glorified status of the city's founder; the eremitic monk with his scriptural prophecy; the physical act of foundation, in which a matrix of power is established, ruled over by the founder; and the ruins of the ancient city Zef, out of which Islam arises supreme. Concerning the first three, the legend reads as follows:

> Ibn Ghālib [n.d.] mentions in his history, that when Imām Idrīs decided to build [Fez] and was standing in the site so as to mark it out, he passed by an old man, one of the Christian monks, over one hundred and fifty years of age, in retreat in a hermit's cell (*ṣawma'a*) nearby. [The monk] stopped Imām Idrīs, greeted him, and then said: Amir! What do you wish to do between these two hills? [Idrīs] said: Between them I wish to mark out a city as a dwelling for me and my children after me, wherein God on high is worshipped, His book is recited, and His boundaries are upheld. The old monk said: Amir! I have good news for you. What would that be, monk? Some monk before me in this monastery, dead now a hundred years, told me he had found in his books of knowledge (*kutub 'ilmihi*) that on this site there was a city called Zef, in ruins for 1,700 years; that a man called Idrīs, belonging to the family of the Prophet, would renew it, revive it from oblivion, make stand its ruins; and that its importance would be great, its destiny momentous. In it, the religion of Islam would last until the Last Day. Idrīs said: Thanks be to God. I am Idrīs. I am from the Prophet's family, God bless him and grant him salvation, and I shall build it, God willing. This event strengthened his resolve to build [Fez], and he commenced digging its foundations.[7]

Whereas the elevated and then glorified status of the founder Idrīs requires little comment, so obviously contrived and formulaic is it, and likewise the

monk with his scriptural prophecy, with respect to the physical act of foundation some remarks are necessary. The verb used is *ikhtaṭṭa*: to mark out a site, physically to draw its boundaries.[8] Upon these boundaries will stand the walls of the perimeter fence and the buildings enclosed within.[9] In physically drawing the city's boundaries this way, an inside and outside is established: outside lies what is wild and excluded; inside, what is domesticated and belongs. In the language of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, a 'field of power' (*champ du pouvoir*) is instituted: a society's pre-eminent governing matrix, pertaining to the principles of domination and authority and the political struggles arising in relation to them.[10] This matrix is alluded to in a speech given by Idrīs immediately before he strikes the ground in construction of the city's first walls. Invoked in the speech is a realm of obeisance and a community defined by law:

> When Imām Idrīs, may God be pleased with him, decided to build Fez . . . he raised his hands to the sky and said: O God! Make [of Fez] a house of religious knowledge and law (*dār 'ilm wa fiqh*), wherein Your book is recited and Your Sunna and boundaries upheld. Make its people cleave to the Sunna and Orthodoxy[11] for as long as you make [the city] last. Then he said: In the name of God, the Clement, the Merciful. Praise be to God. The earth belongs to God; He gives it as a heritage to such of His servants as He pleases; and the end is best for the God-fearing.[12] He then took the pickaxe in his hand, and commenced digging the foundations.[13]

Concerning the fourth of the legend's topoi, the story of Zef, whereas drawing the city's boundaries is an act of separation, building upon an ancient site is one of continuity, with one important distinction: the physical and religious trajectories of Zef are reversed in Fez. Zef is in ruins, Fez is on the rise. Zef is pre-Islamic and pagan, Fez is avowedly Islamic; a contrast exemplified by an inscribed marble bust unearthed from the ancient ruins, testifying to heathen practices there,[14] and a Prophetic *ḥadīth* apparently foreseeing Fez's Islamic pedigree.[15] In transforming Zef's physical and religious trajectories this way, reversal not only gives rise to Fez, but is memorialised in the city's name. Recounting the origins of the city's name, the legend explains:

> It is said that when the construction [of Fez] was finished, Imām Idrīs, may God be pleased with him, was asked: What will you call it? He said: I shall call it by the name of the city that was here before on this site, which the monk told me was that of an eternal town, built by the Ancients and fallen into ruin [seventeen hundred] years before Islam. The name of that town was Zef. I shall reverse this name and call [the city] by [the result], which was Fez, and [the city] was named after it.[16]

According to the foregoing analysis, four elements stand out in the foundation legend of Fez: the elevated status of the founder, further glorified in the account; the figure of the monk and his scriptural prophecy; the demarcation of a political matrix, what Bourdieu calls the 'field of power'; and the reversal of a prior state, or the ascendancy of Islam and salvific urban space. In order to prove that these are indeed topoi and not just isolated elements, peculiar to Fez only, they must be found to compare with other foundation legends. Given the city's early date, the foundation legend of Kairouan in modern day Tunisia is the first in this comparison.

On the authority of Ibn 'Idhārī's (d. after 720/1320) history of North Africa and Islamic Spain, Kairouan was founded in 51/671 by one of the Followers (*tābi'ūn*) of the Prophet, the legendary conqueror and martyr 'Uqba b. Nāfi' al-Fihrī.[17] Ordering the start of the construction, Ibn Nāfi' is told that the chosen site is covered in wild, impenetrable vegetation, and haunted by lions, snakes and other predatory beasts. On hearing this, he takes the eighteen of his men who are Companions (*aṣḥāb*) of the Prophet, and heads for the site. There he calls out: 'O Snakes and Lions! We are Companions of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation. Depart from us! We [mean] to settle [here]. Whatever we find of your type after this [warning], we shall kill!' At this, all the beasts and their young departed, and the people (*al-nās*) entered in safety, never to see another beast there for forty years. Ibn Nāfi' could now begin his construction, first marking out the government quarters and the congregational mosque.[18]

In this legend, the elements shared with Fez are three: the elevated status of 'Uqba b. Nāfi', who is then glorified in his miraculous eviction of the predatory beasts; the reversal of a prior state; and the demarcation of a field of power. Regarding the second of these, whereas Fez moves from paganism to urbane Islam, here the reversal is from untamed, savage nature to urbane Islam. Regarding the third, in the form of the government quarters, or *dār al-imāra*, and the congregational mosque, or *al-masjid al-a'ẓam*, the establishment of a dominant authority and community is clearly stated. As Paul Wheatley says of these two Islamic institutions, they are 'signatures of power in the urban landscape'.[19]

In 145/762, almost 100 years after the foundation of Kairouan, the 'Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–58/754–75) founded Baghdad.[20] As recounted by the historian al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) on the authority of the father of one Muḥammad b. Jārir (n.d.), the foundation legend begins with al-Manṣūr in the area of a village called Baghdad. Thinking about building his city there, he sees a monk and asks: 'In your books, do you find a city to be built here?' 'Yes', the monk replies, 'Miqlāṣ is to build it.' At this, al-Manṣūr exclaims: 'In my youth, I was called Miqlāṣ.'[21] Next in the account, on the authority of a certain Sulaymān b. Mujālid (n.d.), al-Manṣūr orders the city to be marked out and its foundations dug.[22] Finally, on the authority of an

unnamed source or sources, al-Manṣūr appears to repeat these last actions, but in the following way. Wanting to see what the city will look like, the caliph orders it marked out with ashes, and then 'enters through each gate, and walks along the walls, arcades, and squares'. Exiting, he orders cotton seed and oil to be placed on the outline, ignites them and 'in the flames [he comes to] understand the city and recognise its design'. He gives the order to dig.[23]

Beyond the striking image of the field of power – the caliph surveying his city of fire – the elements of the Baghdad legend also appearing in the Fez legend are the figure of the monk and the scriptural prophecy of the future city. As has been pointed out by others, prophecies from monks and their books appear to be a necessary ingredient of Muslim foundation legends:[24] in addition to Fez and Baghdad, examples include the Umayyad city of Wāsiṭ[25] and the 'Abbasid city of al-Rāfiqa,[26] not to mention those legends that echo the monk-and-book theme, such as the old crone seer of Madīnat al-Zāhira in al-Andalus.[27] For present purposes, however, the best example of a comparable legend is that of Samarra, because in this legend not only is a monk with his bookish prophecy found, but all the elements of the Fez legend.

In al-Yaʿqūbī's (d. 284/897) description of the city he calls *Surra Man Ra'ā*,[28] the foundation story is reported on the authority of Jaʿfar al-Khushshakī (n.d.), a member of the royal entourage scouting locations for the new capital. After visiting and rejecting a number of sites, relates al-Khushshakī, the entourage eventually arrives at the future location of Samarra: a desert, inhospitable and empty but for a Christian monastery. Entering the monastery, the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 217–27/833–42) asks the monks the name of the place. They reply: 'In our ancient books, we find that this site is called *Surra Man Ra'ā*; that it was the city of Shem (*Sām*), son of Noah; and that after [many] ages it will be rebuilt at the hand of a resplendent king . . . who will settle there, as will his son.' On hearing this prophecy, al-Muʿtaṣim swears to build the city, and summons his architects (*muhandisūn*). He then marks out the congregational mosque and the areas for his administrative officers and secretaries, the *dār al-imāra*.[29]

As stated above, all the elements of the Fez legend appear in this account: the glorification of the founder, a 'resplendent king'; the figure of the monk; the scriptural prophecy of the future city; the reversal of a prior state, both undomesticated nature and pre-Islamic ruin;[30] and the demarcation of a field of power. Their appearance confirms the elements of the Fez legend to be more than an isolated occurrence, and therefore topoi;[31] and renders worthwhile the pursuit of an ur-text after which they were possibly modelled. Following Stephen Humphreys's recovery of a Qur'anic paradigm informing the narrative structure of early Islamic historiography, the second part of this chapter considers the possibility of a *sīra* paradigm as the legends' source.[32] My argument is that the legends are ritual re-enactments of this paradigmatic myth.

The Prophet, Medina and the myth of foundation

Malinowski defines myth as 'a warrant, a charter, and often even a practical guide to the activities with which it is connected'.[33] The Cambridge anthropologist Edmund Leach follows this definition,[34] but amends it in one significant way: myth refers to a corpus of often contradictory, mostly oral sacred traditions, not single traditions in isolation.[35] For Leach, both the Bible and Qur'ān qualify as myth;[36] and on this view, so, too, does the *sīra*.[37]

Meaning literally 'way of going', 'way of acting', *sīra* also means 'biography'; and with the definite article placed before it, *al-sīra*, 'the Prophet's biography'.[38] For Muslims, the value of this latter biography could scarcely be greater, 'almost a holy writ',[39] because as stated in the Qur'ān, the Prophet is their exemplary model (*uswa ḥasana*).[40] Nevertheless, the Prophet's *sīra* is not a biography in the modern sense of the word, but compilations drawn from a corpus of often contradictory oral traditions purporting to portray aspects of his life.[41] As such, it qualifies as myth in Leach's definition. And because for Muslims 'the life of Muḥammad represents the most crucial stage of a sacred history that began with the creation of the world', it qualifies as myth in the broader sense, too.[42] As Mircea Eliade, for example, defines the term:

> Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings'. [Myths] describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred . . . into the world. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really establishes the World and makes it what it is today.[43]

Usefully, Leach's close definition of myth and Eliade's broader one agree on a basic purpose of myth: something to be ritually re-enacted in the present.[44] Both scholars, in other words, adhere to Malinowski's definition of myth as a social charter: in re-enacting the charter, myth comes to life, often in the form of legend.

Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra* is one of the very earliest *sīra* compilations. No longer extant in its original form, it best survives in a recension of al-Bakkā'ī (d. 183/799), as redacted by Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834).[45] In that format it found favour with early and medieval Muslim historians;[46] it is considered the most prominent of all the *sīra* compilations;[47] and according to Montgomery Watt, it represents 'the basic work on the subject'.[48] In that format, too, it is the compilation chosen for the following analysis, and hereafter is referred to only as the *Sīra*. In it, a number of events are reported that bear close resemblance to the shared elements of the foundation legends. As already stated, my argument is that these elements are ritualised re-enactments of the *Sīra*'s mythic events, the latter representing

something akin to a 'foundation paradigm'. This paradigm comprises three parts: Baḥīrā the monk; the Prophet's arrival in Medina; and the so-called Constitution of Medina.

Baḥīrā the monk

According to the *Sīra*, when the Prophet was a boy, his guardian and uncle Abū Ṭālib took him to Syria in a merchants' caravan. On their way they stopped near a monk in his hermit's cell (*ṣawmaʿa*). The monk's name was Baḥīrā; he was well versed in Christian knowledge; and in his cell he had a book, allegedly passed down from generation to generation. Numerous caravans had passed him over the years, but never had he taken any notice of them, until this year, when he invited the travellers to a feast he had prepared for them. All came but the Prophet, who on account of his youth was left to guard the baggage. When Baḥīrā looked at his guests, he knew that one of them was missing and requested him to attend. When the Prophet duly arrived, Baḥīrā saw upon his body traces of a description found in his book (*ʿinda-hu*). And when at the end of the feast Baḥīrā asked him questions, in the Prophet's answers lay traces of this description, too. Finally, when Baḥīrā examined the Prophet's back, between his shoulders he found the Seal of Prophecy, also just as described in his book. Immediately, he approached Abū Ṭālib and said: 'Take your nephew back to his city and guard him carefully against the Jews; for if they see him, and know about him what I know, by God they will do him harm! A great event belongs to this nephew of yours, so get him home quickly.'[49]

As A. Abel has observed of this story's place within Muslim tradition, in the figure of Baḥīrā is '*the* witness, chosen at the heart of the most important scriptural religion, of the authenticity of the Prophetic mission'.[50] At the time to which the story refers, Islam has yet to be preached, but in Baḥīrā its foundations are prepared: its prophet's credentials guaranteed by scripture. In this way, too, function the bookish monks of the foundation legends: they guarantee both the cities' and their founders' Islamic credentials.[51]

The Prophet's arrival in Medina

Approximately four decades after his encounter with Baḥīrā, the Prophet left Mecca for Medina, then called Yathrib. In the Muslim calendar, this emigration or *hijra* marks the start of year one of the Islamic era (AD 622). After frustrating, turbulent and finally untenable beginnings in Mecca, the new religion of Islam was about to enter a period of consolidation.

According to the *Sīra*, on the fourth day after his arrival in Yathrib, the Prophet founded the religion's first mosque, in a place called Qubāʾ on the southern fringes of the oasis.[52] The next day he left Qubāʾ and headed towards the centre of the oasis, giving his camel free rein, for she was

divinely commanded. Where she finally halted was outside an agricultural enclosure belonging to two orphans. The Prophet bought it from them, taking it as the site for his new mosque and living quarters. He gave the order for both edifices to be built, and along with the Emigrants and *Anṣār* (Supporters) laboured in their construction, singing: There's no life but the life of the next world. O God, have mercy on the Emigrants and *Anṣār*![53]

While both mosques in this account are important for the development of Islam, the second is especially so, for in Muslim tradition it is known as the Prophet's Mosque;[54] it is commonly considered the model for all subsequent mosques;[55] and in the details of the *Sīra*'s account, as Jeremy Johns has shown, its foundation is 'a calque upon the foundation of the Temple of Jerusalem'.[56] In these three ways, this mosque is more than just a second, or supplementary, mosque, but an originary foundation, marking the establishment of Islam's temporal and spiritual authority. The *Sīra* confirms this interpretation in a passage that follows the mosque's foundation, the signing of the so-called Constitution of Medina and the institution of fraternity between the Emigrants and *Anṣār*:

> When the Prophet, peace be upon him, had settled himself in Medina; when the Emigrants had gathered about him; and [when] the matter of the *Anṣār* had been resolved, the rule of Islam was established (*istaḥkama amr al-Islām*). Ritual prayer was instituted; alms-giving and fasting, prescribed. Legal punishments were instituted; *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*, determined. Islam took up residence amongst them.[57]

Although neither mosque-foundation account in the *Sīra* shows the Prophet personally marking out the sites, demarcating their boundaries, in helping to build the second mosque he performs a related action. A field of power is in the process of construction; one completed with the signing of the so-called Constitution of Medina.

The Constitution of Medina

Consisting of approximately fifty clauses, the Constitution of Medina, as it is misleadingly called in Western scholarship, is a treaty or collection of treaties between different groups in Yathrib at the time of the Prophet's arrival there. It is a practical, political affair, worded in accordance with first/seventh-century local tribal customs (*ma'rūf*),[58] and according to the *Sīra*, written by the Prophet himself.[59] Preserved in two recensions, the earlier and fuller one belonging to the *Sīra*, it is almost universally accepted as authentic in both Muslim and Western scholarship.[60] But dating it, deciding upon its composition, defining its key terms and understanding how and to which groups in Yathrib it refers all remain debated issues.[61] The following analysis does not attempt to address these issues, but refers

to what is unambiguously stated in the *Sīra*'s recension and to what may reasonably be inferred from it. In the notes, the citations refer first to Serjeant's bilingual edition of the *Sīra*'s recension,[62] then to Montgomery Watt's more commonly available translation.[63]

According to its wording and location in the *Sīra*, the Constitution of Medina is a unitary document, composed before the institution of fraternity between Emigrants and *Anṣār*, and after the foundation of the Prophet's house-cum-mosque.[64] In conjunction with information from other sources, this dates it to approximately the fifth or eighth month of year 1/622,[65] and makes it part of the Prophet's foundational activity in Yathrib.[66] As will be seen, in defining Yathrib as a sacred enclave, or *ḥaram*, and establishing the concept of an exclusively Muslim *umma*, the Constitution of Medina is the equal of the other foundational events of that year.

In the Qur'ān, use of the term *umma* to refer solely to the Muslims is limited to three chronologically late occasions (2: 128, 2: 143 and 3: 104). In the Constitution of Medina, the term *umma* occurs twice,[67] and although no complete agreement exists regarding its exact meaning there, both R. B. Serjeant and Frederick Denny consider it a closed concept: something never shared, but exclusive to a theocratic confederation or religious group; a usage consonant with its late Qur'anic occurrences.[68] Both Serjeant and Denny also find in it a territorial quality, especially Serjeant.[69] In the clause that renders Yathrib inviolable, *ḥarām*,[70] Serjeant sees the culmination of a process that began with the naming of the different Muslim groups in Yathrib as an *umma*, the Constitution's first paragraph and clause.[71] According to Serjeant, this *umma* was a theocratic confederation of tribes presided over by the Prophet as arbiter.[72] When the latter was sufficiently consolidated in Yathrib, his prophetic credentials and 'honourable, arms-bearing' lineage recognised, he designated the oasis *ḥarām*; a designation that for Serjeant represents '[an] Arabian solution . . . for centralising the power and control over tribes which will not yield their own sovereignty and independent management of their own affairs'.[73] Forming an inviolable core around which an indefinite number of tribes could be gathered,[74] Yathrib 'al-ḥarām' became the nucleus of the Prophet's 'theocratic state',[75] a development that according to Serjeant took a number of years, but which the *Sīra*'s recension presents as completed by the time the document was drafted.

If Serjeant's thesis is correct, as represented by the *Sīra*, with the Constitution of Medina the Prophet completed a foundation process that began with the foundation of his mosque and the Qubā' mosque.[76] Inaugural of Islam as a spiritual and temporal power, this process was itself inaugurated by the monk Baḥīrā with his scriptural authentication of the Prophet's divinely commanded authority. From these two inaugurations emerged Islamic Medina and the Muslim religious polity, or *umma*. In these two inaugurations lie the origins of the topoi common to the foundation legends: in the figure of Baḥīrā lie the elements of the monk and his scriptural

prophecy; in the figure of the Prophet and Baḥīrā's discovery of the Seal of Prophecy lies the founder's elevated then glorified status; in the foundation process begun at Qubā' and finished with the separation of Yathrib from the surrounding territory as *ḥarām* lies the demarcation of a field of power, with even a corresponding name change to boot, Yathrib to Medina.[77] Finally, in the *hijra* that preceded this foundation process lies the reversal of a prior state; for although the *hijra* was discussed in terms not of reversal, but of separation, implicit to its Islamic meaning is relinquishment of an iniquitous situation and attachment to a praiseworthy one.[78] In this intentional severance-and-turn movement lies the reversal. For the Prophet, it formed the bedrock of the events that followed his arrival in Yathrib.

In conclusion, lying at the heart of a number of early and medieval Islamic city foundation legends is a Prophetic foundation paradigm. In ritually re-enacting this mythic paradigm, the legends testify to one aspect of the alleged miracle of Islam: the repeated establishment of inviolable enclaves of guidance and truth. In an age that was frequently suspicious of urban life,[79] they thereby identify the founders, their *madīna*s and by extension their inhabitants as cast of Prophetic mould: virtuous, like the first generations of that originary *madīna*, Medina.

Notes

1 See, for example, G. E. von Grunebaum, 'The sacred character of Islamic cities', in Abdurrahman Badawi (ed.), *Mélanges Taha Hussein: Offerts par ses amis et ses disciples à l'occasion de son 70ième anniversaire*. Cairo: Dar Al-Maaref, 1962, 25–37; Heribert von Busse, 'Der Islam und die biblischen Kultstätten', *Der Islam* 42, 1966, 113–47; F. de Polignac, 'L'imaginaire Arabe et le mythe de la fondation légitime', *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 46, 1987, 55–63; and Franck Mermier, 'Les fondations mythiques de Sanaa et d'Aden', *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 67, 1993, 131–9.

2 Cf. Giovanna Calasso, 'I nomi delle prime città di fondazione islamica nel *Buldān* di Yāqūt: Etimologie e racconti di origine', in Renato Traini (ed.), *Studi in onore di Francesco Gabrieli nel suo ottantesimo compleano*, 2 vols. Rome: Università di Roma 'La Sapienza', 1984, vol. 1, 147–61, p. 147.

3 Northrop Frye, *Words With Power: Being a Second Study of 'The Bible and Literature'*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990, p. 30.

4 Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Myth in primitive psychology', in *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays by Bronislaw Malinowski*. London: Souvenir Press, 1974, 93–148, p. 106.

5 'Alī b. Abī Zar' al-Fāsī, *al-Anīs al-muṭrib bi-rawḍ al-qirṭās fī akhbār mulūk al-Maghrib wa ta'rīkh Madīnat Fās*, 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb b. Manṣūr (ed.), 2nd edn. Rabat: Al-Maṭbā'a al-Malikiyya, 1999, pp. 45–54 (hereafter cited as *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*); 'Alī b. Abī Zar' al-Fāsī, *Rawd Al-Kirtas: Histoire des Souverains du Maghreb et annales de la ville de Fès*, trans. Auguste Beaumier. Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1860; reprint, Rabat: Editions La Porte, 1999, pp. 39–46; 'Alī al-Jaznā'ī, *Janā zahrat al-ās fī binā' madīnat Fās*, 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb b. Manṣūr (ed.), 2nd edn. Rabat: Al-Maṭba'a al-Malikiyya, 1991, pp. 20–4 (hereafter cited as

Zahrat al-ās); ʿAlī al-Jaznāʾī, *Zahrat el-ās (La fleur du myrte): Traitant de la ville de Fès par Abou-l-Hasan ʿAli El-Djaznāi*, trans. Alfred Bel. Algiers: Jules Carbonel, 1923, pp. 42–50.

6 On the historical fact of misattribution, see Évariste Lévi-Provençal, *La fondation de Fès*. Paris: Larose, 1939, pp. 1–18. On the political motivations underlying this misattribution, see Giovanna Calasso, 'Genealogie e miti di fondazione: Note sulle origini di Fās secondo le fonti merinidi', in *La Bisaccia dello Sheikh: Omaggio ad Alessandro Bausani Islamista nel sessantesimo compleanno*, Quaderni del Seminario di Iranistica, Uralo-Altaistica e Caucasologia dell'Universitá degli Studi di Venezia 19. Venice: Universitá degli Studi di Venezia, 1981, 17–27, pp. 21–7; and Herman L. Beck, *L'image d'Idrīs II, ses descendants de Fās et la politique sharīfienne des sultans marīnides (656–869/1258–1465)*. Leiden: Brill, 1989, esp. pp. 124–9.

7 *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 46; trans., p. 40. Cf. *Zahrat al-ās*, p. 23; trans., p. 48.

8 'Ikhtaṭṭahā: to put a mark, the mark of an outline, on the site, so as to make it known that the site is claimed for building a house. . . . It is said a person has done "ikhtaṭṭa", when he has taken a site and outlined it with a wall.' Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 15 vols. Beirut: Dār Ṣadir/Dār Bayrūt, 1955–6, vol. 7, p. 288.

9 As Calasso says, the perimeter walls are a secondary element of *ikhtaṭṭa*; of greater significance are the internal walls, 'which, one might say, circumscribe the city'. Calasso, 'I nomi delle prime città,' p. 155.

10 Pierre Bourdieu's treatment of 'field' and 'field of power' is diffuse, spread across his writings, but see, *inter alia*, 'Champ du pouvoir, champ intellectuel et habitus de classe', *Scolies* 1: 1, 1971, 7–26; 'The genesis of the concepts of *habitus* and of *field*', *Sociocriticism* 1: 2, 1985, 16–24; and especially Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 76–7, 76 n. 16, 99–115; and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, 'From ruling class to field of power: an interview with Pierre Bourdieu on *La noblesse d'État*', *Theory, Culture and Society* 10: 3, 1993, 20–5.

11 'Al-sunna w'al-jamāʿa': see Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1881; reprint, Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1981, vol. 1, p. 215.

12 Qurʾān 7: 128.

13 *Zahrat al-ās*, pp. 22–3; trans., p. 47. Cf. *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 45; trans., p. 39.

14 *Zahrat al-ās*, p. 23; trans., pp. 48–9. Cf. *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 46; trans., pp. 40–1.

15 *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 45; trans., p. 40. Cf. *Zahrat al-ās*, p. 20; trans., p. 42. This *ḥadīth* is discussed in Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)*, S. M. Stern (ed.), trans. S. M. Stern and C. R. Barber, 2 vols. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967–71, vol. 2, pp. 121–5.

16 *Zahrat al-ās*, p. 24; trans., p. 50. Cf. *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, p. 54; trans., p. 46.

17 Ibn ʿIdhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa'l-Maghrib*, G. S. Colin and Évariste Lévi-Provençal (eds), 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1948, vol. 1, p. 20.

18 'Fa-ikhtaṭṭa ʿUqba awwalan dār al-imāra thumma atā ilā mawḍiʿ al-masjid al-aʿẓam fa-ikhtaṭṭahu'. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayān*, vol. 1, p. 20.

19 Paul Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh through the Tenth Centuries*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 228.

20 Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together*, p. 54.

21 Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusūl wa'l-mulūk*, M. J. de Goeje et al. (eds), 16 vols (incl. 2 indices) in 3 series. Leiden: Brill, 1964, series III, vol. 1, p. 276; trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Taʾrīkh al-rusūl wa'l-mulūk)*,

Ehsan Yar-Shater et al. (eds), 39 vols. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985–98, vol. 28, p. 244.

22 '. . . wa amara bi-khaṭṭ al-madīna wa ḥafr al-asāsāt'. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, series III, vol. 1, p. 277; trans., vol. 28, p. 245.

23 al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, series III, vol. 1, p. 277; trans., vol. 28, pp. 245–6.

24 See, for example, Charles Wendell, 'Baghdād: *Imago Mundi*, and other foundation-lore', *IJMES* 2, 1971, 99–128, pp. 111–12; and Calasso, 'Genealogie e miti di fondazione', p. 20.

25 Wendell, 'Baghdād', pp. 111–12. Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, series II, vol. 2, p. 1126; trans., vol. 23, p. 71. On Wāsiṭ itself, see Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together*, pp. 88–9, 400, n. 21.

26 al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, series III, vol. 1, p. 276; trans., vol. 28, pp. 244–5; and series III, vol. 1, p. 372; trans., vol. 29, pp. 67–8.

27 Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Ḥimyarī, *La péninsule ibérique au moyen-âge d'après le Kitāb ar-Rawḍ al-mi'ṭār fī khabar al-aqṭār d'Ibn 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Ḥimyarī*, trans. Évariste Lévi-Provençal. Leiden: Brill, 1938, p. 80 (Arabic), pp. 100–1 (French).

28 According to Alistair Northedge, this was the name used for Samarra at the caliph's court, and represents an unusual wordplay. It means: 'He who sees it is delighted'. Alistair Northedge, 'Sāmarrā', *EI* 2, vol. 8, 1039–41.

29 '. . . thumma khaṭṭa al-qiṭā' li'l-quwwād wa'l-kuttāb w'al-nās wa khaṭṭa al-masjid al-jāmi'.' Ja'far al-Khushshakī, cited in al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, M. J. de Goeje (ed.). Leiden: Brill, 1892, pp. 255–8.

30 To be sure, the city of the prophet Shem is not of the same pre-Islamic order as that of Zef, city of paganism. Hence the frequent desire of Muslim authors to ascribe to their cities not just antique, but also biblical, origins using prophets acknowledged by the Qur'ān and Prophet. See von Grunebaum, 'The sacred character of Islamic cities', pp. 25–6; and von Busse, 'Der Islam und die biblischen Kultstätten', pp. 137–42; cf. de Polignac, 'L'imaginaire Arabe et le mythe de la fondation légitime', p. 60.

31 Cf. Calasso, 'Genealogie e miti di fondazione', p. 20.

32 R. Stephen Humphreys, 'Qur'anic myth and narrative structure in early Islamic historiography', in R. S. Humphreys and F. M. Clover (eds), *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, 271–90.

33 Malinowski, 'Myth in primitive psychology', p. 108. Also, '[Myths] never explain in any sense of the word; they always state a precedent which constitutes an ideal', Malinowski, 'Myth', p. 110.

34 See, for example, Edmund Leach, 'Anthropological approaches to the study of the Bible during the twentieth century', in E. Leach and D. Alan Aycock (eds), *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 7–32, p. 8.

35 Edmund Leach, 'Introduction', in M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij, *Myth*, trans. Mary P. Coote and Frederic Amory. Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma, 1982, 1–20, pp. 5–7, 14–18; and Leach, 'Anthropological approaches to the Bible', pp. 9, 25.

36 Leach, 'Introduction', p. 6; Leach, 'Anthropological approaches to the Bible', p. 9. By way of comparison, Leach also counts as myth the oral traditions of local rival football clubs. Leach, 'Introduction', p. 18.

37 Upon different criteria, John Wansbrough also refers to the *sīra* literature in terms of myth. J. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 1–49, esp. pp. 23, 31, 33.

38 W. Raven, 'Sīra', *EI* 2, vol. 9, 660–3, p. 660.
39 Raven, 'Sīra', p. 663.
40 Qurʾān 33: 21.
41 On the orality of the traditions and their compilations, see especially Uri Rubin, 'Introduction: the Prophet Muḥammad and the Islamic sources', in U. Rubin (ed.), *The Life of Muḥammad*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1998, xiii–xxxvi, pp. xiii, xxv–ix; and M. J. Kister, 'The *Sīrah* literature', in A. F. L. Beeston et al. (eds), *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 352–67, pp. 352, 366–7. On the often contradictory nature of the traditions, see Raven, 'Sīra', p. 662; Uri Rubin, 'The life of Muḥammad and the Islamic self-image: a comparative analysis of an episode in the campaigns of Badr and al-Ḥudaybiya', in Harald Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad: The Issue of the Sources*. Leiden: Brill, 2000, 3–16; Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Earliest Sources. A Textual Analysis*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995; J. M. B. Jones, 'The *Maghāzī* literature', in Beeston et al. (eds), *Arabic Literature*, 344–51, pp. 349–51; and W. Montgomery Watt, 'The materials used by Ibn Isḥāq', in Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds), *Historians of the Middle East*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962, 23–34, pp. 30–3.
42 Rubin, 'Introduction', p. xiii.
43 Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964, pp. 5–6. See also pp. 18–20.
44 Leach, 'Introduction', pp. 5–6; Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 18–20.
45 On Ibn Isḥāq, his text's different recensions and still incomplete reconstruction from other sources, see, *inter alia*, Josef Horovitz, 'The earliest biographies of the Prophet and their authors', *Islamic Culture* 2, 1928, 169–82; Alfred Guillaume's 'Introduction' to Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. A. Guillaume. London: Oxford University Press, 1955, xiii–xli; and A. A. Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs*, trans. Lawrence I. Conrad. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 33–6.
46 Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing*, p. 36.
47 Raven, 'Sīra', p. 661.
48 W. Montgomery Watt, 'Ibn Hishām', *EI* 2, vol. 3, 800–1, p. 800.
49 Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Mālik Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, Saʿīd Muḥammad al-Laḥḥām (ed.), 2nd edn, 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1998, vol. 1, pp. 149–50; trans., pp. 80–1. Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, series I, vol. 3, pp. 1123–5; trans., vol. 6, pp. 44–5.
50 A. Abel, 'Baḥīrā,' *EI* 2, vol. 1, 922–3, p. 922; emphasis added.
51 Cf. Wendell, 'Baghdād', p. 111.
52 Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 2, p. 105; trans., *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, p. 227.
53 Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 2, pp. 105–8; trans., pp. 228–9.
54 See, for example, Abū ʿAbd Allah al-Bukhārī, 'Kitāb faḍl al-ṣalāt fī masjid Makka wa Madīna', *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allah b. Bāz (ed.), 5 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1994, abwāb 1–3, 5–6, arqām 1188–93, 1195–7.
55 See, for example, Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 40.
56 Jeremy Johns, 'The "House of the Prophet" and the concept of the mosque', in J. Johns (ed.), *Bayt al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 9.2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 59–112, p. 103; his demonstration then follows, pp. 103–7.
57 Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 2, p. 116; trans., p. 235.

58 Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together*, p. 25; see also R. B. Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*, pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the *Taḥrīm* of Yathrib: analysis and translation of the documents comprised in the so-called "Constitution of Medina"', *BSOAS* 41: 1, 1978, 1–42, p. 2.

59 Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 2, p. 111; trans., p. 231.

60 R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, rev. edn, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 92; but note that Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, for example, refer to it as only 'plausibly archaic', in *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 7.

61 See Humphreys's summary of the debates in his *Islamic History*, pp. 93–8.

62 Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*', pp. 16–39. Page and clause references to the Arabic will come first.

63 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956, pp. 221–5.

64 Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*', p. 16: 1, trans. p. 18: 1; p. 23: 3a, trans. p. 24: 3a; Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 221, 223: 22. For its location in the *Sīra*, see Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. 2, pp. 111–13; trans., pp. 231–3.

65 ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allah al-Samhūdī, *Kitāb wafāʾ al-wafāʾ bi-akhbār dār al-Muṣṭafā*, 2 vols. Cairo: n.a., 1908, vol. 1, p. 190; and Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs fī aḥwāl anfas nafīs*, 2 vols. Cairo: n.a., 1885, vol. 1, p. 398; both cited in Moshe Gil, 'The Constitution of Medina: a reconsideration', *Israel Oriental Studies* 4, 1974, 44–66, p. 49. See also R. B. Serjeant, 'The "Constitution of Medina"', *Islamic Quarterly* 8: 1/2, 1964, 3–16, p. 7.

66 On different chronologies proposed for the Constitution in Western scholarship, see especially Serjeant, 'Constitution', pp. 8–16; and Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*', pp. 15–39.

67 Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*', p. 16: 2a, trans., p. 18: 2a; p. 26: 2a, trans., p. 27: 2a; Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 221: 1, 223: 25.

68 Serjeant, 'Constitution', p. 13; Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*', p. 4; Frederick Mathewson Denny, '*Ummah* in the Constitution of Medina', *JNES* 36: 1, 1977, 36–47, p. 44.

69 Serjeant, 'Constitution', pp. 12–13; Denny, '*Ummah*', pp. 44–5.

70 Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*', p. 35: 1, trans., p. 35: 1; Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 224: 39.

71 R. B. Serjeant, 'Haram and Hawtah, the sacred enclave in Arabia', in Abdurrahman Badawi (ed.), *Mélanges Taha Hussein*, 41–58, p. 50.

72 See Serjeant, 'Constitution', pp. 11–13; and Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*', p. 4. On the clause that renders the Prophet the final arbiter, see p. 24: 4, trans. p. 24: 4; Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 223: 23; see also Serjeant, 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*', pp. 25: 4.

73 Serjeant, 'Haram and Hawtah', pp. 47–50.

74 Serjeant, 'Haram and Hawtah', p. 50.

75 Serjeant, 'Constitution', p. 15.

76 For acceptance of this thesis, see Gil, 'The Constitution of Medina', p. 56; and Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together*, pp. 27–8. For more guarded acceptance, see Denny, '*Ummah*', p. 46; and Humphreys, *Islamic History*, p. 95.

77 Cf. Calasso, 'I nomi delle prime città', pp. 153–4.

78 This meaning is explicit in the Qurʾanic usage of the verb *hājara fī*. For example, 'Those who left [their homes] for [the sake of] God after being oppressed, We shall house well in the world (*Wa alladhīna hājarū fī Allahi min baʿdi mā ẓulimū . . .*)'. Qurʾān 16: 41; see also 16: 110, and 22: 58; and cf. Daoud S.

Casewit, 'Hijra as history and metaphor: a survey of Qur'anic and Ḥadīth sources', *The Muslim World* 88: 2, 1998, 105–28, pp. 109, n. 18; 117. Struggle and effort are required to achieve this severance from the bad and attachment to the good; hence the Qur'anic association of *hijra* with *jihād*, striving or fighting for God, e.g. 'Those who believed and left [their homes] and strove (*hājarū wa jāhadū*) with their wealth and their lives in the way of God'. Qur'ān 8: 72; see also 8: 73–5.

79 See, for example, Tarif Khalidi, 'Some classical Islamic views of the city', in Wadād al-Qāḍī (ed.), *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān ʿAbbās on his Sixtieth Birthday*. Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981, 265–76.

4

THE CITY OF SULTAN KALA, MERV, TURKMENISTAN

Communities, neighbourhoods and urban planning from the eighth to the thirteenth century

Tim Williams

Urbanism . . . is defined as a . . . societal process in which spatial and locational strategies are employed to structure social and economic integration.[1]

Introduction: urban space and society

The relationships between urban space and societies are complex, and still inadequately researched, especially with respect to different political, social and ideological settings. As archaeologists, we are often primarily dealing with below-ground data, which places an emphasis on the analysis and interpretation of plan and layout, rather than standing architecture. But we need to integrate this understanding of urban layout and form with the visualisation of space, and experience, as a context for social action.

Urban space is delineated and delimited by various built elements (such as buildings, walls, fences), soft architecture (such as plants and trees), transitory or temporary structures (such as stalls or awnings), street architecture (such as surfaces, pavements, bollards), open spaces (through forms such as surfacing and texture) and, perhaps most complexly, by cognitive constructs, such as ideas of public and private, elite space, inside and outside, gender- or age-based access or use, cleanliness, safety, the resident and the visitor.

The form of the city is linked to decisions made within a framework of regulations (laws, ideologies, accepted practices), and based on the decisions of functional societies. The scale of centralised decision-making, societal pressures and norms, and local and individual adaptation provide the context for exploring the archaeologically interpreted city plan.

There are a number of elements that we might explore. *Open spaces* (typically squares, courtyards, plazas, streets and gardens) provide one of

the key settings for the life and activities of the city. Exploring access to, and the function of, these spaces provides a rich resource for interpreting the rhythm of the city's daily life and the movement and social interaction of its people. The form of the *street network* (grid-based or not) raises issues of connectivity, centrality (poly- or monocentric) and neighbourhoods. Do discrete groupings of structures and streets suggest political, social, ethnic, religious or trade networks? Are neighbourhood boundaries distinctive boundaries to navigation, and can these be recognised archaeologically?

Islamic cities

Given the complexity of issues briefly outlined above, we need to move beyond simplistic classifications of the Islamic city. We need to explore the complexity of the city's development and use. While this does not refute the recognition of broader patterns of urban development and morphology, I would argue that it is the complexity of form, use and expression that gives us insight into societal processes.

> Informed by a Weberian notion of the ideal-type, they [historians and social scientists] postulated a rather essentialist Islamic City concept based on a set of morphological and legal criteria they attributed to Islam which seem to transcend the movement of history. They then tried to validate the ideal-type construct by looking for evidence in a tiny sample of pre-modern cities in North Africa and Syria.[2]

Islamic cities have often been characterised as functional, based upon the extensive provision and control of shared local facilities, such as mosques, baths, public ovens and street fountains.[3] This contrasts with the provision of relatively limited centralised facilities, under the control of political elites, such as *sūq*s, with fiscal issues of social control and resource extraction. The interplay of city-wide administration and planning with local decision-making and organisation is perhaps underplayed in this model. The degree to which the infrastructure of the city was shaped by the needs of the community, or the political and ideological elites, bears more examination.

The early Islamic city offers an important opportunity to study the process of Islamic urbanisation, exploring the extent to which the city potentially combined ideas and approaches from pre-existing urban form and function, from Classical, Arab and Central Asian contexts, with new ideologies, both religious and secular. The adoption of Khurāsānī ideas of elite display has been well rehearsed in the context of Umayyad palaces, but what of wider urban planning or the social organisation of urban space?[4] The transition from late antique to Islamic city has received some attention, but mostly within the eastern Mediterranean and North African contexts.[5] Perhaps most important is the opportunity to look at new foundations of the early Islamic

period, as opposed to cities that were working within, adapting and changing, extant pre-Islamic urban landscapes, with all the issues of existing property rights, water supply and street systems. While the imposition of new civil and social structures, Friday and local mosques, for example, says much about the ability of the elite to insert such features into an existing cityscape, the choice of the detail of the urban visual fabric – for example, in terms of street organisation (size, linearity, visual structure, etc.) – is relatively limited. The study of adaptation and new-build has much to offer.

How then can we characterise and document the complex spatial attributes of early Islamic cities? Many of these cities are buried or submerged by later urban communities, leaving us to extrapolate the layout and organisation of the early Islamic city from a much later urban form. The city of Sultan Kala, Merv, in Turkmenistan, offers a rare opportunity to explore the nature of the early Islamic city.

Merv

Merv lies on one of the main arms of the ancient silk roads that connected Europe and Africa to the Far East. A broad delta of rich alluvial land, created by the Murghāb River that flows northwards from Afghanistan, forms an oasis at the southern edge of the Karakum Desert (Figure 4.1). The ancient cities of Merv developed at the heart of this oasis, close to the course of the main river channel in antiquity.

A succession of cities, which together encompassed over 1,000 hectares, date from the fifth century BC to the present day. The oval Achaemenid city, now called Erk Kala, covered about 12 hectares, but as the earliest settlement it lies some 17 m below the modern day surface, buried under a sequence of over 1,500 years of buildings. As part of the Seleucid Empire, Antiochus I (r. 281–261 BC) began a massive expansion of the city: the earlier city was turned into a citadel and a substantial walled city, Antiochia Margiana (today called Gyaur Kala), nearly 2 km across and covering some 340 hectares, was laid out. Again, we know little of the detail of the early Seleucid city, buried as it is under a deep sequence of later occupation. The remains of a rectilinear street grid, however, are evident in the later seventh-century city (visible through aerial survey), suggesting a Hellenised classical layout to the urban landscape.

The Parthians (from c.250 BC), and then the Sasanians (from AD 226), developed Merv as a major administrative, military and trading centre, but with the coming of Islam in the seventh century AD, the urban landscape and the conduct of daily life began to change, as did Merv's role in the wider world. As the capital of Khurāsān (the 'eastern land') Merv became a centre for Arab expansion, intended to relieve the overcrowding and religious and political discontent of towns such as Kufa in southern Iraq.[6] A smaller (c.110 hectares) self-contained walled town, Shaim Kala, was built outside
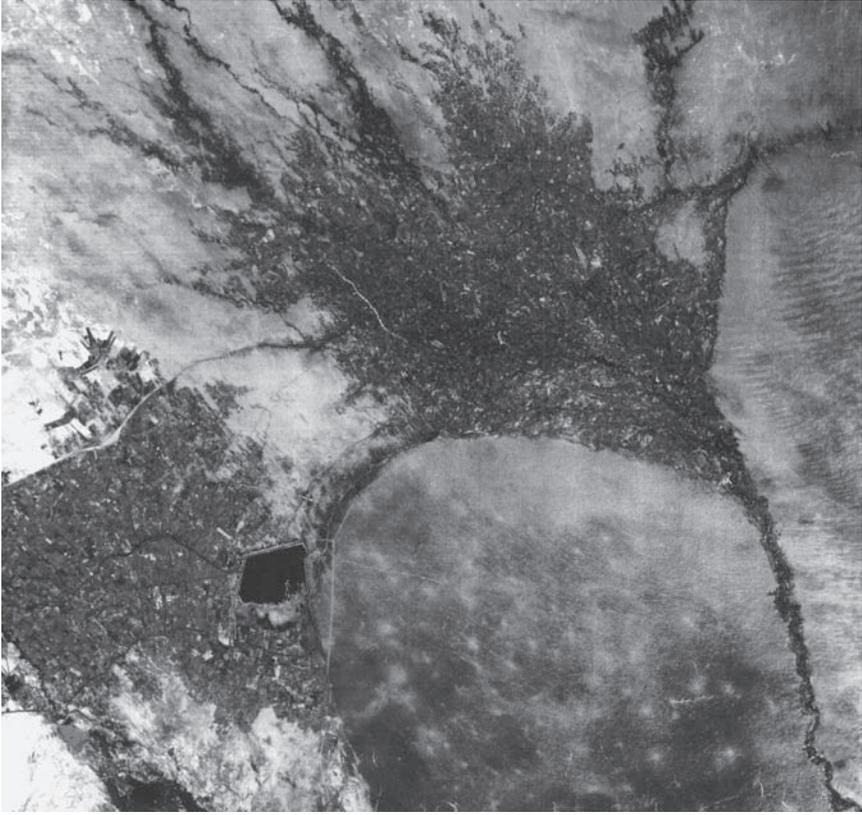
Figure 4.1 Satellite image (Landsat 7) of the Murghāb delta (right), showing the dendretric nature of the oasis. The cities of Merv lay on the ancient main channel of the river, in the east (right) central part of the oasis.

the eastern gates of Gyaur Kala, perhaps to house these colonists (unfortunately this town was badly damaged by the construction of a Soviet collectivised village in the twentieth century).[7]

The focus of this chapter is the shift of the urban centre from Gyaur Kala to the new city Marv al-Shāhijān (Merv the Great, today Sultan Kala), which lay immediately to the west of the old town, on the opposite bank of the substantial Razīq canal (Figure 4.2). The new city became an outstanding example of a large and complex urban settlement (by the thirteenth century some 350 hectares were enclosed within its 9 km defensive circuit; with another 200 hectares enclosed in walled suburbs to the north and south).

The date and process of foundation of Sultan Kala, however, are a matter of current debate. Historical sources state that the governor, Abū Muslim,

Figure 4.2 Satellite image (IKONOS) of the cities of Merv (taken in 2000). To the east (right) is the roughly square city of Gyaur Kala – some 2 km across – with the older oval city of Erk Kala incorporated as a citadel in its north wall. To the west (left) is the city of Sultan Kala, with the later city walls evident (roughly square – again just over 2 km across – with arched northern and rectangular southern walled suburbs). The approximate course of the main Razīq canal can be seen running south to north between the two cities, in the line of a more modern drainage channel. To the south (bottom left) can be seen the much smaller square Timurid city of 'Abd Allah Khān Kala.

commissioned a mosque and *dār al-imāra*, or government house, to be constructed alongside the Mājān canal, although it is not clear whether this was before or after the 'Abbasid revolt had started here in Merv in AD 748.[8] A documentary source also evocatively places the house where robes were first dyed black in support of the 'Abbasids alongside the Mājān (a house visited as a tourist attraction hundreds of years later),[9] which strongly suggests that there was already some settlement alongside the canal before the revolution. There were also a number of large *kūshk*s within the area that was later to become Sultan Kala. But how large was the settlement to the west of the Razīq at the time that the formal elements of the city, the mosque and the administrative buildings and market structures, were added? When was the Mājān canal laid out, and was it conceived from the outset as supplying water to a new city, or as an agricultural feature that was subsequently adapted to that purpose? These questions are explored below.

While the revolution may have begun at Merv, Baghdad was established as the capital of the new empire. Merv's status grew, however, as the capital of Khurāsān, which by the tenth century was an extensive and thriving city. Its fortunes fluctuated over the next 300 years.[10] The city was badly damaged by the Mongol invasion in AD 1221, and while there are traces of subsequent reoccupation, these appear to be relatively small scale: field walking and surface collection suggests that large areas of the city were abandoned.[11] By the early fifteenth century a new city, 'Abd Allah Khān Kala, had been built some 2 km to the south.[12]

Sultan Kala encompasses 500 years of urban development, at a vital time for our understanding of the city in the Islamic world. Most importantly, it provides a legible urban landscape, largely frozen in its late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century form. Perhaps even more importantly, possibly because of the lack of pressure on space (outside some of the central public building areas, see below), it seems likely that the original genesis and organisation of the city was not obscured over the five centuries. In the same way that later adaptations of pre-Islamic cities were in part constrained by the earlier urban layout, so the later development of Islamic Merv is likely to have been constrained by the initial layout of the settlement. Thus the organisation of the roads and alleys, the canals and reservoirs, the *sūq*s and markets, and the location of major public complexes and unbuilt space, may well reflect the original organisation of the space.

Data

There has generally been insufficient research on the historical sources for the city since Zhukovskii's pioneering work in 1894, and Le Strange's translations in the early twentieth century. Most recently Kennedy has reviewed some of the available resources.[13] Arabic sources on the history of

Islamic urban settlements can be divided between the geographical and the historical/narrative. In the case of Merv, the geographical works from the tenth century onwards give detailed accounts of the city as observed by geographers such as al-Muqaddasī, al-Istakhrī and Ibn Hawqal. Later sources include Yāqūt, who lived in Merv and describes the city in its state on the eve of the Mongol invasion, and al-Yaʿqūbī. But there remains much as yet untapped information on the political, social and religious environment of Merv, buried in the historical, narrative and biographical sources. These include the classical texts such as al-Ṭabarī's history. Conquest histories, such as the accounts by al-Baladhūrī and Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, will contain information on the conquest of Khurāsān and Merv and their early histories. Other lesser known histories, by such as al-Dinawarī, are likely to contain information relevant to Khurāsān.[14]

Aerial photography

There are numerous problems in recognising and understanding the complex topography of Sultan Kala on the ground. Some major features are reasonably clear, such as the Mājān canal (Figure 4.3) or the main east–west street

Figure 4.3 The Mājān canal in the centre of Sultan Kala, still visible as a distinct depression running across the city (with a small sample excavation in progress, and the Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar in the distance).

Figure 4.4 The broad main east–west street, photographed in the west of the city. The course is clearly visible, and the large mounds on either side suggest that the buildings to the north and south of this main thoroughfare were substantial structures.

(Figure 4.4), but the majority of the surface of the city is much less clearly understandable.

It became evident that aerial photography had considerable potential to explore the urban landscape at Merv (Figure 4.5). Vertical aerial photography exists for the city as a result of some Russian material taken in the 1970s. Unfortunately there are a series of problems with this: no negatives can be located, the surviving prints are damaged, they do not provide complete coverage, they were taken at variable altitudes, have no rectification data and poor differential exposure. Nevertheless, the existing images clearly demonstrate the potential of aerial photography to explore the urban layout, with clear definition of buildings, streets, canals, open areas, etc. Indeed, the detail in the imagery is remarkable, with courtyards, walls and even in places doorways visible.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to take new vertical images because of restrictions regarding Turkmen airspace and the lack of appropriate aircraft, although we are currently exploring the use of small remotely

Figure 4.5 Vertical aerial photography from the 1970s: poor quality prints survive, with variable exposures, but they show the wealth of detail within this largely residential area of northern Sultan Kala.

guided survey planes to overcome this. What has been very successful was the acquisition, in 2000, of a high-resolution IKONOS satellite image (Figure 4.6). With the aid of high-quality differential Global Positioning Systems (GPS) we have been able both to locate accurately this image, effectively creating the first workable base-map for use at Merv, and then to register the older aerial photographs against it, thus enabling the plotting of the features they so eloquently show us.[15]

In addition, we have undertaken a number of seasons of ground verification, exploring the actual features that we can observe on the images, establishing local conditions and clarifying ambiguities in the images (for example, between soil moisture, later industrial activities and vegetation patterns). Perhaps even more important has been the ability to clarify the nature of the aerial photographic image by understanding the local surface topography and thus drawing interpretations from this, such as the possible identification of more substantial structures, perhaps two or more storeys, on the basis of the more substantial debris mounds (Figure 4.4). All of the data will eventually be combined with topographic survey and extensive surface scatter collection work to enhance further our understanding of the urban space.

The data are being combined, interpreted, managed and stored within the project's computerised Geographic Information System (GIS). This stores geo-referenced data, including rectified photographic imagery and satellite imagery, and work is under way on collecting surface contour data and building a digital terrain model. Built on this are interpretative layers, starting with the simple digitisation of wall lines and the spaces that they bound. This is followed by an interpretative grouping of the features into broad building units and open areas, which are in turn interpreted, with varying degrees of certainty, into generic uses of space (such as streets, canals, domestic housing, gardens). The next stage is to interpret these into broader functional groups (public, domestic, etc.), and where possible, into more specific functional types (caravanserai, mosque, etc.). This is then used to provide a broad brush characterisation of the whole urban landscape, building on the preceding layers, to suggest zones, schematic plans, circulation routes, built/unbuilt space, chronological development, etc. Finally, spatial analysis, exploring the geometric, topologic and visual properties of the city form (buildings, street networks and open spaces), including spatial clustering, access and movement, is enabling us to identify spatially discrete clusters that have wider connections; for example, access to religious and trading facilities.[16]

Each of the above graphic elements is linked to a database, which discusses the evidence, interpretation and confidence of identifications. The work is in progress, and will be published in full, but the following outlines some preliminary ideas.[17]

Interpretation of the aerial photography:
the identification of specific functions

There are significant, if hardly unexpected, problems with differentiating specific building functions on the basis of broad plan-form alone.

> There are very few forms in Islamic architecture that cannot be adapted for a variety of purposes. . . . The paramount example of this phenomenon is the four-*īwān* courtyard structure of Central Asia and Iran, which is also found in other parts of the Muslim world. These structures function equally well as palace, mosque, *madrasa*, caravanserai, bath or private dwelling; at different times and in different places, in fact, they were built to serve all of these functions.[18]

The common use of ranges of buildings arranged around courtyards is shared across a variety of building types, from houses to mosques. But the scale of the structures and perhaps especially their courtyards, their location (in relation to streets, position within the city, etc.) and details of design make it possible to divide the visible data into broad generic monument/building groups, such as domestic housing, *ḥammām*s, *sūq*s, caravanserais, gardens. Some groups, however, are extremely problematic, such as distinguishing a *madrasa* from a mosque purely on the basis of the sort of plan that can be established through aerial photography alone.

In addition, the varying and relative scale of buildings and open spaces, the possible differentiation between public and private, and between single- and multistoried buildings, the mapping of street lengths and angles, and the identification of street networks are all ways of structuring this evidence, and enabling the broad character of the urban morphology to be mapped, leading to the identification of districts.

Extrapolating to the eighth century

Is the proposition tenable that we can extrapolate the eighth-century foundation from the aerial plan of the city, largely as abandoned in the thirteenth

Figure 4.6 (*Opposite*) Sultan Kala (IKONOS satellite image, north to top), with the modern road clearly visible (running from left centre to top). The Mājān canal is the faint line winding from south (centre bottom) to north through the city. The later citadel of Shāhriyār Ark can be seen in the north-east. In the centre the Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar can be seen to lie in a broader urban landscape, with extensive complexes of buildings surrounding the courtyard within which this later structure was placed. To the north is the base of a minaret, while immediately to the west (left of the modern road) lies a massive complex of buildings arranged round a large central courtyard (some 120 m across), the so-called Ruler's House. In the south-east less built-up and unbuilt areas perhaps indicate elite residences and gardens.

century? I think it is for a number of reasons. First, we can see a structure to the urban form – patterns of streets, groupings of structures – that would have been very difficult to have completely changed in the four centuries following foundation. Second, where substantial changes have taken place over time, we can see this in the aerial photographs; for example, the western spread of the urban area from an original boundary, the insertion of the later citadel (Shāhriyār Ark) over the earlier street plan (still clearly visible beneath the Saljuq use of the area) or the imposition of the late eleventh-century defences, in places negotiating their way around pre-existing structures, while everywhere cutting across earlier streets. Third, even where some modifications took place (for example, the insertion of the Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar into the courtyard of an earlier building complex) the overall pattern of 'public building' and private space is still distinguishable. Indeed, one can argue that attempts to reconstruct urban morphology for the first four centuries of the Islamic city are almost invariably fragmented and open to debate, and this represents perhaps one of the best opportunities, despite the complexities.

Principal buildings/areas

Space here permits only a brief discussion of the complexity of Sultan Kala, but a number of preliminary observations on some of the principal building groups and activities are offered.[19] At the outset it is important to recognise the changing boundary of the city over time. The very visible city walls on the aerial photographs date from *c*.1080.[20] These walls cut through an existing urban landscape, blocking streets and demolishing buildings (while, as noted above, they sometimes detoured around significant existing structures). It has been widely suggested that the new city of Sultan Kala may have remained unwalled from the eighth to the late eleventh century.[21] While this may be true, there is a very clear boundary to the earlier settlement, at least on the western side, visible on the satellite image. Radiating road systems, especially evident in the south-west (Figure 4.6), seem to indicate entry points and suggest that some form of physical boundary must have existed at that time, even if it were not defensive.

Within the city there is an identifiable central grouping of substantial buildings that almost certainly included the Friday mosque (Figure 4.6). These structures make a strong statement, at the junction of the main east–west road and the north–south Mājān canal street, dominating the highest point of the city, with large walled complexes demarcating the central appropriation of space.

Careful plotting and interpretation of aerial photographs also suggests, unsurprisingly, a number of neighbourhood mosques (below). A number of minarets are also evident, with the majority lying close to the

north–south route of the Mājān, perhaps suggesting the primacy of this feature and providing a potentially interesting visual structuring to the urban space.

At the centre of the city also lay the initial administrative/palatial complex, the so-called 'Ruler's House'. This has often been associated with a substantial building complex (Figure 4.6) to the west of the first mosque complex. It measures 135 m east–west by 110 m north–south, with the most substantial range of buildings (about 28 m wide) on the eastern side where it adjoins the mosque complex, and an internal courtyard to the complex 70 m across. It fronts the main east–west street to the south, and substantial open spaces (gardens?) to the west and north.

Spaces that may have formed markets and bazaars can be identified in a number of locations, primarily in the central area and stretching along the roads to the north, south and west gates. Historical accounts suggest that many of these would have been dedicated to specific trades: al-Tartūsī, for example, mentions the Bazaar of the Hoe-makers and the Samanil Bazaar, where grain and seeds were sold.[22] There were also a number of caravanserais, both intramural (seemingly clustered near the southern and western gates) and extramural (especially in the area south of the road leading from the later west gate; for example, Figure 4.7).

The Mājān canal provided a central spine to the city (Figure 4.6). It ran south to north along a spur of slightly higher ground; its not-quite-straight course probably reflects its following this contour. Excavation of a section of the canal in the northern part of the city showed that it was lined with fired bricks, the whole being 2.7 m deep and 1.5 m wide at the base, but with gradually sloping side walls that broadened towards the top.[23] It provided the key infrastructure for the new city – water. Its siting meant that it could supply, by gravity feed, the whole city. A clustering of substantial building complexes with large courtyards along either side of the course of the canal suggests that important buildings, with high water consumption, such as mosques and ḥammāms, were sited along its course (for example, the substantial ḥammām demolished to make way for the Kushmayhān Gate at the end of the eleventh century). A network of narrower fired brick-lined canals also distributed fresh water to the city, including district reservoirs.[24]

Domestic housing appears to have been concentrated in a broad zone extending approximately 300–350 m to the east of the Mājān canal and up to about 600 m to the west. This intensively built up zone also extended well beyond the southern and northern line of the later inner city wall, a total distance of some 3.5 km (Figure 4.6). The density of occupation clearly varies across the urban landscape; the most densely packed areas lay in a zone approximately 300 m either side of the Mājān, and in a narrower ribbon along the main east–west roads.

Figure 4.7 A substantial extramural caravanserai, some 350 m from the main west gate of Sultan Kala (seen on the IKONOS satellite image). A clear double courtyard building, each courtyard some 100 m across, with external corner and interval towers.

Large *kūshk*s, of which the Great Kyz Kala was the most substantial (Figure 4.8), lay to the north and west of the eighth-century city. While some may pre-date its foundation, it suggests that the new city was encircled with elite buildings, which on the aerial photograph appear often to have associated managed landscapes around them: possibly gardens, orchards and vineyards. It is interesting to note that some of these complexes, such as the so-called Organ Pipes Kūshk,[25] lay outside the early city boundary (above) but were later encompassed within the eleventh-century Saljuq city walls.

There are substantial areas of largely unbuilt space within the later city walls (Figure 4.6). In particular the areas in the south-east and east of the city (away from the main streets) did not exhibit the same build-up of stratigraphy that we see elsewhere, although some enclosure wall lines do exist. Do these areas echo the similar unbuilt areas in the corners of the

Figure 4.8 The Great Kyz Kala, the largest of the *kūshk*s, lying to the west of Sultan Kala.

pre-Islamic cities of the region (for example, see Gyaur Kala in Figure 4.2), or could these areas be more structured garden/green spaces, perhaps within walled enclosures?

Districts

Neighbourhoods or quarters within Islamic cities have often been recognised, divided according to ethnic origin, religious affiliation or trade.[26] Islamic society, based on Islamic law (*sharī'a*) and Islamic social norms (*'urf*), makes the community (*umma*) paramount, and places an emphasis on strong functional quarters/neighbourhood communities (*maḥalla*).[27]

At Merv, preliminary analysis of the aerial photography appears to support the identification of such discrete foci: distinct groups of large buildings (mosques, *madrasa*s, *ḥammām*s, etc.) surrounded by areas of dense housing. The identification of neighbourhoods or wards is also supported by the tenth- to twelfth-century historical sources that, for example, refer to a jewellers' quarter within the city, located near the Friday mosque, close to the house of master goldsmith Naṣr, and a blacksmiths' (hoe-makers') quarter in the eastern part of the city.[28]

Conclusions: the urban form

A view of the Islamic urban landscape in Central Asia was recently offered by Pugachenkova:

> There was practically nothing regular about the internal planning of the towns. To a certain extent, it was determined by the main streets, which ran from one gate to another, forming intersections at the town centre. They did not run in straight lines and there were sharp bends. These arteries determined the location of the town's focal points with small squares here and there and the main bazaars stretching along the streets, either uncovered or with light awnings, and sometimes with an extensive covering of vaulted and domed roofs. Between these main streets lay *guzār*s (Persian, lanes) or *mahall*s (Arabic, quarters), criss-crossed by a tangled web of alleys, in which living accommodation, the local mosque, the *maktab* (elementary school) and the public water cistern were to be found and which preserved the communal life-style. The different trades and crafts had their own special quarters: those with harmful side-effects such as potteries and iron-foundries were located in the *rabad*s whereas the 'clean' trades (sewing and embroidery, jewellery, etc.) were to be found inside the *shahristān*.[29]

While the broad flavour of this seems applicable to Merv, the unplanned organic form seems less convincing here.[30] Does the evidence for 'Abbasid Sultan Kala really fit this? Does its plan reflect the organic development of these ethnic/trade quarters or was there more structure to the process? The public/private dichotomy is perhaps too modern and Western a structure of meaning, and instead we should be exploring the degree to which elites and the powerful have shaped or constricted the ways in which communities can develop.[31]

There was evidently no straightforward orthogonal grid at Sultan Kala (Figure 4.6), but there was a clear structure to the urban landscape. Distinct neighbourhoods, each with its own facilities, were complemented by some centralised city facilities. Discrete neighbourhoods with short connections (to the local mosque, market or *ḥammām*) contrast with the long-range connections with the urban space (to the Friday mosque and specialist bazaars and quarters).

The organisation of water supply and reservoirs (above) suggests some planning of the infrastructure, if not the planning of individual streets, alleys and plots. But the streets do demonstrate a strong pattern. There are roughly rectangular blocks, commonly between 40 and 60 m east–west, and separated by east–west streets set some 110–130 m apart, with further sub-divisions evident in places. While this is no orthogonal grid, and many

of the streets appear to end in T-junctions or stepped intersections rather than running through for many blocks, there are also numerous examples of streets running straight and uninterrupted for some considerable distance though the urban space. For example, an east–west street to the north-east (later blocked by the building of the citadel) runs for nearly 1 km. Straight streets of 250–350 m are not uncommon. The Mājān clearly forms a vital element of this structuring: of the more major east–west streets that adjoin it, eleven of eighteen actually cross its line, the rest stop at that junction.

Built alongside the 'city of the unbelievers' (Gyaur Kala), which still used its Hellenised rectilinear street grid, the new city also developed a clearly structured urban space. Was some part of the new street system based on a familiar Hellenised model? Familiar territory or casting off the old associations? The primary streets were not organic, but planned and segmented, a familiar visual territory to the inhabitants from the old city. Later expansion suggests modification, but a city-wide visual structure for local communities provides an enduring model. The city had a designed infrastructure (water and districts) with a connected landscape of communities and a visual core providing ideological and functional cohesion, as well as a framework within which to grow.

Merv was no backwater in the eighth century, it was a staging post for eastern Umayyad expansion and then was central to the new 'Abbasid regime. 'Immense financial resources of the Islamic state, whose exchequer was swollen by the accumulated booty of the Arab conquests and by the taxation revenue which came pouring in thereafter, were at the disposal of the Umayyad builders.'[32] Bulliet has advanced a compelling thesis that the early Islamic period in the region saw widespread migration from country to town, with new converts seeking escape from rural persecution to a town where they could associate with other Muslims.[33] This migratory model may also be accentuated by economic migration, with people drawn to Merv 'by the commercial opportunities which resulted from its role as a provincial capital. Tradesmen, textile workers and metal-workers would have found the capital a very attractive place to work.'[34] By the mid-eighth century, therefore, Merv probably had rapidly growing and disparate immigrant communities, coupled with an already existing ethnically diverse population, Arab soldiers and settlers from Iraq.

It is tempting to see Abū Muslim's move of the mosque, *dār al-imāra* and main *sūq*s as part of a wider process of planning a new city; building on existing activity but shaping a new future. There was a need for a different arrangement of public spaces, buildings and infrastructure from the old city, and perhaps most importantly access to clean water for the practice of Islam. The reasons for the rapid expansion of the Sultan Kala settlement are likely to have been a complex mix of the functional and ideological. We might summarise some of that complexity as: religion (the need for water, central places/visual dimension, a break with the 'city of the unbelievers');

practical/topographic (water supply, drainage, problems with the water supply to the 'old town on the hill'); economics (available resources, the need to control and enhance trade and production to extract taxation, the concomitant need to improve the infrastructure of trade, i.e. markets and caravanserais); politics and power (a capital city, creating a new sense of identity and ideology, managing a rapid and ethnically diverse population increase, pressure on space in the old city); and culture (the need to provide for new administration structures, the support of learning). The above discussion suggests there were both reasons and opportunities for the development of Sultan Kala. It does not appear as an accidental or gradual process, although it may have started as this in the very early years of Islamic rule, but rather as a planned process, where the organisation of the urban space went beyond the simple provision of a few central facilities.

I return to the idea, posited at the outset, that the selection of the various elements of the urban form are based upon the decisions of functioning societies, and thus provide a platform for exploring political, social and ideological choice. Sultan Kala represents an outstanding opportunity to explore the form of a city, started afresh at a formative period in the development of Islamic urbanism.

Notes

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Part II

POWER AND THE CITY

5

POWER AND THE CITY IN THE ISLAMIC WEST FROM THE UMAYYADS TO THE ALMOHADS

Amira K. Bennison

In this chapter I explore the evolution of royal cities in al-Andalus and Morocco and the spatial and ceremonial means by which they were linked to their larger civilian urban environments. My starting point is an article written in the early 1990s by Jere Bacharach, which suggested a typology for the positioning of governmental centres within medieval Islamic cities.[1] He arranged the topographical relationship between loci of political power and cities in the medieval Islamic world into three stages. As the first stage, he identified the early combination of a centrally placed great mosque with the *dār al-imāra* (seat of government) located adjacent to it. This association was most fully formalised in Umayyad Iraq and made government, in terms of both personnel and location, relatively visible to the general populace. The second stage was the distancing of royal complexes from urban centres on the same topographical plane characterised by 'Abbasid Samarra, and the Fatimid royal cities of al-Mahdiyya (Tunisia) and al-Qāhira (Egypt). The construction of such cities rendered power less visible and more mysterious. Bacharach's third stage was the evolution of a separate but attached citadel physically dominating the city and inhabited by politico-military elites of alien origin. These elites interacted with the population at liminal points such as the parade ground (*maydān*) and the hall of justice (*dār al-'adl*), and signalled their presence in the civilian city by generous patronage of its infrastructure. According to Bacharach, the two main motors driving these changes were, first, the ideology and origins of the ruling elite, and, second, the changing composition of the civilian population from majority non-Muslim to majority Muslim, i.e. the shift from a city 'Islamic' in the sense of being politically dominated by Muslims to 'Muslim' in terms of social composition.

   Bacharach's typology provides a basic framework for developments in the Maghrib and al-Andalus but he interprets the changes taking place

primarily from a Mashriqi perspective. Bearing this in mind, this chapter looks at the distinctive evolution and placing of royal complexes in the Islamic west. By combining archaeological evidence and topographical descriptions with accounts of the ceremonies that linked royal complexes with the wider urban environment, I hope to shed some light on the complex interaction between the identities and ideologies of western Islamic regimes and the society around them. In many ways it was ceremonial that connected governmental structures to the city around them and gave them meaning, thereby suggesting how royal power was inscribed upon the urban landscape and within the collective imagination. Although not all descriptions of topography or ceremonial are contemporary, and some clearly possess the characteristics of topoi, these in themselves reflect the characteristics of each complex that were considered important over time. Of particular value in this respect are the works of several geographers and historians, including Ibn Hawqal,[2] Ibn Ḥayyān,[3] Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt,[4] al-Marrākushī,[5] al-Idrīsī,[6] al-ʿUmarī,[7] Ibn ʿIdhārī[8] and the later seventeenth-century compiler, al-Maqqarī, whose *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghusn al-Andalus al-raṭīb* preserves extensive material from earlier centuries.[9] The anonymous *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya fī dhikr al-akhbār al-marrākushiyya* is also a useful source for the history of Marrakesh.[10]

If we focus upon al-Andalus and Morocco, the development of western Islamic royal spaces began with the Umayyad royal palace (*qaṣr*) in Cordoba founded in AD 784 and the great mosque constructed next to it a few years later. The establishment of these buildings signalled the consolidation of Umayyad power over al-Andalus and the start of a monarchical tradition that evolved steadily during the amiral period and reached its culmination in the subsequent caliphal era inaugurated by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III in AD 929. This evolution can be physically traced in the elaboration of the mosque–*qaṣr* area in Cordoba, and the development of suburban spaces linked to the Umayyads, which reached its apogee with the construction of the royal city of Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ, a project started in AD 936. The political complexion of al-Andalus altered dramatically in the eleventh century with the fragmentation of the Umayyad polity into numerous rival city-states, which were subsequently incorporated into the North African Almoravid and Almohad empires. Although Umayyad ambitions in north-west Africa prefigured the unification of the two shores of the Straits of Gibraltar under the Almoravids and Almohads, the subjugation of the Atlantic plains of Morocco and the Iberian peninsula to the Ṣanhāja and Maṣmūda Berber tribesmen, who formed the core of the Almoravid and Almohad armies respectively, did entail the emergence of different synergies between rulers and ruled, reflected in distinct types of royal complex that interacted with well established, majority Muslim urban communities according to new exigences.

However, neither the Almoravids nor the Almohads wished to break decisively with the paradigmatic Umayyad past and therefore they wove

threads of that past into the rich tapestry of their own urban and ceremonial life, thus contributing to the formation of a western Islamic urban model. By exploring the spatial and ceremonial linkages between royal complexes and their host cities in al-Andalus and Morocco from the Umayyads to the Almohads, it is possible to trace the evolution of a Maghribi language of power, drawn from the wider 'Islamic' lexicon but also representative of local specificities. This in its turn helps to elucidate the ever-changing relationship between ruler and ruled, the latter represented first and foremost by the urban constituencies who resided in proximity to royal complexes of various kinds.

Umayyad Cordoba during the amirate

From AD 757 until AD 929, the Umayyads ruled al-Andalus as amirs who neither challenged nor recognised the 'Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad. Their right to rule was based on their Arab aristocratic ancestry, their descent from a caliphal dynasty and their ability to impose their authority over their rivals. While claiming only temporal power, they gradually constructed a monarchical edifice whose topographic, architectural and ceremonial manifestations interacted with the Islamisation of Cordoba itself. The process began in the 780s when 'Abd al-Raḥmān I finally secured his control over the Muslim conquests in Iberia after nearly thirty years of fighting. He marked the general acknowledgement of his rule by constructing a mosque and palace in Cordoba, his selected seat of government. Their disposition adjacent to each other followed the mosque–dār al-imāra model developed in Umayyad Syria and Iraq as exemplified in such cities as Damascus, Kufa, Basra and Wāsiṭ.[11] Deference to Syrian Umayyad precedent was made explicit by the orientation of the mosque south in emulation of Syrian Umayyad mosques rather than south-east as the geographic relationship between Cordoba and Mecca demanded. The legend that Muslims and Christians had previously shared space within the church of St Vincent, which 'Abd al-Raḥmān I purchased then demolished to build his mosque, created a symbolic analogue with the construction of the great mosque of Damascus on the site of the basilica of St John after a similar period of religious cohabitation. Indeed, Muslim historians made a specific comparison between the two events.[12] However, local precedents also contributed to planning: 'Abd al-Raḥmān I chose to place the two elements in accordance with the previous Visigothic arrangement of church and palace. The qaṣr (palace) was therefore placed west of the mosque across a street, each on the site of their Visigothic forerunners in contrast to the mature Mashriqi Umayyad preference for placing the dār al-imāra on the qibla side of the mosque.[13] Both Umayyad and Visigothic paradigms for the physical relationship between faith, power and the city were thus incorporated into 'Abd al-Raḥmān I's Cordoba (Figure 5.1).

Qaṣr

Great
Mosque

raṣīf

Rabaḍ

N

0 m   500 m   1000 m
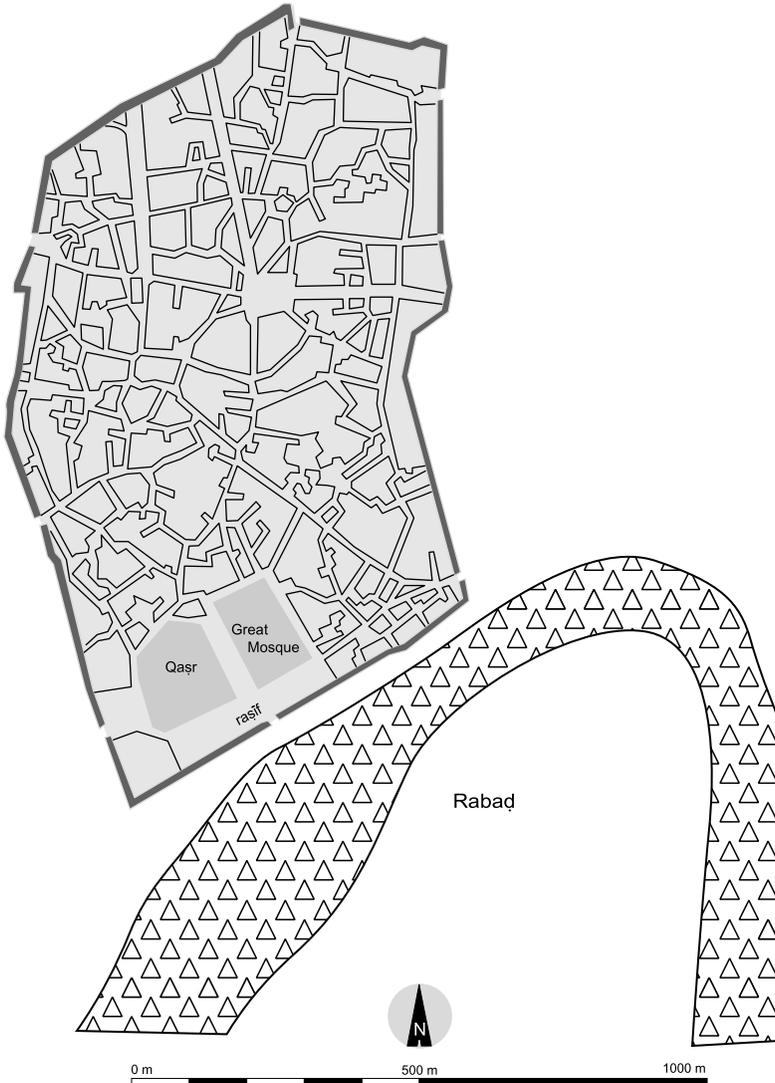
Figure 5.1 Plan of Umayyad Cordoba. Drawing by Piet Collet.

The exact layout of the palace, which no longer exists, is opaque, but certain features are regularly, although not completely consistently, mentioned by the Arabic textual sources. The palace consisted of a walled enclosure punctuated by at least five gates, of which the main ones were: Bāb al-Sudda (Threshold Gate), probably synonymous with the generic Bāb al-Qaṣr (Palace Gate), located on the southern side of the enclosure, Bāb al-Jinān (Garden

Gate) to the west and Bāb al-Jāmi' (Mosque Gate) to the east.[14] The space inside the walls was divided into several courtyards, noted for the fact that they were supplied with water via lead pipes. Although we have no reason to suppose that this was not the case, the control and supply of water also served as a topos in literary descriptions of palaces as one manifestation of a ruler or dynasty's power.[15] It also evoked Qur'anic descriptions of paradise with rivers flowing, thereby placing the ruler in proximity to the divine.[16] Reference to other structures within the palace is limited to mention of a main hall (*majlis*) sometimes called al-Zāhir, which contained the couch or throne (*sarīr*) upon which the amir sat for audiences and to receive the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*), and the Umayyad family tomb (*turba*) contained within a walled garden (*rawḍa*).[17] The *qaṣr* was essentially a private residence composed of a sequence of palatial suites, courtyards and gardens where the amirs met with members of the small Arab Muslim elite in a relatively informal and non-publicised manner.

The sources also allude to additional palaces (*quṣūr*) and suburban villas or estates (*munyāt*) belonging to the amirs, the most famous of which was Ruṣāfa, north-west of Cordoba, which had a palace and extensive, experimental gardens.[18] According to legend, 'Abd al-Raḥmān I constructed Ruṣāfa in order to evoke its eponym in Syria where he had grown up. However, country estates had also formed part of the Visigothic and, prior to that, Roman suburban enceinte, again creating layered references of different significance to the Muslim Arab ruling elite and the non-Muslim mass of the population. The amirs steadily acquired more villas as time passed and it was their regular movement between the *qaṣr* and such estates that rendered them visible, and accessible, to the population. Such trips enabled the amirs to see the city and to respond directly to urban needs, a pattern that continued into the caliphal period: Ibn Ḥayyān records an incident in which al-Ḥakam II rode through Cordoba on a busy narrow street past a ditch. He 'considered the dangers of falling in the ditch alongside' resulting from the traffic and negotiated the purchase of shops on the opposite side from their owners in order to demolish them and widen the street.[19]

Meanwhile, the character of the centre of Cordoba did not remain static but instead responded to changes in the self-image of the amirs as the dynasty became more firmly implanted as the foremost political institution in the Iberian peninsula. During the reigns of al-Ḥakam I (796–822) and 'Abd al-Raḥmān II (822–47) earlier Arab tribal attitudes that had regarded the Umayyads as *primus inter pares* began to be replaced by a more hierarchical monarchical vision of dynastic rule. This coincided with a rise in conversion to Islam among the Christian population and thus alterations not only in elite but also in popular perceptions of the amirs not simply as rulers but as Muslim rulers. These developments received visual and spatial confirmation in 'Abd al-Raḥmān II's transformation of the *qaṣr* into a royal court, the expansion of the great mosque and a flurry of suburban religious construction.

Several sources mention the increased splendour (*fakhāma*) and majesty (*jalāla*) of the amirate under 'Abd al-Raḥmān II and give as his main source of inspiration the 'Abbasid caliphal court in Iraq, which served as the reference point for aspiring monarchs across the Islamic world.[20] One aspect of 'Abd al-Raḥmān II's project was the creation of a court peopled with an appropriate array of concubines, eunuchs, slave soldiers and courtiers, the development of formal protocols and the establishment of necessary facilities such as workshops to produce the ceremonial embroidered items (*ṭirāz*) that Muslim monarchs wore and distributed as gifts.[21] The establishment of *ṭirāz* workshops also hearkened back to the Umayyads of Damascus who introduced the practice during the reign of 'Abd al-Mālik or his son, Hishām.[22]

The aspect of most interest to us here, however, was his remodelling of the entire mosque–*dār al-imāra* area to create a grander public royal space. This involved three key developments. The first was the elaboration and monumentalisation of the main gate to the palace, Bāb al-Sudda, which was greatly enlarged to include several chambers and a viewing platform (*saṭḥ*) for the amir and his officials. It was garrisoned by 'Abd al-Raḥmān II's new and exotic 'slave' guard, the Khurs, who were predominantly 'Frankish' Mamluks purchased by his father.[23] Bāb al-Jinān was also remodelled and a treasury office added at one unspecified gate.[24] The second development was the construction of an esplanade (*raṣīf*) south of the palace. Although the sources are not explicit, Ibn Ḥayyān's description of the esplanade implies that it continued along the south side of the mosque, since he states that it stretched from the palace to the market area, which was located on the far eastern side of the great mosque. This created a large open area, later used for military exercises, which united the mosque and palace in a new way, consonant with the growth in Muslim numbers in Cordoba and throughout Umayyad domains.

The third change to the royal-religious heart of Cordoba was the extension of the great mosque itself to cater for the steadily growing congregation of believers. In addition to extra bays in the prayer hall, 'Abd al-Raḥmān II had arcades for women included in his extension. The rising conversion rate also provided the rationale for the physical Islamisation of the city itself. This was achieved by the construction of subsidiary mosques, many commissioned by members of 'Abd al-Raḥmān II's court. As al-Rāzī puts it, 'his eunuchs, concubines and demure wives vied with each other in building exquisite mosques in Cordoba'.[25] Royal female patrons such as al-Shifā, al-Surūr and Umm Salma gave their names to the mosques they endowed, and these then became the names of the urban quarters around them, suggesting that the mosques were the foci for urban development as well as Islamisation.[26] Mosques were also built in the provinces (*kuwār*) in this period, initiating the broader transformation of the Christian landscape into a Muslim one.[27]

This preceded a competitive stage during the reign of Muḥammad I (852–86), when the dwindling Christian population of Cordoba reacted to their attrition with the Martyr movement during which nearly fifty Christians courted execution by sustained blasphemy towards the Prophet Muḥammad in order to counteract the seductive appeal to Christian youth of Arabo-Islamic culture and religion. Tensions between the two religions were symbolised by the minarets and church towers that competed within the Cordoban cityscape. It was therefore no accident that Muḥammad I responded to the Martyr movement by ordering the destruction of church towers.[28] Meanwhile, the majority of Christians rejected the Martyrs' position and conversion continued apace, creating a new Muwallad majority. Towards the end of this period, 'Abd Allah b. Muḥammad (r. 888–912) continued the elaboration of the mosque–*qaṣr* area and intensified the royal presence in the environs of the city. Piety and the desire to be a just ruler were the ostensible reasons for 'Abd Allah's changes. However, his reign was a time of upheaval and rebellion as different Muslim groups – Arab, Berber and Muwallad – struggled for recognition, and his self-presentation was designed to provide a generic Muslim quality to Umayyad authority and place the ruler above the intra-Muslim disputes of the day.

The most renowned of 'Abd Allah's additions to the mosque–*qaṣr* area was the *sābāṭ*, a covered (possibly vaulted) stone walkway from the palace to the *maqṣūra* in the mosque creating a physical connection between the two and allowing royal power to penetrate to the heart of the mosque. This overlap was enhanced ceremonially by 'Abd Allah's custom of going from the *sābāṭ* to his throne in Bāb al-Sudda to receive the court, eminent scholars and Cordoban notables after the Friday prayer. He also had a new gate, Bāb al-'Adl (Gate of Justice) constructed at the southern corner of the palace where he held *maẓālim* sessions every Friday for common people seeking redress.[29] The exposure of the corpses of rebels on crosses also occurred before this gate, highlighting the penalties for opposition in juxtaposition with the benefits of amiral justice.[30] Meanwhile, 'Abd Allah also invested in villas outside Cordoba. During his father's lifetime he had acquired Munyat Na'ūra adjacent to the *muṣallā* on the Masara plain on the river bank below Cordoba, which he extensively renovated as amir. He also purchased Munyat Naṣr, on the southern *rabaḍ* side of the river near the cemetary, from the court eunuch Naṣr.[31] Like the concubines' mosques, *munyāt* also became the nuclei of suburbs, emphasising the Umayyads' role in the transformation of Cordoba into an Islamic city.[32]

From palace to royal city: Madīnat al-Zahrā'

In 929, in the context of the rise of Fatimid Shi'ism in North Africa and the subjection of the 'Abbasid caliphs to the Shi'i Buyid warlords from Daylam on the Caspian Sea, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III reclaimed the caliphal title for the

Umayyads, transforming a secular monarchy into a religio-political empire. Like earlier political shifts, this change in the Umayyads' status came to be represented in physical alterations to the urban and suburban fabric of Cordoba, the most dramatic of which was the construction of a new royal city, Madīnat al-Zahrā', approximately three miles from Cordoba on the lower southern slopes of the Jabal 'Arūs. Work on Madīnat al-Zahrā' commenced in 936 and was personally overseen by 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's son, al-Ḥakam. It was a large rectangular site enclosed by a double wall punctuated by towers, which may well have exceeded the old core of Cordoba in area (Figure 5.2). The detailed descriptions of its layout and its splendours recorded in the works of Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Maqqarī and others do not tally completely with the site excavations carried out by archaeologists since 1911 but all the evidence indicates that Madīnat al-Zahrā' was to some extent tiered – arranged on three terraces in the literary sources – with the caliph's residence on the highest. Reception halls, gardens, various 'ministries' or halls such as the *bayt al-wuzarā'* (the hall of the ministers) and the *dār al-jund* (the house of the army), the mint, the treasury and a prison were located on the middle terrace and connected by plazas, porticoes and arcades. Together these two terraces formed a royal zone of limited access. A gate, named Bāb al-Sudda like the main gateway to the *qaṣr* in Cordoba, provided admittance, and the majority of visitors were obliged to dismount here if they had not already done so. The larger city, which was spread out upon the lowest terrace, included a great mosque, the habitations of servants and soldiers of the caliph and a landscaped menagerie or wildlife park.[33]

Many elements present at Madīnat al-Zahrā' reflected palatial norms across the Mediterranean and Middle East and the implantation of those norms in North Africa during the tenth century by the Umayyads and Fatimids, both dynasties with caliphal and imperial pretensions. While 'Abbasid Baghdad and Samarra offered one model, Byzantium and ancient mythical palaces such as that of Solomon offered others. As Stierlin has pointed out, references to a mercury basin in a reception hall at Madīnat al-Zahrā', which gave visitors the impression that the room was revolving, suggest a cosmological device in the tradition of the rotunda in Nero's *domus aurea*.[34] From this perspective Madīnat al-Zahrā' was the *sine qua non* of the Umayyads' new caliphal status.

However, Madīnat al-Zahrā' was not a symbol of distancing in the same mode as 'Abbasid Samarra. While using an acknowledged caliphal vocabulary involving seclusion, the Umayyads never left Cordoba in the way that the 'Abbasids had left Baghdad when they constructed their royal city of Samarra. Madīnat al-Zahrā' 'worked' in terms of the existing city of Cordoba in a way that grew out of the pre-existing relationship between the mosque–*qaṣr* complex, the suburban enceinte of Umayyad estates and the population of Cordoba. In Safran's words, 'Madīnat al-Zahrā' stood in
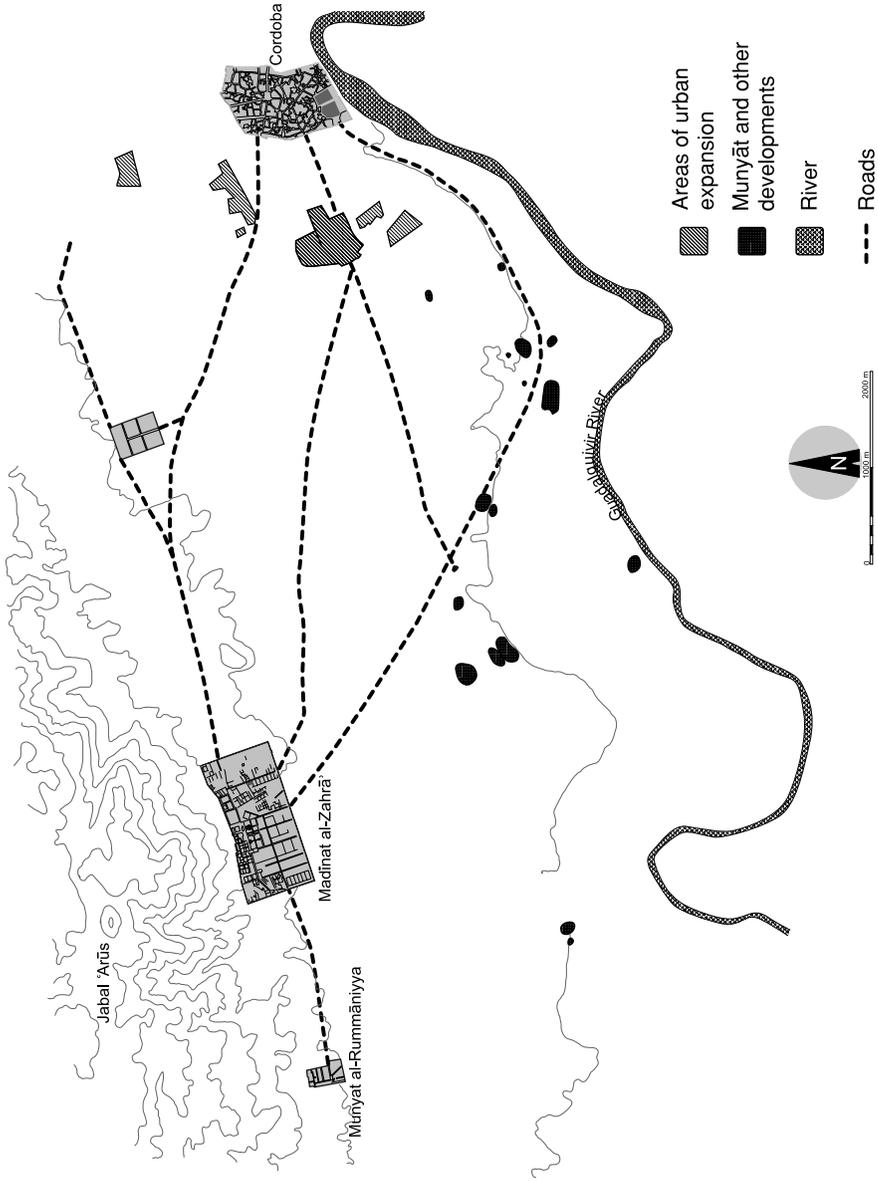
Figure 5.2 Plan showing the relationship between Madīnat al-Zahrā' and Cordoba. Drawing by Piet Collet after Triano, 'Madīnat al-Zahrā'' (see note 32), p. 70.

relationship to Cordoba as the caliphate to its dynastic inheritance' and there were deliberate associations made between the two cities, manifested in the usage of the same names for gates and more subtle echoes in architectural form and decoration.[35] In effect, the Umayyads wove Cordoba into a complex ceremonial fabric of which Madīnat al-Zahrā' functioned as the centrepiece. This fabric included all the elements of the amiral circuit with various additions: tents and camps on the plains outside Cordoba; royal villas, which numbered at least eight at this time; the Cordoban mosque–*qaṣr* complex; Madīnat al-Zahrā'; and houses within Cordoba owned by the Umayyad clan and their functionaries.

Moreover, the two cities were joined by a boulevard along which the inhabitants of Cordoba were encouraged to construct houses from which they could watch the frequent processions of troops, courtiers, ambassadors and the caliph himself travelling to and fro.[36] Such movements 'affirmed the definition of the new city as twin to the old' and made visible the 'bonds between the two cities'.[37] It can thus be argued that Madīnat al-Zahrā' was inconceivable in the absence of the urban and suburban environment of which it was an integral part. Caliphal ceremonial depended upon the circuit described above, which was utilised in part or *in toto* for a wide variety of events involving not only the ruler but also significant elements of the Muslim and non-Muslim Cordoban populace. The most reliable accounts that we have for this period are those of the al-Rāzī family, preserved in Ibn Ḥayyān's historical chronicle, the *Muqtabis*. These accounts give detailed information about how the caliphs 'Abd al-Raḥmān III and al-Ḥakam II used the spaces at their disposal, and the crucial importance of the routes connecting them for a variety of events from *'īd* celebrations to the hosting of foreign embassies. Such occasions often involved lengthy peregrinations through a hierarchy of locations beginning with an encampment, and moving on to Cordoba and the *munyāt* before culminating in receptions in the audience halls of Madīnat al-Zahrā'.

The most elaborate performances were those related to the Umayyad caliphs' central foreign policy objective, the assertion of Umayyad Sunnism against Fatimid Shi'ism in North Africa by means of campaigns against recalcitrant tribes and the reception of embassies of Berber notables willing to submit to Cordoba. Although Eurocentric historiography has tended to perceive the Umayyads as oriented towards the Christian north and Byzantium, the departure of troops to North Africa and the arrival of Berber notables and returning commanders are given considerably more space in the sections of al-Rāzī recounted by Ibn Ḥayyān than embassies from Byzantium or the Christian kingdoms. They used the entire ceremonial circuit connecting the old – Cordoba, the cradle of the dynasty – and the new – Madīnat al-Zahrā' – and give unique insight into the self-image of the Umayyads and their perception of their relationship to the people they ruled at this time.

The lengthy description of al-Ḥakam II's reception of Jaʿfar and Yaḥya al-Andalusī, two brothers responsible for killing the Fatimid governor of Ifriqiya, Zīrī b. Manād, illustrates the manner in which such events linked numerous locations and invited local participation.[38] Jaʿfar and Yaḥya decided to bring Ibn Manād's head to Cordoba to signal their transfer of allegiance to the Umayyads and thus also their conversion from 'heretical' Shiʿism to 'orthodox' Sunnism, a development that the Umayyads were keen to exploit to full advantage. On their arrival in al-Andalus they were met and escorted to Pavilion Plain (*faḥṣ al-surādiq*) outside Cordoba, where they made camp, the starting point in their ascension to the caliph's presence. A welcome contingent provided them with supplies and then took them to a royal *munya* via Cordoba. This procession was a staged affair involving not just troops but also the notables of Cordoba and the provinces. En route, they were received with pomp and ceremony by Hishām b. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān, governor of Valencia and Tortosa, and nephew of the Umayyad official responsible for Cordoba, outside the *qaṣr* at Bāb al-Sudda, and then they proceeded through the Cordoban suburbs (*arbāḍ*), where the inhabitants massed to see them, before arriving at their designated villa, Munyat Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. While they relaxed, court officials began to organise the procession to Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ due to take place a few days later. This involved all the different contingents of the caliph in dress uniform and the urban militias of Cordoba and its suburbs who lined the way between the two cities.

When Jaʿfar and Yaḥya finally reached Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ, they were admitted to the upper zone through Bāb al-Sudda and shown to the *dār al-jund*. Meanwhile the court gathered around the caliph according to a strict court protocol orchestrated by the *ḥājib*, the chamberlain or master of ceremonies. The caliph entered the hall first and left last, creating an illusion of stasis and stability. He was followed by his closest male relatives, who sat either side of him, and key officials, including whoever was serving as the *ḥājib* for the occasion. The rest of the court entered, greeted the caliph, and took up their seats arranged in a hierarchy that could only be altered at the express wish of the caliph. Such public gatherings were also attended by urban notables from Cordoba, provincial governors, religious scholars and Christian translators when their services were required. When the court had assembled, the Berber chiefs were summoned from the *dār al-jund*. They progressed through the intervening courtyards and porticoes lined with servitors and soldiers dressed in their finest garb. The brothers finally entered the audience hall, kissing the floor as they advanced, 'professing the renewal of their faith'. After the audience they returned to the *dār al-jund* and were escorted back to Cordoba laden with gifts of textiles, horses and provisions to residences allocated for them.[39]

The intimate and ongoing relationship between Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ and Cordoba provided the rationale for the work carried out on the great mosque

of Cordoba during the caliphal era: 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's addition of a substantial square tower minaret in 952 and al-Ḥakam II's extensive renovation of the great mosque of Cordoba and construction of an elaborate new *maqṣūra* in 962 shortly after his accession. While the minaret expressed the regime's religious position and did not speak directly to Madīnat al-Zahrā', al-Ḥakam's changes to the great mosque deliberately complemented the form and decoration of the reception halls at Madīnat al-Zahrā' and strengthened the visual links between them. Al-Ḥakam II's extension in the great mosque and the audience halls at Madīnat al-Zahra' were both basilical in plan at a time when the domed *īwān* had become the favourite form for reception areas in the Mashriq, and fragments of stone decoration from the royal city show similar motifs to the mosaicwork in the mosque, carried out using materials and craftsmen from Byzantium.[40]

In addition to physical similarities, a subtle symbolic mirroring occurred, designed to indicate the new religio-political status of the Umayyads and their rejection of Fatimid Shi'ism. From the great mosque of Damascus onwards, the idea of the mosque as an evocation of the garden of paradise was a feature of Umayyad mosque design. In the case of the great mosque of Cordoba this was expressed by frequent comparison of the pillars and arcades of the prayer hall to a palm forest.[41] This Sunni Umayyad understanding of the mosque was transposed to the eastern audience hall at Madīnat al-Zahrā', a grand basilical space decorated with vegetal ornamentation, which opened on to splendid gardens. At one end there was a niche for the caliph's seat that al-Rāzī rather unexpectedly calls a '*mihrāb*', thus evoking an association with the mosque and suggesting semantic as well as spatial similarities between these two poles of religio-political ceremonial.[42]

The connections between the dynasty and its version of Sunni Islam were further evoked through a Qur'ān ceremony purported to have taken place in the new section of the mosque. Ibn Marzūq notes on the authority of al-Rāzī that one of the fabled Qur'āns of 'Uthmān, the third caliph and a member of the Umayyad clan, was installed in the great mosque of Cordoba in 965.[43] This Qur'ān is mentioned by several other authors, including the geographer al-Idrīsī, who says that a beautifully bound Qur'ān containing four pages from the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān, ancestor of the Umayyads, spattered with blood from his murder, was taken out each morning from one of the rooms adjacent to the *mihrāb* by three servitors of the mosque.[44] It was carried by two while the third walked before them with a lit candle. The Qur'ān was placed on a special stand and the imam recited half a *ḥizb* from it, after which it was returned to its place. Although the associations were implicit rather than explicit, the daily exposure of this relic ensured that the caliph – the descendant of 'Uthmān – was symbolically present within the mosque even when physically in residence at Madīnat al-Zahrā', and that his championing of Sunni Islam was reiterated and given a blood pedigree.[45]

Such Umayyad ceremonial practices invested the layout of Madīnat al-Zahrā' and its relationship to Cordoba with a unique local significance that belies a simple transposition of meaning from 'Abbasid Iraq to Umayyad al-Andalus. Multiple linkages bound the two cities together and the caliphs did not decisively abandon one for the other as the 'Abbasids had temporarily done, or seek to isolate themselves from a hostile subject population as the Fatimids did in Tunisia. Although the creation of a new mystique through distancing in the manner suggested by Bacharach as the rationale for the construction of separate royal cities was an Umayyad caliphal objective, Cordoba and its population were required to participate actively and passively in caliphal ceremonial. Despite the caliphs' preference for holding major audiences and receptions at Madīnat al-Zahrā', popular involvement in parades and court gatherings, or simply as spectators, made the now majority Muslim population an integral part of the show. Madīnat al-Zahrā', with its careful, even artful, construction of a hierarchy of spaces and concentration of servitors and soldiers, was the culmination of a vast theatre in the round involving the entire Cordoba area.

Almoravid urbanism: *qaṣr* and city in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries

The extended collapse of the Umayyad dynasty between 1018 and 1031 was accompanied by the destruction of Madīnat al-Zahrā'. It was sacked repeatedly and then abandoned to sink into an obscurity from which it was only retrieved by archaeologists in the twentieth century. However, the palatial language that it had enunciated so dramatically during its short life was eagerly taken up by the Ṭā'ifa kings who parcelled out the Umayyad inheritance. In Seville, Toledo and Saragossa, local dynasts built palaces emulating the Cordoban model but wrapped them in defensive walls and fortifications to protect them from the vicissitudes of the time: the depredations of the Christian kingdoms to the north, rival Ṭā'ifa kings and eventually the Almoravids of North Africa. Evidence from rural estates such as the Castillejo of Monteagudo in Murcia suggests that they also acquired fortifications during this extended period, creating a link between the expansive royal city of Madīnat al-Zahrā', fortified Ṭā'ifa palaces such as the Ja'fariyya in Saragossa and the last great example of Andalusi palatial construction, Madīnat al-Ḥamrā' (the Alhambra) in Granada.[46]

In the intervening 200 years, however, the initiative passed to the North African Almoravids and Almohads, who introduced new ideological and ethnic imperatives to the construction of royal complexes and their relationship to cities and by extension their inhabitants. Although both regimes have tended to be dismissed disparagingly as fanatical Berbers in more populist historiography, they were quite different, and indeed inimical, in terms of both ethnicity and ideology. They adopted distinct approaches to

urban planning, which contributed to the emergence in the Islamic west of Bacharach's third stage, the royal citadel attached to the city but separate from it, inhabited by a ruling Muslim elite of a different ethnicity from the Muslim subject population.

The Almoravids were Ṣanhāja of nomadic origin from the north-western Sahara. During the eleventh century, various Ṣanhāja tribes were persuaded to subscribe to the teachings of Ibn Yāsīn, a religious preacher given the task of inculcating true knowledge of Islam into his fellow Ṣanhāja. He had been appointed by Wajjāj, the head of a religious outpost (*ribāṭ*) in southern Morocco, at the request of a Ṣanhāja chief who had been given Wajjāj's name in Kairouan in Tunisia while travelling to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. This complicated trajectory defined the Almoravid understanding of Islam: they were inspired by an orthodox Sunni outlook mediated through Kairouan but also derived from Baghdadi praxis. While they were staunch adherents of the dominant school of law in Kairouan – Malikism – they also swore allegiance to the 'Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, becoming in the process its lieutenants in the far west.[47]

In the context of North Africa, the Almoravids' beliefs placed them at odds with many of their neighbours, including the Khārijī Midrarids of Sijilmasa, the Baghwata of the Atlantic plains north of the High Atlas and the tribes of the Fez region who had supported the Fatimids. In contrast, there was no unsurmountable religious conflict between the Almoravids and their Andalusi subjects: the latter also subscribed to Malikism, despite their rather more sophisticated understanding of theology, and had supported no rival Sunni caliph since the passing of the Umayyads. Moreover, the Almoravids aspired to acquire the accoutrements of Arabo-Andalusi culture. They endeavoured to master Arabic and became great patrons of Arabic poetry, and employed Andalusi artisans throughout their empire to construct and embellish mosques and palaces. They also laid claim to a Yemeni Arab genealogy according to which they were the descendants of Himyarite Arabs who had migrated across North Africa in distant times.[48] Despite this evident desire to assimilate to an Arab model, the Almoravids maintained a strong sense of tribal solidarity, which manifested itself in a reluctance to incorporate other groups into the politico-military elite and gained them a reputation for exclusivism.[49] It also determined their approach to urban life, of which they had had limited experience prior to their conquest of al-Andalus.

The Almoravid approach to urbanism appears to have been conditioned by the settlement types of the Saharan fringe, their strong clan identification and their new religious affiliations. In the south of Morocco today, two major settlement types can be identified: the *qaṣr* and *qaṣaba* (colloquially known as *qsar* and *qaṣba*). Both are fortified rammed-earth settlements differentiated by the fact that the *qaṣr* extends on a horizontal plane and is inhabited by what we would call a village community, while a *qaṣaba* rises

vertically and is inhabited by a single extended family or clan and their retainers. Both types are believed to be of considerable antiquity. A more specialised settlement type with which the Almoravids would also have been familiar was the *ribāṭ*, the institution from which the Almoravid movement took its Arabic name (al-Murābiṭūn), a fortified community of unrelated individuals dedicated to religious objectives. The *ribāṭ* in the Sūs from which Ibn Yāsīn came was a frontier post and a religious retreat that provided religious education to the local population, and he created a new *ribāṭ* among the Ṣanhāja. Upon their creation of an empire in North Africa, the Almoravids replicated the forms they knew and built fortified royal/elite settlements (*qaṣr*, *ḥuṣn*) that correlated with their strong clan identity and their sense that they were the true Muslim community in the heterodox environment of the Maghrib. Al-Idrīsī states:

> Between Ta'ūra and Banī Ziyād there are two small towns, one of which is al-Qaṣr, a small town on the route from Tāqrart to al-Sūq al-Qadīma. . . . One of the Mulaththamīn [i.e. Almoravid] amirs built this town and gave it fortified walls and a beautiful palace. It did not have many markets or plentiful trade. Rather, that amir used to live there with most of his uncle's family.[50]

The fullest expression of the Almoravid ethos was naturally their purpose-built capital, Marrakesh, which initially served as a garrison town (*miṣr*) and then as a royal city, thus experiencing an evolution not dissimilar to that of Fatimid Cairo.[51] Marrakesh was first and foremost a camping site for the Almoravids after their arduous crossing of the High Atlas, and their needs were akin to those of the early Arab armies. Accounts of Ibn Tāshfīn's foundation of Marrakesh bear a family resemblance to descriptions of the foundations of Kufa and Fusṭāṭ, mentioning the allocation of plots to tribesmen, the delineation of wide streets and plazas, and the construction of a palace and mosque adjacent to each other.[52] Al-Idrīsī recounts:

> Twelve miles north of this town [Aghmāt] is a city constructed by Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn in 470 (1077–8) after he purchased the land from the people of Aghmāt for a large sum. He divided the land into plots for the clan of his uncle. It is in a depression with no hills except a small mountain called Igilliz from which the stone was cut to build the palace of the Amir of the Muslims, 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn, known as the Stone Palace (Dār al-Ḥajar). There is no stone except from this mountain in all of the city of Marrakesh which they therefore built from clay, bricks and mud bricks. The water which irrigates the gardens is extracted by a splendid piece of engineering made by 'Ubayd Allah b. Yūnus the Engineer.[53]

The Amir of the Muslims was pleased by the work of ʿUbayd Allah b. Yūnus and gave him money and clothes for the duration of his stay with him. The people observed this and continued to dig the ground and extract its water for the gardens which became numerous and reached the buildings of Marrakesh. The area became beautiful to the eye and at this time, Marrakesh was one of the greatest cities of al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā because it was the seat of Lamtūna power (*dār imārat Lamtūna*) and kingship (*madār mulkihim*) and the destination (*silk*) of them all. It had numerous palaces for the many amirs, commanders, and servants of the state. Its streets were broad, its plazas expansive, its buildings lofty and its markets varied and its commodities saleable.[54]

These short paragraphs give us some sense of the evolution of Almoravid Marrakesh. The main urban settlement in the area was the earlier city of Aghmāt Warīka, which other sources describe as inhabited by the Maṣmūda, listed by Ibn Khaldūn as one of the main branches of the Berbers in his universal history.[55] The anonymous *Hulal al-mawshiyya* states that the Almoravids initially settled in Aghmāt but that tensions with the existing inhabitants led to their transfer to a new site, a dynamic that calls to mind the ʿAbbasids' move to Samarra from Baghdad after recruiting large numbers of Turkish soldiers.[56] The Almoravids therefore constructed Marrakesh as a separate elite Ṣanhāja settlement, while Aghmāt remained the region's foremost commercial centre for at least one generation. The relationship between the two settlements is corroborated by circumstantial evidence from the late eleventh-century *Tibyān*, in which ʿAbd Allah b. Buluggīn, the deposed Ṭāʾifa king of Granada, complains about being 'pushed off' to reside in Aghmāt.[57] Marrakesh was primarily designated for the dominant Lamtūna clan of the Ṣanhāja, that of Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn's uncle, ʿUmar, the father of the movement's two previous leaders, Yaḥya and Abū Bakr.[58] The initial city was constructed of rammed earth and mud brick, the usual materials for the area.

With the addition of al-Andalus to the Almoravid empire and the succession of Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn's son, ʿAlī b. Yūsuf, Marrakesh was transformed from a garrison town into a royal showpiece. ʿAlī ordered the construction of a permanent stone residence, the Dār or Qaṣr al-Ḥajar, and presided over the city's beautification through the addition of opulent residences and gardens for the Almoravid court. Much of this work was done by Andalusi craftsmen, including the construction of the only extant Almoravid building, the domed stone pavilion known as the Qubbat al-Baʿdiyyīn or Barūdiyyīn. During this phase, the city's population and functions diversified somewhat with the addition of markets and the development of an Almoravid bureaucracy and judiciary of mixed Maghribi and Andalusi origin. The plan

of the city and the relationship of its constituent elements is, however, extremely hard to ascertain due to the destruction it later suffered and the vagueness of the Arabic sources concerning its topography. Almoravid sites can be located in the centre of the existing old city, in the vicinity of the Yūsufiyya *madrasa* where the Qubbat al-Baʿdiyyīn stands, an area likely to have been the site of the original Almoravid mosque, and in the Kutubiyya mosque area on the south-western periphery where Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn's tomb is situated (Figure 5.3). However, Western scholars disagree over where the crucial Qaṣr al-Ḥajar was located.[59]

Insight into Almoravid ceremonial that might have explained how Marrakesh 'worked' is equally scarce. Anecdotal evidence from sources such as al-Baydhaq's *Memoirs* suggests that the Almoravids did not have a highly articulated set of ceremonies. They appear to have met their counsellors fairly informally within their residences while also moving around the city without elaborate pomp and ceremony in a manner akin to the Umayyads during the amiral period. When Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohad movement, wished to chastise the Almoravid amir, he found him in the great mosque of Marrakesh seated on an animal skin, and was able to approach and address him without hindrance.[60] Similarly, he was able to go up to the amir's sister in the street and remonstrate with her about the impropriety of women appearing in public unveiled and on horseback. He may even have pulled her from her horse, which again points to the accessibility of the Almoravids.[61]

Despite the significant lacunae that exist, when taken together the scattered references to Almoravid residence patterns show that during the short life of the empire the ruling Lamtūna clans retained a level of residential segregation using the fortified *qaṣr* form either as an independent unit or by locating it within a larger urban conurbation. Such residential exclusivism did reflect a degree of intra-Muslim religious difference in North Africa but did not so obviously do so in al-Andalus. While the Almoravids viewed Andalusi Islam as decadent in some respects, it was of the same Mālikī Sunni variety as their own and they recruited numerous Andalusi jurists as advisors, legal scholars and judges, suggesting that the driving force behind their segregation was ethno-cultural distinctiveness rather than ideological differentiation from their subjects. In a similar manner to Mashriqi regimes, the Almoravids tempered their 'foreign' origin by their extensive (re)construction of great mosques within existing cities and building of fortifications, which highlighted their dual role as patrons of Sunni orthodoxy and its military defenders in the west on behalf of the ʿAbbasids, a position that they expressed through the architectural style they chose.[62] Their relations with their subjects remained informal and, as in the case of the Umayyad amirs, revolved around attendance at Friday prayer in the great mosque and select gatherings within their residence, which was described using either of the terms 'qaṣr' or 'dār'.
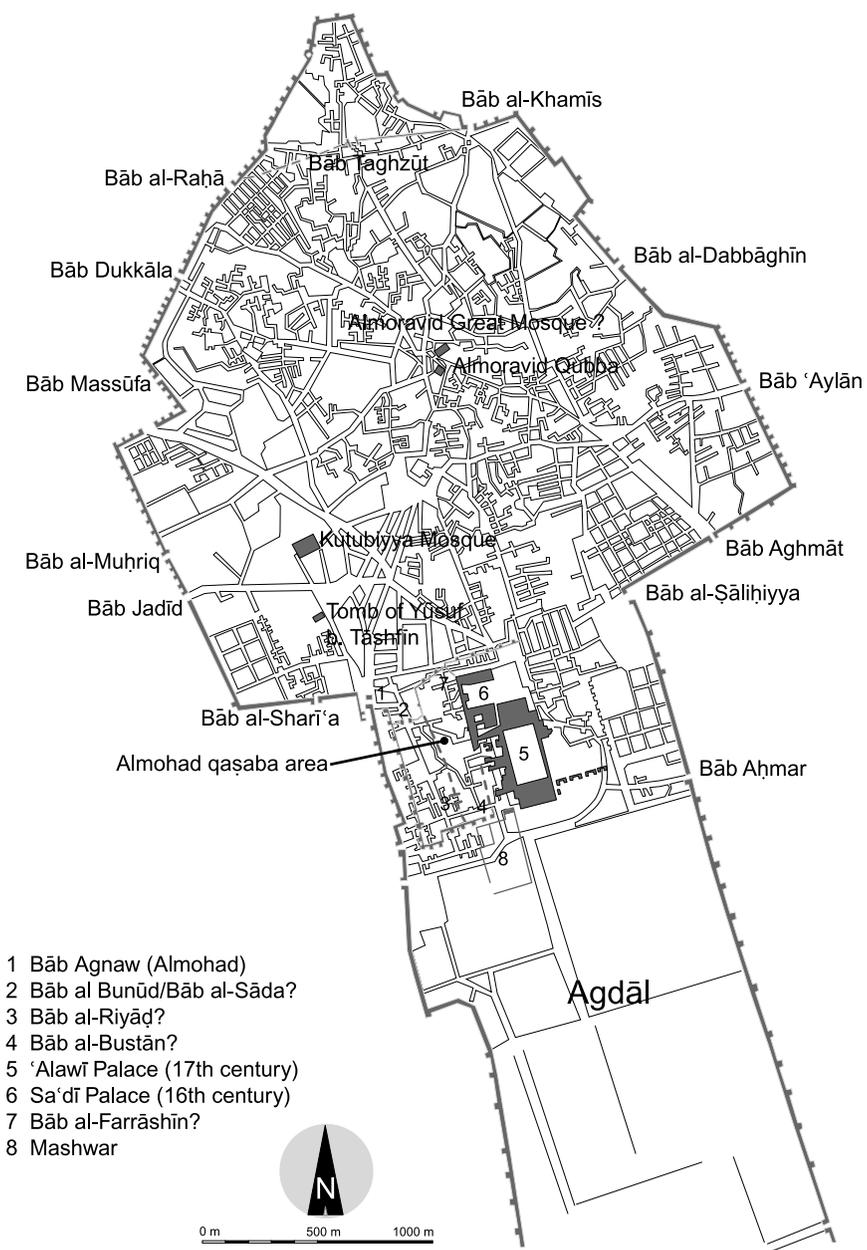
Figure 5.3 Plan of Marrakesh. Drawing by Piet Collet after Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Masālik El Abṣār* (see note 7), opposite p. 181.

The Almohad royal city

After barely half a century in power, the Almoravids were challenged for control of Morocco and al-Andalus by a rival religio-political movement, that of the Almohads (al-Muwaḥḥidūn), which was dominated by Maṣmūda from the High Atlas. Unlike the staunchly Sunni Almoravids, the Almohads professed a new ideology – Almohadism – that rejected both Sunnism and Shi'ism in favour of a mahdistic alternative amalgamating elements of the two. Although Ibn Tūmart was the movement's founder and Mahdī, the construction of an empire was the achievement of his lieutenant, 'Abd al-Mu'min, a Kūmiyya Berber from the Tlemsen area, who founded the Almohad caliphal dynasty, much to the disgust of Ibn Tūmart's lineal descendants. This rift in the ruling elite between the predominantly Maṣmūda shaykhs and the Mu'minids encouraged the latter to place their rule squarely within an imagined western Islamic paradigm of rule initiated by the Umayyads, which counter-balanced the novelty of the movement's doctrine and its potentially hegemonic attitude to earlier understandings of Islam. Under the Mu'minid aegis, the Almohads turned out to be the urban planners of the Islamic west *par excellence* and founded or restructured numerous cities, including Tīnmāll, Rabat and Marrakesh in what is now Morocco, and Seville in al-Andalus. They also elaborated ceremonial forms that were rooted in the Berber past but recapitulated Umayyad practices in some unexpected ways.

The Almohads strove to impose their beliefs upon the region by means of a *jihād* that was also intended to consolidate the frontiers of the *dār al-islām* against the threat presented by the Normans of Sicily and the Christian kingdoms of northern Iberia. This emphasis on *jihād* to legitimate their rule was to some extent similar to Zangid and Ayyubid legitimation through their dedication to *jihād* against the Crusaders in the Levant. Indeed, comparisons were made by contemporaries such as Ibn Jubayr, who left Granada to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1182 and wrote a travel account in which he praised Ṣalaḥ al-Dīn but offered an overall assessment that favoured the Almohads' achievements over those of their eastern co-religionists, caliphal or not.[63]

However, there were also deep differences. The Almohads were not soldiers fighting for the faith but soldiers of the faith: to join the Almohad armies was to 'become an Almohad' or, as they perceived it, to 'accept the oneness of God' (*waḥḥada*) as defined by Ibn Tūmart and, although the mainstay of the army were tribesmen and thus accustomed to fighting, their founding fathers were not military men trained in the service of other rulers but the Mahdī and his caliph. This context encouraged the Almohads to develop a style of urban architecture that was both militant and grand in scale, thus making visible their aspirations to defend the faith and return the population of the Islamic west to true monotheism after the perceived

aberrations of Almoravid legalism and literalism and Fatimid Shi'ism. Although accounts of Almohad ceremonial are not as numerous or as detailed as one would like, the details that can be gleaned suggest the ideological intensity of the empire, its desire to create a new Almohad community, but also the importance of creating some symbolic continuities with the Umayyad past, and even enhancing it, to draw the Muslim subject population of the west into the Almohad present.

The Almohad urban project and development of key ritual or ceremonial nodes began in the High Atlas at Tīnmāll, a pre-Islamic sacred site and a small settlement before its appropriation by the Almohads as their *dār al-hijra*. Just as the Prophet had felt obliged to kill or expel those inhabitants of Medina who refused to join the burgeoning Muslim community, so the Almohads violently purged Tīnmāll of its non-Almohad inhabitants, rendering its population homogeneous and pristine. A mosque was built at its centre flanked by the house of Ibn Tūmart in emulation of the close proximity, if not conjunction, of the Prophet's home and mosque in Medina. The city was heavily fortified with walls topped with towers and could only be accessed by a single bridge and gate. After the death of Ibn Tūmart *c.*1130, 'Abd al-Mu'min fostered the emergence of his burial place as a shrine by rebuilding the mosque as the heart of a complex where several subsequent generations of Mu'minids were then buried, making the city a focus for Almohad pilgrimage.[64] This metamorphosis of the movement's original *dār al-imāra* into a shrine created a further association with the development of Medina and emphasised the fact that the Almohads were not trying to defend what existed but to transform it in the same way that Yathrib had been transformed into Muḥammad's 'city of light'.

Although Tīnmāll was the cradle of the movement, Marrakesh emerged as the Almohads' southern capital after its capture from the Almoravids in 1148. It was their first important urban centre and the physical changes they made to it addressed the tension between their identity as a new religious, political and military elite and their theoretically universal message. Construction of the Almohad city is sometimes attributed to Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Mu'min (1163–84), but distinctive Almohad minarets were constructed in both Tīnmāll (1153) and Marrakesh (1153, 1158) during the reign of his father, 'Abd al-Mu'min (*c.*1130–63). The importance of 'Abd al-Mu'min himself in defining the direction of Almohad urban construction is confirmed by the *Hulal al-mawshiyya*, which states that he destroyed the Almoravid great mosque in the 'lower city' and replaced it with a new Almohad mosque, presumably the Kutubiyya. Conversely, al-Idrīsī states that the Almohads left Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn's mosque derelict and locked. In either case, they made public their disparagement of the Almoravid era by their unusually disrespectful treatment of the Almoravid great mosque, which al-Idrīsī flags up, stating: 'they built a congregational mosque for themselves and prayed in it after they pillaged property, spilt blood and sold

that which should not be sold, all of which their beliefs [*madhhab*] permit'.[65] According to the *Hulal al-mawshiyya*, 'Abd al-Mu'min then ordered the construction of a palace adjacent to the new mosque, which was connected to the former by a *sābāṭ*, a covered passageway, creating an immediate association with the *qaṣr*–great mosque area in Cordoba that had also been connected by such a passage.[66] Moreover, the *minbar* of the new mosque was of Andalusi workmanship. The neglect or destruction of the Almoravid mosque, considered with the integration of elements of the Andalusi Umayyad heritage, indicates the Mu'minids' ambivalent attitude towards the past: while it was important for them to draw a firm contrast between Almohadism and Almoravid Malikism, their relationship with Umayyad Sunnism was more complex.[67]

The location of the Kutubiyya on the south-west periphery of the Almoravid city demonstrated another aspect to their ambivalence: the Almohads positioned themselves neither inside Marrakesh nor definitively outside it, but appear to have added an extension to it in the form of a royal quarter, sometimes conceptualised as an entirely new city. The exact siting of this urban area is hard to determine but it seems incontrovertible that it lay primarily to the south of the Almoravid city in the region subsequently used by the Saʿdī and ʿAlawī dynasties for their palace complexes, and where the current royal palace still stands. Two gardens, the Menara to the south-west and the Agdāl to the south of the city, are attributed to the Almohads and mark the furthest limits of their urban vision.[68]

According to al-ʿUmarī (d. 1348), who based his account on information from Ibn Saʿīd, Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Yūsuf al-Manṣūr (r. 1184–99) transformed the Almoravid royal city into a civilian entity by adding an Almohad royal complex, called Tamarākusht, which was connected to the older city by a gateway. Since 'Tamarākusht' is the feminine form of 'Marrakesh' and al-Manṣūr is also recognised as the patron of the Almohad minaret in the *qaṣaba* of Marrakesh (1196), French scholars have made the logical assumption that this mysterious 'city' and the 'citadel' are one and the same urban entity. The character of the area and its relationship to the earlier settlement are conveyed in the following lines:

> [Tamarākusht] had huge walls and high gates with the caliphal complex inside, and within it there were great palaces such as the Crystal Palace (*dār al-ballūr*), the Palace of Aromatic Basil (*dār al-rayhān*) and the Water Palace (*dār al-māʾ*). None of the city's palaces lacked water, wonderful gardens and elevated views overlooking the expanses of Marrakesh.[69]

This short passage gives the impression of a fortified enclave of luxurious residences and green spaces that was essentially the private domain of the Mu'minids and other members of the Almohad elite. The enclave was

constructed on a massive scale, which enabled it physically to impose itself on Marrakesh and allowed its buildings to control the view over what the *Hulal al-mawshiyya* described as the 'lower city', despite the actual flatness of the plain.[70] Thus a definite hierarchy of power between the two locales emerged, which enabled the Almohads to dominate the existing city and its inhabitants using an idiom very different from that developed by the Umayyads at Madīnat al-Zahrā'. While the Umayyads had brought their processions into the heart of Madīnat al-Zahrā' and displayed their royal city, the Almohads remained aloof and powerful in their citadel and displaced public ceremonies and interactive activities to a transitional zone located outside the citadel and the city. This area, called the *raḥba*, a term used in al-Andalus for the open spaces before city gates, stood outside one of the gates of the *qaṣaba*.[71] It was more akin to the esplanade (*raṣīf*) outside the Umayyad *qaṣr* in Cordoba than to the reception halls of Madīnat al-Zahrā', but also shared features and functions with the space between the eastern and western palaces in Fatimid Cairo, eastern Islamic *maydān*s positioned outside citadels and the *maydān* much later constructed by Shāh 'Abbās in Isfahan.[72]

Although the spatial awareness of al-'Umarī's account is compromised by its second-hand nature, it nonetheless points to the main characteristics of the Almohad *raḥba*. It was a walled expanse that could be entered and exited by a number of gates, including Bāb al-Sāda (Gate of the Lords), which Gaudefroy-Demombynes considered to be synonymous with Bāb al-Bunūd (Gate of the Pennants).[73] This gate had a chain across it, forcing those passing through to dismount, and it connected the *raḥba* to an extra-mural necropolis embellished with splendid tombs and gardens. The chain recalled the Umayyad practice of forcing all comers to dismount at the Bāb al-Sudda in Madīnat al-Zahrā' but also the placement of wooden beams on the streets leading to the later Moroccan Idrisid shrines of Jabal Zarhūn and Fez in order to force riders to dismount in the presence of the sacred. In his notes to the text of al-'Umarī, Gaudefroy-Demombynes notes that the suspended chain also evoked the Mamluk court in Cairo and the subsidiary Mamluk courts in Syria.[74] It is impossible to ascertain from where the Almohads took their inspiration, but the fact that Bāb al-Sāda led to the *raḥba* from the Almohad necropolis suggests that the chain marked the presence of both power and the sacred, which were inextricably connected in the movement.

The area enclosed by the *raḥba* wall played two main roles: on the one hand it was a military parade ground used by the Almohads to review the troops garrisoned in Marrakesh, the *jumū'*, and to hold gatherings of the Almohad tribal auxiliaries from the High Atlas, the *umūm*.[75] Its second role was to provide the spaces in which the Almohads could receive their subjects and embassies. These functions required a set of structures that stood in the *raḥba* rather than in the *qaṣaba* itself. The first of these buildings was

a loggia next to the *qaṣaba* gate, the *qubbat al-khilāfa*, where the Almohad caliph held court. The *raḥba* also housed a menagerie containing wild animals, and a *madrasa* and library where scholarly gatherings were held. According to al-Marrākushī, the caliphs regularly summoned scholars of all disciplines, especially speculative philosophical thinkers, from among their subjects and even recruited them to their entourage, as in the case of the Andalusi historian Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt. Such non-Almohad scholars were collectively known as *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar* to distinguish them from the Maṣmūda shaykhs known as *ṭalabat al-muwaḥḥidīn*, with whom they met and discussed religious matters.[76]

Almohad Marrakesh was thus a walled city that included not only the Almoravid settlement but also a new *qaṣaba*, of more or less great extent, which was closed to the subject population. However, the Almohads compensated for this withdrawal by creating the *raḥba*, a large semi-private walled area in which a range of activities involving rulers and ruled took place. They also made plain their religious domination of the city by their deliberate disavowal of the existing great mosque and construction of the Kutubiyya, a pattern of patronage different from that developing in the Mashriq at the time, with its focus on *madrasa*s and auxiliary structures such as hospitals.[77] The Mu'minids followed a similar urban plan in their other main cities while respecting and employing local topography to their advantage. For instance, in 1160 'Abd al-Mu'min ordered his son, Abū Saʿīd 'Uthmān, to oversee the construction of a new settlement at Gibraltar, which he renamed Jabal al-Fatḥ (Mountain of Victory). Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt reports that he instructed Abū Saʿīd to consult with eminent Almohad shaykhs, the Almohad *ṭalaba* (scholars) and Andalusi architects, and to summon a team of Andalusi builders and artisans to construct the new town.[78] He says that the city contained a proliferation of palaces and residences (*quṣūr wa-diyār*), a windmill, walls and, as at Tīnmāll, a single gate called Bāb al-Futūḥ facing the mainland.[79] The city also contained a mosque and a *qaṣaba* in a domineering position overlooking not just the town below but also the Iberian mainland, which provided 'Abd al-Mu'min with a perfect venue to celebrate his victories against the Normans in Tunisia in the presence of the Muslim lords of al-Andalus.[80] The Almohad grand design can also be seen in the plans of Rabat and Seville, where new wall systems culminated in a *qaṣaba* opening on to a *raḥba*, and Almohad mosques took precedence over older great mosques, thereby asserting the status of Almohadism as the true monotheism.

The extramural character of the *raḥba* and the Almohads' externalisation of ceremonial were distinctive developments in the Islamic west that grew out of the Maṣmūda milieu in which the tribes gathered for large open-air meetings at regular intervals. This exteriority became more pronounced as the empire grew in size to incorporate Tunisia and al-Andalus. The Mu'minids had to be peripatetic rulers and move large armies across vast distances.

They therefore created a ceremonial on a scale as grand as their urban construction, transforming the stationary parades of the *raḥba* into moving cavalcades that engaged in the same complex dialectic with the past as did their urbanism. According to al-Marrākushī, the Almohad contingents travelled in processions whose every move was accompanied by prayer and Qur'anic recitation, emphasising the tribemen's identity as soldiers of the faith.[81] However, 'Abd al-Mu'min took care to present that faith as one that possessed a dual heritage: that of Ibn Tūmart and that of the Umayyads. In two intriguing passages, Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt and al-Marrākushī pick up the story of the famous Qur'ān of 'Uthmān from Cordoba, mentioned above, and describe its appropriation by the Almohads and display alongside the Qur'ān of Ibn Tūmart.

According to Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, when the caliph Abū Ya'qūb set out from Marrakesh for al-Andalus with a huge army on Saturday 4 Rajab 566 (13 March 1171), he was preceded by the white banner of the Almohads, the Qur'ān of 'Uthman and the Qur'ān of Ibn Tūmart. The Qur'ān of 'Uthmān was covered with red drapery (*killa*). Its case was decorated with red, yellow and green precious stones and an emerald. The jewels were obtained by the first caliph of the Mahdī ('Abd al-Mu'min) and his son (Abū Ya'qūb), who used them to decorate the Qur'ān case. One of the experts responsible for the artefact told Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt that one jewel resembled a horse's hoof and had originally belonged to Kumarawayh, son of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, master of Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and the Mzab.[82] He adds that when Abū Ya'qūb reached Rabat he dismounted and: 'ordered the bringing forth of four small flags on poles surmounted by gold globes (*tuffāḥa*) which gleamed and sparkled in the light. The coloured flags were made of red, yellow and white silk cloth (*khuldī*). These flags formed the supports of the Qur'ān's tabernacle.'[83] Al-Marrākushī gives a similar account:

> The Almohads took the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān from the treasures of the Banu Umayya and carried it before them wherever they went upon a red she-camel [adorned] with precious trappings and a splendid brocade cloth of great cost. They used to place a cloak of green brocade beneath it [the Qur'ān] with staffs to the left and right carrying green banners and surmounted by gold [pommels] resembling apples. Behind the camel came a mule similarly adorned carrying another copy of the Qur'ān said to be written by Ibn Tūmart smaller than the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān and ornamented with silver plated with gold. These preceded their caliph.[84]

Other sources mention Almohad usage of a red pavilion or tent, a practice common to the Umayyads that could be traced back to the Prophet's use of a red tent to receive a delegation from the Thaqīf tribe.[85] The Almohads thus stood apart as the true Muslims of the west but also endeavoured to

provide the possibility of inclusion to the Sunni Mālikī subject population of al-Andalus, in particular, by implying their participation in a line of western Islamic rulers whose practices were derived from the practice (*sunna*) of the Prophet himself. From the perspective of their non-Almohad subjects, however, their legitimacy depended on their military ability to wage *jihād*, the default position of many Muslim dynasties, particularly in times of external threat. It was therefore essential that Almohad self-projections, like those of the Ayyubids and Mamluks, should emphasise military prowess through the medium of military parades and processions. However, the Almohads also envisioned their cities as transformed communities and therefore used the *raḥba* in Marrakesh, and perhaps in other cities, as a space for theological disputation designed to persuade their subjects, represented by the *ṭalabat al-ḥaḍar*, of the veracity of their message. Their movements across their empire gave a similarly religious as well as military message.

This double emphasis distinguished the Almohads from contemporary eastern Islamic regimes and sheds some light on the reasons behind the distinctive Maghribi manifestation of the third stage in Bacharach's typology. On the one hand, major Almohad cities did possess extensive walling systems connecting different urban units, including a royal enclave of a citadel-like type. Moreover, the Almohad *raḥba* clearly shared aspects of form and function with the Ayyubid and Mamluk *maydān*, acting as a pivotal transition zone between civilian Marrakesh and the private complex of the ruler and his court. However, the Almohads were not a politico-military elite of foreign origin despite their predominantly Maṣmūda background. They were a religious sect prepared to admit anyone who subscribed to Almohadism into their ranks and keen to propagate their beliefs as the true Islamic monotheism. This caliphal paradigm found expression in the additional functions attributed to the *raḥba*, their use of military progresses for religious propaganda purposes and their tendency to construct great mosques rather than the *madrasa*s, *khanqah*s and hospitals more common in Egypt and Syria.

Conclusions

The development of governmental complexes in the early medieval Islamic west followed a trajectory consonant with the evolution identified by Jere Bacharach, and reflected the same general trends regarding the respective religious identities of rulers and ruled. However, the identification of such a simple schema may be deceptive and, in the western Islamic environment, does not make sufficient allowance for varied understandings of the nature of rule and the influence of sectarian concepts of Islam. The topographical and architectural choices made by rulers in al-Andalus and the Maghrib indicated complex interactions with their subjects that can be sub-divided into as many as five phases: the early Umayyad amirate, the mature Umayyad

amirate, the Umayyad caliphate, the Almoravid empire and the Almohad empire. The Arabic sources discussing cities, the building contributions made by successive regimes and the ways in which they used the urban spaces at their disposal give evidence for the importance of rulers in shaping the urban environment on a macro-scale, and insight into the specificities of the west through these successive phases.

When the Umayyads established their control over al-Andalus in the eighth century they did so as one aristocratic clan among many, despite their caliphal ancestry, and were essentially temporal rulers until 929. The development of the mosque–*dār al-imāra* zone in Cordoba during these two centuries suggests a two-stage evolution in the relationship between the amirs and their subjects, dictated in part by their aspirations to monarchy and in part by the religious affiliations of the population of the city. 'Abd al-Raḥmān I's *qaṣr* was essentially private. Audiences, a new amir's receipt of the *bay'a* and burials took place inside before limited audiences composed of the Umayyad clan itself, their clients and members of the minority Arab Muslim elite. The positioning of the palace adjacent to the mosque held Syrian associations for the Arabs but, equally, provided continuity with the Visigothic past in the city's political and religious topography for the non-Muslim subject population. Country estates (*munyāt*) played a similar role and also ensured the visibility of the amirs as they moved laterally between them and their religio-political nexus in Cordoba. At this stage the amir's movements were informal: in order to enter the mosque from the *qaṣr* he crossed a public street and entered an as yet undifferentiated congregational space.

In the early ninth century, Umayyad ceremonial began to mature, and transitional zones between royal and civilian, and private and public spaces were created. The palace was endowed with complex multifunctional gateways, the previously nondescript area south of the palace and mosque was replaced with an esplanade and space in the newly extended mosque became differentiated by the insertion of a screened royal enclosure, the *maqṣūra*. These changes rendered the amir more distant and monarchical but also intensified his symbolic presence within Cordoba. Within fifty years, this ceremonial was given a more Islamic thrust through the addition of the *sābāṭ*, which physically penetrated the mosque, thereby extending the palace to the *maqṣūra*, and Bāb al-'Adl, which provided a space in which the amir could manifest his justness but also demonstrate the punishment awaiting 'rebels' who incurred Umayyad wrath. Over the same period, the burgeoning number of royal villas and mosques, foci for urban development and, in the case of villas, nodes in an amiral circuit, wrapped Cordoba in an Umayyad and Islamic cloak.

The proclamation of a new Umayyad caliphate in 929 to a majority Muslim population marked the start of a third phase that found spatial expression in the construction of Madīnat al-Zahrā', a royal city in the caliphal mode defined by 'Abbasid Samarra. However, the relationship between Madīnat

al-Zahrāʾ and Cordoba was uniquely Andalusi, indicating a local rather than generic 'Islamic' rationale for the developments taking place. While Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ certainly filled the need to create an appropriate mystique around the caliph and a suitable environment for him to receive foreign visitors, the way in which the Umayyads made it part of a larger urban zone including numerous villas and the old city of Cordoba expressed the importance of continuity in al-Andalus and the highly integrated relationship between rulers and ruled. The additions to the great mosque and its extension during the caliphal period further enhanced the connectivity of Cordoba and Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ.

The rise of the Almoravids, Ṣanhāja Berbers from the Saharan fringe, introduced a new dynamic to urban planning. Although the Almoravids waged a *jihād* based on sectarian differences against fellow Muslims in Morocco, they adhered to the same *madhhab* as the Andalusi population. However, in both regions they displayed a preference for residential segregation in fortified units frequently called *quṣūr*, a term denoting a vertically dominant fort inhabited by members of a clan in southern Morocco, which could be independent settlements or an element within a city. Their urban preferences appear to have been based primarily on ethnic difference, which they tempered with urban patronage designed to unite Sunni Mālikī rulers and their subjects. This took the form of constructing fortifications to defend cities from attack in addition to investment in the religious infrastructure.

Almohad urbanism was more developed than that of their Almoravid predecessors and reflected the tenets of the Almohad religio-political movement itself, which the first generation of Almohads envisaged not as a renewal but as a new start. The Almohads therefore hoped to make the Islamic city anew as they had at Tīnmāll. However, this proved impossible and they remained a religio-political elite rather than the vanguard in the conversion of the entire empire to Almohadism. It also proved useful to the ruling Muʾminid family to make connections between the Almohads and earlier western Islamic regimes, the Umayyads especially. Although the physical combination of city walls connected to a citadel and a large plaza seems similar to Ayyubid, and later Mamluk, Cairo, the imperatives underlying these parallel developments were quite different. The Almohads sought to resolve the tension between the need to create an appropriate urban environment for the elite that reflected their power – the *qaṣaba* – and the importance of spreading their religious message to the subject population, which they expressed by the construction of new great mosques of massive dimensions and *raḥbāt*, spaces dedicated to interaction between rulers and ruled. Almohad processions and marches exhibited a similar concern to maintain and promote the religious dimension of Almohadism while also creating associations with the Umayyad past. The placing of royal complexes within cities in al-Andalus and Morocco from the Umayyads to the Almohads confirms a trajectory broadly similar to that in evidence across

the Islamic world but also suggests that the underlying causes for changes in the relationship between such elements were frequently local, and responded to the shifting identities of western Islamic regimes and their subjects in ways that were not always the same as the responses to shifts taking place in the Mashriq.

Notes

1 Jere Bacharach, 'Administrative complexes, palaces and citadels: changes in the loci of medieval Muslim rule', in I. Bierman, R. Abou-El-Haj and D. Preziosi (eds), *The Ottoman City and its Parts: Urban Structure and Social Order*. New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas, 1991, 111–28.

2 Abū'l-Qāsim b. Hawqal, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, M. J. de Goeje (ed.), Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum 2. Leiden: Brill, 1873.

3 Ibn Ḥayyān's *Muqtabis* was a multi-volume history including major portions from the history written by a succession of members of the al-Rāzī family. Not all the volumes are extant and those that exist have been edited and published by a variety of scholars. The following were consulted for this chapter: J. Vallvé Bermejo (ed.), *Ben Haián de Córdoba Muqtabis II: Anales de los Emires de Córdoba Alhaquem I (180–206H/796–822JC) y Abderramán (206–232H/822–847JC)*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1999; P. Melchior Antuña (ed.), *Ibn Haiyan, al-Muktabis III: Chronique du règne du caliphe umaiyade 'Abd Allah à Cordoue*. Paris: Geuthner, 1937; P. Chalmeta, F. Corriente and M. Subh (eds), *Ibn Hayyan: al-Muqtabas V*. Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1979; A. al-Hajji (ed.), *Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis fī akhbār balad al-Andalus*. Beirut: Dar Assakafa, 1965 (henceforth *al-Muqtabis* VI).

4 Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *Ta'rīkh al-mann bi'l-imāma 'alā al-mustaḍ'af īn bi-an ja'alahum Allah a'imma wa ja'alahum al-wārithīn*, 'Abd al-Hādī al-Tāzī (ed.). Baghdad: Dār al-Ḥurriyya, 1979.

5 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, Muḥammad Sa'īd al-'Aryān (ed.). Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'lā li'l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1383/1963.

6 al-Idrīsī, *Opus Geographicum*, E. Cerulli et al. (eds), Fascicules I–IV and V–VIII. Rome and Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, 1970.

7 Ibn Faḍl Allah al-'Umarī, *Masālik El Abṣār fi Mamālik El Amṣār: l'Afrique moins l'Egypte*, M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes (ed. and trans.). Paris: Geuthner, 1927.

8 Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Maghrib*, vol. 2, Reinhart Dozy (ed.). Leiden: Brill, 1849.

9 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghusn al-Andalus al-raṭīb wa-dhikr wazīriha Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb*, Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Hamīd (ed.), 10 vols in 5. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1367/1949.

10 *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya fī dhikr al-akhbār al-marrākushiyya*, Bashīr al-Fawratī (ed.). Tunis: al-Taqaddum al-Islāmiyya, 1329/1911. The editor erroneously attributes this work to Ibn al-Khaṭīb.

11 Bacharach, 'Administrative complexes', pp. 113–16.

12 Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān*, vol. 2, p. 244.

13 See D. Whitcomb, Chapter 2 in this volume and Bacharach, 'Administrative complexes', p. 113.

14 al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, vol. 1: 2, pp. 12–13.

15 Control and supply of water also appear in descriptions of Almohad Marrakesh and Marinid Fez, and continue to occur into the nineteenth century when the

historian al-Nāṣirī gave an extremely detailed description of the sultan Mawlay 'Abd al-Raḥmān's restoration of the Agdal gardens and their water supply from the High Atlas, juxtaposed with reports discussing his consolidation of power. Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-istiqṣā l-akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqsā*. Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, 1956, vol. 9, pp. 13–14.

16 For example, Qur'ān 3: 15.

17 Vallvé, *Muqtabis II*, p. 103/139.

18 al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, vol. 1: 2, p. 14.

19 al-Hajji, *Muqtabis VI*, p. 67.

20 Vallvé, *Muqtabis II*, p. 106/140v.

21 Vallvé, *Muqtabis II*, pp. 110–14/142v–144v.

22 Yedida K. Stillman and Paula Saunders, 'Ṭirāz', *EI* 2, vol. 10, 534–8, pp. 535–6.

23 Vallvé, *Muqtabis II*, p. 114/144v. These troops were called *khurs*, 'silent ones', because they did not (initially) speak Arabic. The term '*afrānj*' (Franks) used to describe these slaves appears to be used here in its widest sense of individuals from northern Europe.

24 Vallvé, *Muqtabis II*, pp. 106/140r, 112/143v.

25 Vallvé, *Muqtabis II*, p. 109/142r.

26 al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, vol. 1: 2, p. 13.

27 Vallvé, *Muqtabis II*, p. 109/142r.

28 J. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990, pp. 102–3.

29 Antuña, *Muqtabis III*, pp. 34, 37.

30 Antuña, *Muqtabis III*, p. 25.

31 Antuña, *Muqtabis III*, p. 39.

32 Antonio Vallejo Triano, 'El proyecto urbanístico del estado califal: Madīnat al-Zahrā'', in Rafael Lopéz Guzman (ed.), *La Arquitectura del Islam occidental*. Madrid: Lunwerg Editores, 1995, 69–81, p. 69. Al-Maqqarī mentions four suburbs named after *munyāt*. *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, vol. 1: 2, p. 13.

33 For a description of Madīnat al-Zahrā' in English see M. Barrucand and A. Bednorz, *Moorish Architecture*. Cologne: Taschen, 1992, pp. 61–9. For detailed analysis of the site and its relationship with both Cordoba and the *munyāt*, see Triano, 'Madīnat al-Zahrā''.

34 Henri Stierlin, *Islam: Early Architecture from Baghdad to Cordoba*. Cologne: Taschen, 1996, p. 108.

35 Janina Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 68.

36 Ibn Ḥawqal, *Masālik*, p. 77.

37 Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, p. 69.

38 Safran makes specific reference to this embassy and its implications, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, pp. 80–8.

39 al-Hajji, *Muqtabis VI*, pp. 44–53.

40 Ibn 'Idhārī states that al-Ḥakam II requested mosaic stones and master craftsmen from Constantinople in deliberate emulation of his Damascene caliphal ancestor, al-Walīd. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān*, p. 253.

41 Robert Hillenbrand, 'Medieval Cordoba as a cultural centre', in S. Jayyusi (ed.), *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. Leiden: Brill, 1994, vol. 1, 112–35, pp. 133–4.

42 al-Hajji, *Muqtabis IV*, p. 29.

43 Ibn Marzūq, *El Musnad: Hechos memorables de Abu l-Hasan Sultan de los Benimerines*, trans. Maria J. Viguera. Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1977, p. 377.

44 Dodds, *Architecture*, p. 100; al-Idrīsī, *Opus*, V–VIII, p. 577.

45 I have traced the evolution of myths related to this so-called Qur'ān of 'Uthmān and its particular importance to the Almohads in a separate article. Amira K. Bennison, 'The Almohads and the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān: the legacy of the Umayyads of Cordoba in the twelfth century Maghrib'. *al-Masāq*, forthcoming.

46 Barrucand and Bednorz, *Moorish Architecture*, pp. 146–8.

47 É. Levi-Provençal, 'Le titre souverain des Almoravides et sa légitimation par le califat 'abbāside', *Arabica* 2: 3, 1955, 265–80.

48 H. T. Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*. London: Longman, 1982, pp. 107–8.

49 Messier has argued that it was an excess of tribal feeling (*'asabiyya*) and the very limited sharing of the spoils of empire that brought the Almoravids down. R. Messier, 'Rethinking the Almoravids, rethinking Ibn Khaldun', in J. Clancy-Smith (ed.), *North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean World*. London: Frank Cass, 2001, 59–80.

50 al-Idrīsī, *Opus*, I–IV, p. 245. The residence of an amir with his uncle mentioned here and also in Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn's construction of Marrakesh reflected Ṣanhāja social norms according to which inheritance passed via a sister's son. This made women, particularly sisters, politically prominent, a tendency for which the Almoravids were criticised by their Almohad opponents.

51 See Jonathan Bloom, Chapter 6 in this volume.

52 J. Jomier, 'al-Fusṭāṭ', *EI* 2, vol. 2, 957–9; Hichem Djaït, 'al-Kūfa', *EI* 2, vol. 5, 345–51.

53 al-Idrīsī, *Opus*, I–IV, p. 233.

54 al-Idrīsī, *Opus*, I–IV, p. 234.

55 Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'ibar wa dīwān al-mubtadā' wa'l-khabar fī ayyām al-'Arab wa'l-'Ajam wa'l-Barbar wa man 'āṣarahum min dhuwiy al-sulṭān al-akbar*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Banānī, 1959.

56 *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya*, p. 5.

57 Amin Tibi, *The Tibyan: Memoirs of Abd Allah b. Buluggin, Last Zirid Amir of Granada*. Leiden: Brill, 1986, p. 169.

58 Although al-Idrīsī uses the word *'amm* (paternal uncle) in both the cited extracts, according to the genealogy of the Almoravids given in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Tāshfīn was the brother of Ṣāfiya, the wife of 'Umar, who was thus Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn's maternal uncle (*khāl*). This fits with the Ṣanhāja custom of making a sister's son heir, thus making the relationship between uncle and nephew particularly strong. H. T. Norris [and P. Chalmeta], 'al-Murābiṭūn', *EI* 2, vol. 7, 583–91, p. 586.

59 Classic French scholarship represented by Gaudefroy-Demombynes located the Dār al-Ḥajar complex south-west of the current *madīna* in the Kutubiyya area where Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn's tomb is situated. Barrucand and Bednorz locate it in the vicinity of the Qubbat al-Ba'diyyīn. M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 'Quelques passages du Masalik El Absar relatif au Maroc', in *Memorial Henri Basset: nouvelles études nord-africaines et orientales*, vol. 1. Paris: Geuthner, 1928, 269–80, pp. 270–4; Barrucand and Bednorz, *Moorish Architecture*, p. 141.

60 al-Baydhaq, 'Kitāb akhbār al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart wa'ibtidā' dawlat al-Muwaḥḥidīn', in É. Levi-Provençal (ed. and trans.), *Documents inedits d'histoire Almohade*. Paris: Geuthner, 1928, 50–133 (Arabic), 75–224 (French), p. 67 (Arabic) and pp. 108–9 (French).

61 Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'ibar*, vol. 8, p. 468.

62 Yasser Tabbaa, *The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2002, pp. 114–18.

63 Ibn Jubayr's views are made explicit in his well known assertion that 'There is no Islam save in the Maghrib lands'. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. Roland Broadhurst. New Delhi: Goodword, 2001 reprint, p. 73.

64 Halima Ferhat, 'Tinmal', *EI* 2, vol. 10, 530–1.

65 al-Idrīsī, *Opus*, I–IV, p. 234.

66 *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya*, p. 108. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt also mentions a *sābāṭ* in Granada that linked the Zirid fortress on the Sabika hill with the ruler's residence (*qaṣaba*) in the city below and appears to have performed a security function. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi'l-imāma*, p. 185.

67 This disparagement did not necessarily extend to all Almoravid constructions. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt does report that Abū Yaʿqūb used the old Almoravid *qaṣr* in Marrakesh for at least one major reception. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi'l-imāma*, p. 463.

68 Popular lore claims that the Almohads taught recruits to swim and handle boats in the large pool in the Menara gardens, while also using the pool for recreation.

69 al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik El Abṣār*, p. 181.

70 *al-Hulal al-mawshiyya*, p. 108.

71 L. Torres-Balbás describes the Andalusi *raḥba* in his *Cuidades hispano-musulmanes*, vol. 1. Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Dirección General de Relaciones Culturales, Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1971, pp. 295–301.

72 See Stephen Blake, Chapter 8 in this volume.

73 The difficulties in reconciling al-ʿUmarī's description with the fragmentary Almohad remains in the Qaṣaba area of Marrakesh led Gaudefroy-Demombynes to suppose that there may have been more than one area described as a *raḥba*, with a principal one of large size. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 'Quelques passages du Masalik El Absar', pp. 270–4.

74 al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik El Abṣār*, p. 184, n. 1.

75 al-Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, pp. 425–6.

76 al-Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, p. 426.

77 al-Marrākushī records that the Almohad caliph, Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb, did found a hospital in Marrakesh. Al-Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, pp. 364–5.

78 Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi'l-imāma*, pp. 130–2.

79 Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi'l-imāma*, pp. 134–5.

80 L. Torres-Balbás, 'Gibraltar llave y guarda de España', *Cronica de la España Musulmana*, vol. 2. Madrid: Instituto de España, 1981, 60–116/168–216, pp. 65–6/ 173–4.

81 al-Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, pp. 426–7.

82 Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi'l-imāma*, pp. 467–9.

83 Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi'l-imāma*, pp. 474–5.

84 al-Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, p. 326.

85 Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi'l-imāma*, p. 530, n. 2. Gaudefroy-Demombynes also mentions the *afrag* or *qubbat al-ḥamrāʾ*, whose origins can be traced to pre-Islamic Arabian usage of a red leather tabernacle to shelter sacred objects. 'Quelques passages de Masalik El Absar', p. 276.

CEREMONIAL AND SACRED SPACE IN EARLY FATIMID CAIRO

Jonathan M. Bloom

Much recent scholarship on the history of Cairo has suggested that the Fatimid caliphs (r. 909–1171) founded the city as a ceremonial centre and symbol of their rule adjacent to Fusṭāṭ, the administrative and commercial centre of Egypt, established some three centuries earlier by the first Muslim conquerors of Egypt. For example, the late Paul Wheatley wrote in his magisterial survey of early Islamic cities that 'when the Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz ordered his general Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī to lay out an Ismāʿīlī ritual palace at the head of the Nile delta, he was opting for a locality that could look back on a long line of political, ritually, and commercially important settlements'.[1]

Although commonly held, this interpretation is quite wrong: there can be no question that the Fatimid general Jawhar conquered Egypt in 969 and founded what was to become Cairo. It is also true that a few years later the caliphs decamped from their base in Tunisia and moved lock, stock and barrel to Egypt, where they remained for another two centuries. Furthermore, Fatimid Cairo, whose massive walls enclosed the caliph's splendid palaces and mosques, did become one of the great metropoli of the medieval Mediterranean region. Indeed, textual and artistic sources provide evidence for a complex ceremonial life in late Fatimid times, with elaborate processions performed by the caliphs and their court.[2] Nevertheless, a close reading of the historical sources for the early period of Cairo's existence demonstrates that Cairo was not founded as a city, nor was it initially intended as a ceremonial centre. Instead it was but one of a series of practical foundations the Fatimids built in the expectation of establishing their authority over the entire Muslim world. When things did not turn out as expected, the Fatimids changed their plans and transformed their temporary fort into their next and final capital city.

The sources

Nearly all the eyewitness accounts of the period in question – that is, the sixty-five years from Jawhar's victory in Egypt until the reign of al-Ẓāhir

– come to us either second- or third-hand in the form of quotations that appear in the works of later authors. The only exceptions are some tenth-century geographers, who had remarkably little to say about the new Fatimid capital, and the eleventh-century traveller Nāṣir-i Khusraw, who said much. For example, al-Muqaddasī writes in his text of 985 that:

> al-Qāhira is a town (*madīna*) built by Jawhar, the Fatimid general, after his conquest of Egypt and his subjection of its people. It is large and well-built and has a handsome mosque. The royal palace stands in its centre. The town is fortified and has iron plated gates. It is on the highway to Syria, and no one can enter al-Fusṭāṭ without passing through it, as both the one and the other are hedged in between the mountain and the river. The *muṣallā*, or place where the public prayers of the two festivals are held, is situated to the rear of al-Qāhira, while the graveyards lie between the city and the mountain.[3]

Nothing in this text would suggest anything particularly out of the ordinary, in contrast to the geographer's fullsome description of neighbouring Fusṭāṭ. Some sixty years later, the situation had changed significantly, for when the Persian traveller and Ismāʿīlī spy Nāṣir-i Khusraw visited the city during the reign of al-Mustanṣir in 1048, he reported extensively on the city of al-Qāhira, 'whose equal is hardly to be found'. The city had five gates enclosing tall buildings and gardens and orchards. There were four mosques within and immediately outside the city. There were no fewer than 20,000 shops, no end of caravanserais, bathhouses, other public buildings, and 8,000 residential buildings, all owned by the 'sultan' and rented out. In the centre stood the sultan's palace, which looked like a mountain because of all the different buildings and the great height. Nāṣir reported that 30,000 people worked in the palace, including women and slave girls, and that it consisted of twelve buildings with ten gates. He continues his description with a lengthy account of the ceremony when the sultan opened the canal as the Nile reached its maximum flood level.[4]

Few, if any, contemporary Fatimid sources survive intact, but many fragments have been preserved by the Mamluk historian al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442), whose *Ittiʿāẓ al-ḥunafāʾ* and *Khiṭaṭ* are major sources for Fatimid history and for the history of Cairo respectively.[5] While al-Maqrīzī's works often contain large chunks of text lifted verbatim from books composed three or four centuries earlier by such early Fatimid historians as Ibn Zūlāq, these texts have been redacted through the filter of later sensibilities and do not necessarily represent the unadulterated originals. The words themselves may be original, but the contexts in which they are presented may not. In contrast, more sources survive concerning the later Fatimid period, stretching from the great crises during the reign of al-Mustanṣir in the 1060s and the

establishment of the all-powerful vizierate of Badr al-Jamālī and his son al-Afḍal to the end of the dynasty in 1171, but the usefulness of such writers as Ibn al-Ṭuwayr for the early Fatimid period may be limited because they reflect later perceptions of events that had occurred nearly two centuries earlier.[6] One must, therefore, carefully evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of the medieval sources before attempting to reconstruct the first few decades in the history of Cairo.

The foundation of Cairo

The Fatimid invasion of Egypt was meticulously and flawlessly planned, as the caliph in North Africa subordinated all aspects of government and bent the entire resources of the realm to prepare for the conquest.[7] Wells were dug along the route across Libya, and depots established for supplies.[8] Fusṭāṭ had been an important node in the Ismāʿīlī network long before the Fatimid conquest of Egypt.[9] The Mahdī, the founder of the dynasty, had passed through Fusṭāṭ on his way to the Maghrib, and historical sources as well as distinctive formulae found on tombstones indicate that Fatimid missionaries were active in the city long before Jawhar arrived in 969.[10] The director of the Ismāʿīlī mission in Egypt had befriended and perhaps bribed many important local officials and the heads of resident ʿAlid families. Many Egyptians may have objected to Fatimid rule on doctrinal grounds, but most would have seen Jawhar's conquest as a deliverance from the chaos caused by Ikhshidid ineptitude. A series of low Nile floods had brought on the worst famine in living memory, and the government collapsed under the incompetent administration of the eunuch Kāfūr, who was unable to keep the various factions from pulling the country apart.[11] The Fatimid general Jawhar, who had already distinguished himself in campaigns against the neo-Umayyads of Spain and their proxies in north-west Africa, arrived in Alexandria in April or May 969, accompanied by a huge army and a strong fleet, not to mention a war chest of perhaps 24 million dinars – at a time when a middle-class family could live on approximately six dinars a month.[12] A delegation of notables from Fusṭāṭ negotiated a peace treaty with the conquerors, who promised to establish order and security, implement justice, redress wrongs, improve the social and economic situation, protect the country from non-Muslim and Muslim enemies and ensure complete religious tolerance.[13]

Arriving at Giza on the banks of the Nile about two or three months later in July, the Fatimid army crossed over to Fusṭāṭ, the capital city of Egypt since the Islamic conquest over three centuries earlier, and camped several kilometres to the north-east of the city on a largely agricultural site occupied by a Coptic monastery, a small *qaṣr* or fortified enclosure and the stables and zoological park of the former Ikhshidid ruler. General Jawhar initially named his encampment al-Manṣūriyya after the Fatimid capital near Kairouan in Tunisia, but within a few years it would be renamed

al-Qāhira al-Muʿizziyya, 'the [City of] al-Muʿizz's Victory', or more simply al-Qāhira, 'the Victorious', from which Cairo, its modern name, derives.[14]

Post-Fatimid historians – particularly Egyptians – have conflated the sequence of events and viewed the foundation of Cairo through the rose-tinted lenses of retrospection. Simple logic as well as a close reading of historical sources suggests that both al-Muʿizz and Jawhar initially viewed the conquest of Egypt not as an end in itself but as a means to the greater end of establishing Fatimid hegemony over the entire Muslim world.

The aplomb and ostentation with which Jawhar marched his army – perhaps numbering as many as 100,000 men – through Fusṭāṭ to camp to the north-east of the Tulunid district al-Qaṭāʾiʿ indicates that he had planned the operation carefully. Indeed, the account of Ibn Zūlāq, one of the few contemporary sources, indicates that al-Muʿizz may already have selected the site in advance from his base in Tunisia.[15] In any event, Jawhar did not have much choice about where to settle his troops, for the spot he chose was the only sizeable piece of relatively vacant flat – and dry – ground still available on the right bank of the Nile (Figure 6.1). The annual flood of the Nile would have begun at the end of June, and it would have been foolhardy to camp too close to the river, which would continue to rise until September. In any event, low ground would have remained damp or even marshy. The chosen site, located on the same side of the river as Fusṭāṭ, had the further advantage of being at a safe remove from its congregational mosque and the old government offices, which Jawhar could well have expected to be centres of anti-Fatimid resistance.[16]

Following the precedent of early Islamic times, when a conqueror would establish a camp (known in Arabic as a *miṣr*, pl. *amṣār*) for his army, Jawhar and his troops established a rectangular encampment, which some medieval historians called a *qaṣr*, or fortress, measuring roughly a kilometre in either direction. Medieval historians recount an amusing story about how Jawhar consulted astrologers to determine the most auspicious moment to begin work, but the fact that much the same story had been told earlier about Alexander's foundation of Alexandria much reduces its evidential value and shows it to be a topos.[17] Furthermore, other incidents show how little attention the Fatimids paid to astrology.[18] Decades earlier, before the Mahdī, the first Fatimid caliph, had set out with the Kutāma army for Kairouan, astrologers are said to have warned him of an unfavourable conjunction of Mars and Virgo, but he set no store by it, because he attached no importance to it.[19]

The orientation of the encampment along an axis about 20° east of north, which was to have major ramifications for the later urban history of Cairo, was dictated, it seems, not by astrological considerations but by the alignment of the Nile–Red Sea canal (*khalīj*), first laid out in Pharaonic times, against which the camp's north-west wall was built.[20] The enclosure wall itself is said to have been built of large sun-dried bricks, measuring about a cubit (approximately 50 cm) square and nearly two-thirds of a cubit (some
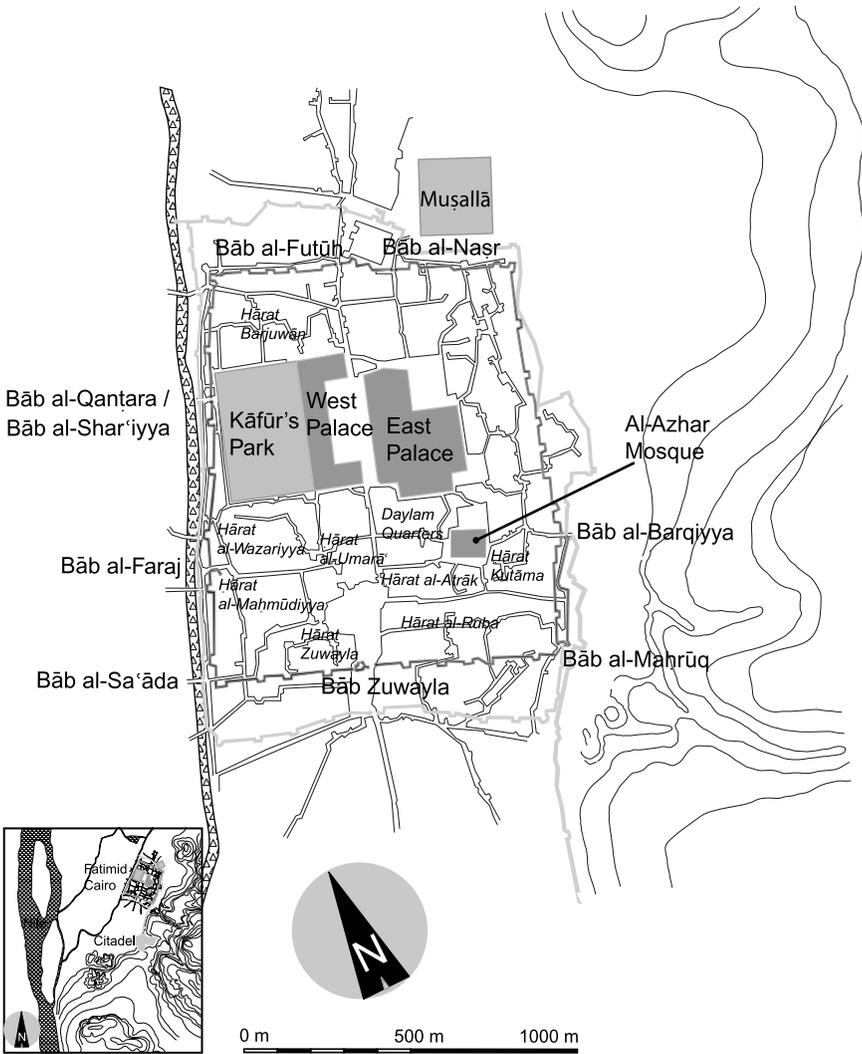
Figure 6.1 Map of al-Qāhira and surrounds. Drawing by Piet Collet.

33 cm) thick; it was broad enough for two horsemen to ride abreast, according to an eyewitness who saw parts of it several centuries later.[21] We have no idea how high this wall would have stood, but the staggering amount of labour involved in constructing a rampart about 4.5 km long makes it ridiculous to imagine that such a task could have been completed, as some medieval accounts state, during the first night of work. It is likely, however, that the Fatimid troops did work at night, at least initially, for the full moon

of mid-month (they arrived on 17 Shaʿbān) would have been more con-
ducive to heavy labour than the full sun of midsummer. That the enclosure
wall was the first thing Jawhar built indicates just how vulnerable the Fatimid
army must have felt in Egypt.

Jawhar's troops, whose primary responsibility would have been building
walls and gates to protect themselves, immediately established their resid-
ences inside the camp. As in the early *amṣār*, each regiment was given its
own area in which to settle, and the regimental names eventually came to
designate the area, as in the 'Barqiyya' district of the south-east corner of
the settlement, which was settled by the regiment from Barqa. Some of the
labour must have been done not by soldiers but by local workers, and some
of the benefits of this and other Fatimid public works projects must also
have accrued to those who had suffered mightily from the famines and
disruptions of the final years of Ikhshidid rule.[22]

Almost immediately after settling in Egypt, Jawhar ordered the construc-
tion of an outdoor prayer-place, called a *muṣallā* in Arabic. Later sources
identified its location beyond Bāb al-Naṣr, one of the two northern gates
of the enclosure. It was necessary to establish a *muṣallā* immediately because
the Fatimid army had arrived in the middle of the month of Shaʿbān and
the following month was Ramaḍān. This month of fasting culminates in the
'īd al-fiṭr, or break-fast feast, one of the two great feasts normally celebrated
at a *muṣallā* rather than in a mosque. That said, a *muṣallā* did not require
much construction beyond some demarcation and orientation with a wall and
a *miḥrāb*; a *minbar* for sermons might also have been installed. The *muṣallā*
was also needed because the celebrations of the end of Ramaḍān that year
revealed sharp differences in religious practice between the Fatimid army
and the Egyptian populace they governed. The new rulers did not actually
wait to see the new moon of Shawwāl, but determined that the month of
fasting had ended by calculating the moon's appearance after thirty days
had passed since the beginning of the month. Meanwhile the largely Sunni
Egyptians remained fasting and praying at the Mosque of ʿAmr in Fusṭāṭ
until they saw the crescent of the new moon the following night.[23]

The walls of Jawhar's encampment lay on relatively flat and open ground.
While the north-west wall would have been protected by the proximity of
the canal, and the south-east wall was similarly protected by its proximity
to the escarpment of the Muqaṭṭam hills, the south-west wall was exposed
to the potentially unruly population of Fusṭāṭ. Still more vulnerable, however,
was the north-east side, which gave on to an extensive open plain and the
routes towards Palestine, Syria and Arabia. Defence was Jawhar's primary
consideration, so only a few gates initially breached the massive walls,
although more were added once security was assured. The first gates included
Bāb al-Futūḥ (Gate of Conquests) and Bāb al-Naṣr (Gate of Victory) on
the north, as well as Bāb Zuwayla (Gate of the Zuwayla [regiment]) on the
south. The martial names of the gates, particularly the two on the vulnerable

north-east side, may express Jawhar's wishful thinking about current con-
ditions, but it is more likely that they were chosen to echo the names of the
gates of the earlier Fatimid foundation of al-Manṣūriyya outside Kairouan
in Tunisia. The names of the gates lend further credence to Ibn Zūlāq's
report that Jawhar initially named the new settlement 'al-Manṣūriyya'.[24]
Yet the Egyptian foundation was no mere copy of the Tunisian royal city:
Jawhar's Manṣūriyya was roughly square, while the one in Tunisia was
round. Shape would therefore seem to have been of no special significance,
although it was probably easier – and faster – to survey and build a rectangle
than a circle, despite the theoretical advantage of a circular wall to enclose
the maximum area within the shortest wall. Although the gates would
be rebuilt and even officially renamed a century later, they continued to
maintain their original early Fatimid names for over a millennium. Finally,
while the Tunisian city enclosed both a palace and a mosque, the Egyptian
one – at least initially – had neither.

   In line with the Fatimids' eastern strategy, in November 969, four months
after the conquest of Egypt, Jawhar despatched the main body of the Fatimid
army to conquer Palestine and Syria. But the initial Fatimid successes there,
where they quickly seized Damascus and pressed on north and east towards
Byzantine territory and perhaps even the 'Abbasid capital itself, proved
transitory. In the summer of 971 the Qarmatians of Bahrain, who had once
been allied with the Fatimids, defeated the Fatimid army at Damascus with
the help of tribal forces and Ikhshidid renegades. Anticipating that the
Qarmatians would next attack the Fatimid base in Egypt, Jawhar ordered
an immense dry moat (*khandaq*) to be dug beyond the north-western wall
of the encampment and stretching from the river to the Muqaṭṭam cliffs,
further to protect it. He also ordered a bridge built over the canal, thereby
providing his settlement with direct access to the Nile port of al-Maqs. The
two iron-clad valves of a portal from the former Ikhshidid polo ground
(*maydān al-ikhshīd*) were reinstalled to close the gate in the wall that led to
the bridge. While the transfer of gates, like countless earlier instances of this
practice in west Asia, undoubtedly symbolised to the population the transfer
of power to the new rulers, the primary reason these gates were moved was
surely practical, namely to defend the new Fatimid outpost from attack.[25]
Encouraged by their victories in Syria, the Qarmatian commander chased
the Fatimid army back to Egypt, and overran the eastern delta and the
towns on the coastal route from Palestine. In late December 971, Jawhar
mustered an improvised army that successfully defended his encampment
and the city beyond, and the Qarmatian commander and his army were
forced to retreat.[26]

   Once security was assured in Egypt and the residents of the encampment
needed to go in different directions, additional gates were cut through the
walls. Within a few decades one could enter the city through a total of
eight gates spread out in all four walls. The increase indicates that security

was no longer a major concern and that free and easy movement between the Fatimid encampment and the surrounding districts was becoming increasingly important as the new district became integrated into the older settlement. The gates were named Bāb al-Qanṭara (Gate of the Bridge), Bāb al-Barqiyya (Gate of the Regiment from Barqa), Bāb al-Qarrāṭīn (Gate of the Clover-Merchants), Bāb al-Saʿāda (Gate of Happiness) and Bāb al-Faraj (Gate of Joy).[27]

Later observers, projecting backwards from what Cairo eventually became, have imagined that Jawhar intended to build more than he actually did construct. Historians have repeatedly stated that the Fatimids intended Cairo to be a princely town to mark the birth of a dynasty and to affirm its authority. Specifically, Cairo would have been 'a royal refuge within whose secure enclosure an alien [and Shiʿi] caliph and his entourage could pursue their lives' and rule over a largely Sunni population.[28] Indeed, one recent study considers the walled city of Cairo a 'ritual city' that served as a stage for the elaboration of Fatimid ceremonial.[29] Although the Fatimid walled city might eventually have come to serve as a ceremonial stage in the later part of the dynasty's 200 years of rule in Egypt, when fancy-dress parades to mosques replaced military-dress parades to war, Cairo was certainly not created as a stage set. The historical sources are clear on one point: the walls were begun significantly before the mosque and even the palace, which seems to have been something of an afterthought. Given the Fatimids' experience in North Africa and their designs on the rest of the Muslim lands, the enormous initial effort of building a great defensive wall was a practical response to very real threats rather than a symbolic gesture to separate the rulers from the ruled. Cairo was founded to be a temporary way-station for the Fatimids' conquest of the Muslim lands in their entirety. As at many other times in history, however, things did not turn out as planned.

Nor was Fatimid Cairo a forbidden city reserved exclusively for the members of the court. The multiplicity of gates argues forcefully against such an interpretation, for exclusivity implies restricted access. Later authors such as Ibn Duqmāq (d. 790/1388) tell us that Jawhar built the palace for his master 'so that he and their friends and armies were separate from the general public'[30] but countless contemporary texts mention houses, merchants and traffic in the city. Granted, there were occasional caliphal edicts prohibiting traffic entering the city, but like all sumptuary laws, these reveal what was already the norm. For example, the contemporary historian al-Musabiḥī reports that during the reign of al-Ḥakim, in March–April 1005, merchants were prohibited from setting up shop near one of the palace gates, and everyone was prohibited from passing by the palace; but the merchants complained bitterly and the edict was repealed.[31] So merchants must have been used to selling their wares within the Fatimid city.

Many, if not all, of the typical urban functions were present in Fatimid Cairo. The starry-eyed – and biased – Persian Ismāʿīlī Nāṣir-i Khusraw, for

example, who visited Cairo between August 1047 and April 1048, says that all the 20,000 shops in Cairo belonged to the imam, as did the caravanserais and the bathhouses there. The imam also owned 8,000 buildings in both Cairo and Fusṭāṭ, which were rented by the month.[32] Perhaps the figures are exaggerated, but whatever the number, the buildings were surely inhabited. Cairo's residents were served by markets, of which the first was built in 975–6, and bathhouses, of which the first was built by al-Muʿizz's son, the caliph al-ʿAzīz; his daughter Sitt al-Mulk built more.[33] Even in the middle of the twelfth century, when the Fatimid dynasty was teetering on the brink of collapse, houses in Cairo were bought, sold and bequeathed, according to documents from Cairo's Jewish community.[34] In short, there is no contemporary evidence to suggest that Fatimid Cairo was founded as a restricted royal city.

The mosque

This observation is confirmed when we look at the history of the city's principal mosque and palace. For nine months after the conquest of Egypt, the religious needs of both the Egyptians and the conquerors were served by the congregational mosques of Fusṭāṭ and al-Qaṭāʾiʿ, except for the prayers at the end of Ramaḍān, which had been celebrated in the new musallā. The Egyptian chief preacher, who was strongly opposed to the Fatimids, avoided giving the sermon in favour of the Fatimid caliph by delegating the responsibility to a deputy. In late March 970, after several months of delicate negotiations, the preacher returned from temporary retirement and finally pronounced the sermon in favour of the Fatimid caliph, who was at this time still resident in Tunisia. Meanwhile, the muezzins at the Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn began adding the distinctive Shiʿi formula (Come to the best of works!) to the call to prayer, and within a few weeks even the Mosque of ʿAmr, the bastion of Sunni orthodoxy, resounded with these charged words.

Still these accommodations may not have been sufficient, for on 4 April 970, nine months after the conquest, Jawhar ordered that another congregational mosque be constructed in the middle of the Fatimid settlement; it was finished with remarkable speed in little more than a year, for the first Friday prayer was held there on 22 June 971.[35] The building is now known as al-Azhar (the most Radiant), a name conventionally understood to be a reference to Fāṭima al-Zahrā' (the Splendid), the Prophet's daughter and progenitrix of the Fatimid lineage, but it is unclear how early this name was applied. The name was certainly used by 1010, when an endowment deed refers to the mosque by this epithet.

The mosque is the oldest Fatimid structure in Egypt to survive, although it has been enveloped in a web of later construction that totally obscures its Fatimid core. The veneration accorded to the building in modern times has made archaeological investigation impractical if not impossible, and the ill-conceived renovations following the devastating earthquake of October

1992 have further obscured any Fatimid remains under slabs of polished marble and coats of bright paint and gold leaf. An understanding of the original Fatimid mosque must rely, therefore, on a careful analysis of the extant – if altered – physical remains combined with a judicious interpretation of the often equivocal and obscure medieval texts.[36]

All scholars agree that the mosque was originally a rectangular enclosure measuring roughly 85 by 69 m (Figure 6.2). K. A. C. Creswell, who measured the mosque, noted that it is oriented to a *qibla* reckoned 40° south of east (130°), which conforms to neither the *qibla* of the Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn (141°) nor the *qibla* of the Mosque of 'Amr (117°), also known as the *qibla* of the Companions of the Prophet (*ṣaḥāba*). Instead, it is close to 127°, the *qibla* computed by the Egyptian astronomer Ibn Yūnus (d. 1009), which suggests that the Fatimid general was concerned to establish the scientifically correct orientation, much as he had been concerned with establishing the scientifically correct time to end the Ramaḍān fast.[37] The prayer hall occupied roughly one-third of the mosque's area and consisted of five aisles parallel to the *qibla* wall. The prayer hall was divided in half by an axial aisle with clerestory windows running from the court to the *mihrāb*, leaving arcades of nine arches on either side. A text quoted by al-Maqrīzī has led some scholars to reconstruct domes in the rear corners of the prayer hall, but as Nasser Rabbat suggested, the absence of any physical evidence for such structures argues against them, although they are found in the Mosque of al-Ḥākim, built a few decades later.[38]
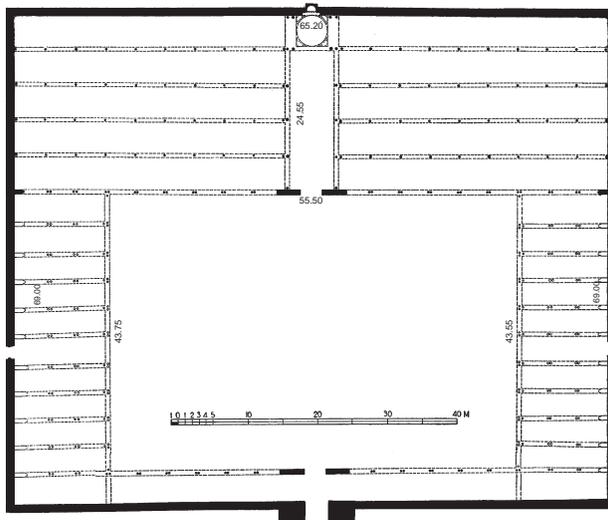
Figure 6.2 Plan of the Mosque of al-Azhar with modifications, after Creswell, *MAE* (see note 17), Figure 21 on p. 59.

On either side of the courtyard were narrower halls three bays deep. The arcades run parallel to the mosque's *qibla* wall, an unusual arrangement, as it would have made more sense for them to run parallel to the mosque's side walls, as at the Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn. As the court façade has been rebuilt several times, Creswell somewhat hesitantly reconstructed it as an arcade supported on columns, but it may well have been supported on piers. Although Creswell indicated that there was no arcade along the court wall opposite the prayer hall, this arrangement is very unusual, not to say ungainly. It is possible, indeed likely, that the entire courtyard was surrounded by arcades. The walls, both inside and out, were built of brick covered with plaster, and marble columns and capitals taken from earlier buildings supported the arcades.[39] (The extensive use of *spolia* and a local workforce may help to explain the speed with which the mosque was constructed.) Surviving fragments of carved plaster indicate that the upper portion of the mosque's interior walls as well as the upper arcades were decorated with vegetal designs outlined with bands of texts taken from the Qur'ān written in floriated Kufic script.

Although nothing is known of the mosque's exterior, which is entirely encased in later construction, it is likely that the main façade had a projecting portal, following the precedent of the first Fatimid mosque at al-Mahdiyya in Tunisia and providing a prototype for the slightly later Mosque of al-Ḥākim in Cairo. This area of the Azhar mosque has been so rebuilt, however, that the existence of such a portal can only remain conjectural.[40] Like other Fatimid mosques, the mosque would have had no tower because there was no need for one: following Shi'i practice, the call to prayer would have been given from either the portal itself or the mosque's roof.[41]

Apart from the absence of a tower minaret, which by the ninth century had become the most prominent feature of all 'Abbasid mosques, and the presence of a monumental portal, which seems to have taken on a special significance for the Fatimids in the North African period, Jawhar's mosque fits relatively well into a developing tradition of Islamic architecture in Egypt. There are no features in either form or decoration to distinguish it as a particularly royal establishment for ceremonial use, and so it seems likely that the mosque was simply established to provide a place where the Fatimid troops and other inhabitants of the district could worship without making the trek to the older congregational mosques in the city. Once the imam-caliph had moved from Tunisia and installed himself in the new capital city, however, requirements changed and appropriate renovations were made.

The palace

In January–February 973 – about three and a half years after Jawhar had conquered Egypt – he began building a suitable palace to receive the imam-caliph al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allah. Al-Mu'izz had decided to transfer

the seat of the imamate to Egypt only after his general had repulsed the Qarmatian attack. Although the conquest of Egypt had gone smoothly, the caliph must have realised that the conquest and pacification of Syria would be more difficult than he had previously imagined.[42] Meanwhile in North Africa, preparations had to be made for the imam-caliph's ceremonial procession to Egypt. The contents of the palaces at al-Manṣūriyya had to be packed up, and everyone accompanying the monarch had to be provided with written authorisations and passes to be presented at checkpoints along the way.[43] The displacement of an entire dynasty, including even the coffins of their ancestors, from Ifrīqiyā to Egypt was an extraordinary achievement unparalleled in Islamic history, and this logistical triumph underscores the Fatimids' mastery of administration even before they established themselves in Egypt.[44]

The Egyptian palace where the imam-caliph was to be received, located in the heart of the Fatimid enclosure on the eastern side of the north–south thoroughfare crossing the city, would eventually come to be known as the Great Eastern Palace. It was later complemented on the west by the Lesser Western palace, which was begun by al-Muʿizz's son and successor al-ʿAzīz (r. 975–96) and extensively restored by al-Mustanṣir (1036–94), who hoped to install the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Qāʾim (r. 1031–75) there as his permanent 'guest'.[45] The Fatimid caliphs continued to live in the Great Palace until the fall of the dynasty in 1171, when both palaces were abandoned and the valuable land on which they stood was appropriated.[46]

Virtually nothing of the palace structures has survived the centuries, apart from some marble panels and wooden beams and doors removed and reused in other Cairene buildings.[47] Eyewitness descriptions of the palace do not begin until the mid-eleventh century, when Nāṣir-i Khusraw saw it; they end with Hugh of Caesarea, the twelfth-century Crusader whose Latin report is contained in William of Tyre's *A History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea*.[48] Our main source is the Mamluk historian al-Maqrīzī, who collected contemporary Fatimid accounts and retrospective histories written during the Ayyubid period. In the late nineteenth century the French scholar Paul Ravaisse coordinated al-Maqrīzī's reports with the map of the contemporary city (Figure 6.3). He determined that the Great, or Eastern, palace measured approximately 425 by 275 m and was roughly shaped like a thick L with a rectangular projection on the bottom; the Lesser, or Western, palace was shaped like an elongated and squared C. The two palaces were separated by a great plaza or *maydān*, logically known as *bayn al-qaṣrayn*, or 'between the two palaces'. Although Ravaisse was unable to determine the internal articulation of the Great Palace, he hypothesised major axes separating three great internal courtyards, an arrangement curiously reminiscent of the Beaux-Arts principles of design that were in vogue in Europe at that time.[49]

Working from this jumble of evidence, most scholars have imagined the twin palaces in Cairo to have been massive structures constructed from the

Figure 6.3 Map of al-Qāhira, from P. Ravaisse, 'Essai sur l'histoire et sur la topographie du Caire d'après Maḳrīzī', vol. 1 (see note 49), opposite p. 454. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

outset to copy the twin palaces at the earlier Fatimid capitals of al-Mahdiyya and al-Manṣūriyya in North Africa.[50] The chronology of the palaces in Cairo, however, shows that Jawhar did not plan this arrangement but that it evolved slowly over time as the palaces were enlarged and embellished to meet new needs. For example, al-ʿAzīz added the Great Hall (*al-īwān al-kabīr*) in 979–80[51] and began the Lesser Western Palace for his daughter, Sitt al-Mulk. This latter palace was completed by al-Mustanṣir only in 1064.[52] The textual evidence and comparison with extant medieval Islamic palaces indicate that the Great Eastern Palace should be imagined not as a single massive structure but as a series of interconnected pavilions, belvederes, a dynastic mausoleum, kitchens and suites of rooms arranged around courtyards, all enclosed behind high walls.[53] Nāṣir-i Khusraw wrote:

> The sultan's palace is in the middle of Cairo and is encompassed by an open space so that no building abuts it. Engineers who have measured it have found it to be the size of Mayyāfāreqin. As the ground is open all around it, every night there are 1,000 watchmen, 500 mounted and 500 on foot, who blow trumpets and beat drums at the time of evening prayer and then patrol until daybreak. Viewed from outside the city, the sultan's palace looks like a mountain because of all the different buildings and the great height. From inside the city, however, one can see nothing at all because the walls are so high. . . . The palace . . . consists of 12 [separate] buildings. The harem has 10 gates on the ground level (excluding the sub-terranean ones) each with a name: Bāb al-Dhahab, Bāb al-Bahr, Bāb al-Rih, Bāb al-Zahuma, Bāb al-Salām, Bāb al-Zabarjad, Bāb al-ʿId, Bāb al-Fotuh, Bāb al-Zallāqa, and Bāb al-Sariyya [*sic*]. There is a subterranean entrance through which the sultan may pass on horseback. Outside the city he has built another palace connected to this palace by a passageway with a reinforced ceiling. The walls of this palace are of rocks hewn to look like one piece of stone, and there are belvederes and tall porticoes. Inside the vestibule are platforms for the ministers of state; the servants are blacks and Greeks.[54]

Clearly the Great Palace of Cairo was not the product of a single campaign, like the Umayyad palace at Mshatta or the ʿAbbasid Balkuwara palace at Samarra, but grew over time like such urban palaces as the Citadel of Cairo, the Alhambra in Granada or the Topkapı Saray in Istanbul, which each consisted of many discrete buildings enclosed within high walls.[55] The palace built by Jawhar for al-Muʿizz was therefore not the grandiose pair of palaces seen by the later sources, but a residence and reception complex with a royal tomb to house the coffins of the first Fatimid caliphs, which had been brought in the train from Tunisia.

This evolution easily explains two otherwise unusual features of the Fatimid palaces. The first is the Eastern Palace's irregular outline, which betrays a history of accretion rather than concerted planning. According to both Nāṣir-i Khusraw and al-Maqrīzī, the Great Palace was composed of many individual palaces (quṣūr).[56] These themselves comprised rooms (qāʿa) and belvederes (manẓara).[57] These separate complexes were ultimately enclosed within the finely built enclosure wall, seen by Nāṣir. The second unusual feature of the Great Palace was its many gates, which al-Maqrīzī counts at nine and Nāṣir at ten. Whatever the actual number, palaces normally have few entrances to limit access. The many gates enumerated by the sources, however, make sense if each is thought to have belonged to a particular and originally separate 'palace'. Thus the Emerald Gate would have led to the Emerald Palace and the Golden Gate to the Golden Palace. The gates were built of stone and were surmounted by belvederes from which the caliph could appear to the crowds assembled outside.[58]

Conclusions

It is now clear that neither Jawhar, who had brilliantly played a leading role in the first act of the drama in which the Fatimids expected to conquer all the Islamic lands, nor his master al-Muʿizz, who had conceived it, had any great interest in creating an imperial capital in Egypt. The credit for that move should be given to al-Muʿizz's son and successor, under whose rule the Egyptian capital would rapidly emerge as a brilliant centre of the arts and learning. Prince Nizār, who took the name al-ʿAzīz Bʾillah, 'Mighty by God', upon his accession in 975, publicly announced his succession by riding out to offer the prayer for the Feast of the Sacrifice under the miẓalla, a parasol shaped like a bejewelled shield hung from the point of a lance held by a courtier. No Fatimid caliph is known to have previously used one,[59] and it seems likely that the Fatimid miẓalla was synonymous with and ultimately derived from the shamsa or shamsiyya used earlier by the ʿAbbasid caliphs as a symbol of authority.[60]

The two-decade reign of al-ʿAzīz was marked by peace, political stability and a well functioning economy. Although the Fatimids were unable to extend their authority much beyond North Africa, Egypt, Syria and the Hijaz, the caliph consolidated his power and contributed much towards creating an imperial style of rule. Compared to the chaos that had prevailed in Egypt less than a decade earlier, the transformation was nothing short of miraculous. The fiscal regime was comprehensively reformed, enriching the treasury and broadening the base of the dynasty's support. The most conspicuous sign of this prosperity was the luxury of the court.[61] The temporary camp erected by his father's general was transformed by a continuous building programme into a splendid capital city: he and his family – his mother and his sister Sitt al-Mulk – commissioned many new religious and non-religious

monuments, such as mosques, palaces and aqueducts, of which the most notable is the enormous mosque to the north of the Fatimid city now known after his son al-Ḥākim.[62] This physical imprint on the landscape of the capital confronted the inhabitants with permanent and visible symbols of the regime's might and authority, as did the splendid public celebrations of festivals that al-ʿAzīz instituted.[63] Al-ʿAzīz's propensity for grandeur was matched by his proclivity for extravagance. It is said, for example, that 10,000 slave girls and eunuchs were employed at court.[64] In short, while the founding of Cairo was certainly the work of the great imam-caliph al-Muʿizz, its transformation into a splendid ceremonial space was the work of his son al-ʿAzīz.

Notes

1 Paul Wheatley, *The Places where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh through the Tenth Centuries*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 281.

2 Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994.

3 Shams al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, M. J. de Goeje (ed.), Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum 3, 3rd edn. Leiden: Brill, 1967, p. 200; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsanu-t-taqāsīm fī maʾrifati-l-aqālīm*, trans. G. S. A. Ranking and R. F. Azoo, Bibliotheca Indica, a Collection of Oriental Works. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1897–1910, p. 328.

4 Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels (Safarnāma)*, trans. W. M. Thackston, Persian Heritage Series 36. New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1986, pp. 44–51.

5 Paul E. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and Its Sources*, Ismaili Heritage Series 7. London and New York: I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2002, p. 140.

6 Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid, 'Lumières nouvelles sur quelques sources de l'histoire fatimid en Égypte', *Annales Islamologiques* 13, 1977, 1–41; Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire*, pp. 150–1.

7 Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE*, The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, vol. 30. Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 266.

8 Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, p. 318.

9 Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi. The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. Michael Bonner, Handbuch der Orientalistik 1: 26. Leiden: Brill, 1996, p. 43.

10 Jonathan M. Bloom, 'The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo', *Muqarnas* 4, 1987, 7–20.

11 Thierry Bianquis, 'Autonomous Egypt from Ibn Ṭūlūn to Kāfūr, 868–969', in Carl F. Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt 1: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 86–119, esp. p. 117.

12 The figure is given by Paul E. Walker, 'The Ismāʿīlī Daʿwa and the Fāṭimid caliphate', in Petry (ed.), *Cambridge History of Egypt 1*, 120–50, p. 137.

13 F. Dachraoui, 'al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh', *EI* 2, vol. 7, 485–9.

14 Walker, 'Ismāʿīlī Daʿwa', p. 141; Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire*, p. 26.

15 Quoted in Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ al-ḥunafāʾ bi-akhbār al-aʾimmat al-fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafāʾ*, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (ed.), 3 vols. Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aʿlā lʾil-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1387/1967, vol. 1, pp. 112–13.

16 Thierry Bianquis, 'La Prise de pouvoir par les Fatimides en Egypte', *Annales Islamologiques* 11, 1972, 49–108.

17 K. A. C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952–9, vol. 1, pp. 19–23 (hereafter *MAE*).

18 Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, pp. 22–3.

19 Halm, *Empire*, p. 143.

20 Orthogonal lines generated from this axis point to *c.*117°, which marks not only the winter sunrise but also the *qibla* favoured by the Companions of the Prophet who first settled in Egypt. See David A. King, 'The orientation of medieval Islamic religious architecture and cities', *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 26, 1995, 253–74, pp. 265–6.

21 These bricks would have been staggeringly large and heavy: packed earth weighs 95 lb (43.18 kg) per cubit foot; if our source is correct, each brick was nearly 3 (2.91346) cubic feet, for an approximate weight of 276.7787 lb (125.8 kg). See Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ waʾl-i'tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ waʾl-āthār [Exhortations and instructions on the districts and antiquities]*, Cairo: Bulaq, 1270/1853, vol. 1, p. 377, lines 31–5. Nevertheless, Roman builders used flat baked bricks measuring two feet in either direction for their vaults; if only 3 inches thick, these would have weighed 120 lb each. See John Fichten, *Building Construction Before Mechanization*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1989. Comparably large bricks are mentioned at Samarra. For a lucid discussion of the materials and costs, see Marcus Milwright, 'Fixtures and fittings: the role of decoration in Abbasid palace design', in Chase F. Robinson (ed.), *A Medieval Islamic City Reconsidered: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Samarra*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 79–110.

22 Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, p. 307.

23 al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ al-ḥunafā*, vol. 1, p. 116; Bianquis, 'Prise de Pouvoir', p. 81; Halm, *Empire*, p. 415.

24 al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ al-ḥunafā*, vol. 1, p. 111; Walker, 'Ismāʿīlī Daʿwa', p. 139; Halm, *Empire*, pp. 415–16.

25 On the reuse of gates in Islamic architecture, see Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, p. 32.

26 Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, pp. 314–15.

27 For the location of the gates see Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, pp. 23–31. Nāṣir-i Khusraw mentions only five gates in 1047–8, and he says, 'there is no wall, but the buildings are even stronger and higher than ramparts, and every house and building is itself a fortress'. Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāma*, p. 46.

28 Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 14, 19.

29 Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City*.

30 Quoted in Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City*, p. 42.

31 al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ al-ḥunafā*, vol. 2, p. 57; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 2, p. 28.

32 Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāma*, p. 45.

33 Yaacov Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*, Leiden: Brill, 1991, p. 65 quoting al-Maqrīzī.

34 S. D. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 5 vols. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967–88.

35 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 2, p. 273.

36 In addition to Creswell, *MAE*, pp. 36–64, see Jonathan M. Bloom, *Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture: Islamic Art in North Africa and Egypt in the Fourth Century AH (Tenth Century AD)*, PhD diss., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Fine Arts and Middle Eastern Studies, 1980, pp. 94ff and, particularly for the history of the mosque in the post-Fatimid period, Nasser Rabbat, 'Al-Azhar mosque: an architectural chronicle of Cairo's history', *Muqarnas* 13, 1996, 45–67.

37 King, 'The orientation of medieval Islamic religious architecture and cities', p. 264.

38 Rabbat, 'Al-Azhar mosque', pp. 51–2.

39 Marianne Barrucand, 'Les chapiteaux de remploi de la mosquée al-Azhar et l'émergence d'un type de chapiteau médiévale en Égypte', *Annales Islamologiques* 36, 2002, 37–75.

40 In the early fourteenth century the Mamluk amirs Aqbughā and Ṭaybars built *madrasa*s on either side of the portal, and in the late fifteenth century, the Mamluk sultan Qā'itbay erected between them a beautiful new portal surmounted by a minaret exactly on the spot where the Fatimid portal might have stood. This remains the mosque's principal entrance to this day.

41 Rabbat, 'Al-Azhar Mosque', p. 50, argues for the existence of a Fatimid-era minaret by quoting a remark in Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir's chronicle of *c.*1280 that the 'minaret of al-Azhar was increased in height during the time of the late judge Ṣadr al-Dīn', whom he identifies as a confidant of the Mamluk sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars. It is likely that this individual erected a tower for the mosque, but it is by no means certain that the structure he modified was a tower. Rabbat states that as none of the Ayyubid rulers could have built the original minaret, the original must have been a tower erected in the Fatimid period. While it is possible that a tower was added to the mosque in the late Fatimid period (the mosque of al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'i', for example, seems to have had some sort of structure on its roof), it takes a great leap of faith to imagine that a tower must have been part of the mosque's original plan. It is possible, for example, that someone had built something like a 'staircase minaret' on the mosque's roof.

42 Dachraoui, 'al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh'); Rabbat, 'Al-Azhar Mosque', p. 65, n. 39 argues that Jawhar had begun constructing the palace long before, but the pace of construction had slackened in the interim. It is unlikely that Jawhar built a palace before his overlord had decided to move. There is some textual confusion: the word *qaṣr* found in the texts refers not only to the palace but also to the entire settlement itself. See Bloom, *Meaning*, pp. 75–8.

43 Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, p. 318.

44 Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, p. 325.

45 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 457.

46 Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, *La Capitale de l'Égypte jusqu'à l'époque fatimide: al-Qāhira et al-Fusṭāṭ. Essai de reconstitution topographique*, Beiruter Texte und Studien. Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1998, pp. 209–326.

47 Foundations discovered by archaeologists under later Ayyubid and Mamluk buildings in the centre of Cairo may belong to Fatimid structures. Among the most recent discoveries, see Nairy Hampikian and Monique Cyran, 'Recent discoveries concerning the Fatimid palaces uncovered during the conservation works on parts of al-Ṣāliḥiyya complex', in Marianne Barrucand (ed.), *L'Égypte Fatimide: son art et son histoire*. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999, 649–63. In the early twentieth century, Max Herz Pasha identified part of the Hospital of Qalāwūn as the great *qā'a* of Sitt al-Mulk. See Max Herz, *Die Baugruppe des Sultans Qalaun in Kairo*, Abhandlung Des Hamburgischen

Kolonialinstituts 42, Reihe B, 22. Hamburg: L. Friedrichsen, 1919; and Fu'ād Sayyid, *Capitale*, pp. 307–11.

48 William, Archbishop of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea*, trans. E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

49 P. Ravaisse, 'Essai sur l'histoire et sur la topographie du Caire d'après Maḳrīzī', in *Memoires publiés par les membres de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire* 1. Paris: E. Leroux, 1889, 409–79; P. Ravaisse, 'Essai sur l'histoire et sur la topographie du Caire d'après Maḳrīzī', in *Memoires publiés par les membres de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire* 3. Paris: E. Leroux, 1890, 1–114.

50 Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, 'Le grand palais fatimide au Caire', in Barrucand (ed.), *L'Egypte Fatimide*, 117–26.

51 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 388.

52 Fu'ād Sayyid, *Capitale*, p. 300.

53 Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994, pp. 377–462; Gülrü Necipoğlu (ed.), *Pre-Modern Islamic Palaces*, *Ars Orientalis* 23 (Entire Issue), 1993.

54 Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnama*, pp. 45–6.

55 Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978; Gülrü Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1991.

56 Al-Maqrīzī's list includes the Qaṣr al-Nāfi', the Golden Palace, the Princes' Palace, the Victory Palace, the Tree Palace, Qaṣr al-Shawq, the Emerald Palace, the Breeze Palace, the Women's Palace and Qaṣr al-Jarr.

57 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 384.

58 Fu'ād Sayyid, 'Grand palais', p. 123 quoting al-Maqrīzī *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 362.

59 While al-Mu'izz is not known to have used it, al-'Azīz's elder brother 'Abd Allah had paraded under a parasol following the defeat of the Qarmatians. See Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City*, p. 25.

60 C. E. Bosworth et al., 'Miẓalla', *EI* 2, vol. 7, 191–5.

61 Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, pp. 331–3.

62 Bloom, 'Mosque of the Qarafa'; Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, p. 334.

63 See Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City*.

64 Lev, *State and Society*, p. 22.

7

FĪRŪZKŪH

The summer capital of the Ghurids

David Thomas

Introduction

Like many other urban centres in Central Asia, Fīrūzkūh, the summer capital of the Ghurid sultanate, was destroyed by the Mongols in 1222–3. The site would probably have remained lost to the caprices of history were it not for the 'rediscovery' of the minaret of Jām in 1957, which sparked renewed interest in the Ghurids. This chapter assesses the historical and archaeological evidence for identifying Jām with Fīrūzkūh before considering the characteristics of this remote settlement in the context of other contemporary Central Asian urban sites.

The Ghurids emerged from relative obscurity on to the geo-political scene of Central Asia in 1150, when 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn attacked Ghazna, capital of the eponymous Ghaznavid dynasty. The city reputedly burned for seven days, earning 'Alā' al-Dīn the sobriquet 'Jahān-Sūz' (World Incendiary). The ferocity of the attack and the subsequent destruction of the Ghaznavid palaces at Lashkari Bazaar/Bust reflected the fact that 'Alā' al-Dīn was seeking revenge for the murder of two of his siblings.[1] As many as 60,000 inhabitants of Ghazna were massacred, and according to the Ghurid chronicler, al-Jūzjānī, the prisoners were forced to carry building materials from Ghazna to Fīrūzkūh, where the mud was mixed with their blood to build the towers of Ghūr.[2]

Al-Jūzjānī states that the region of Ghūr had become sufficiently populous and prosperous under 'Alā' al-Dīn's father, 'Izz al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn (r. 1100–46) to support a cohort of scholars and mystics.[3] Fīrūzkūh was founded by 'Izz al-Dīn's son, Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad, in 1146–7;[4] he was subsequently forced to take refuge in Ghazna, during one of the Ghurid elite's many feuds, so the building work at Fīrūzkūh was completed by another brother, Bahā' al-Dīn Sām.[5]

The Ghurid sultanate continued to flourish under the unusually co-operative siblings Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sām and Mu'izz al-Dīn

115
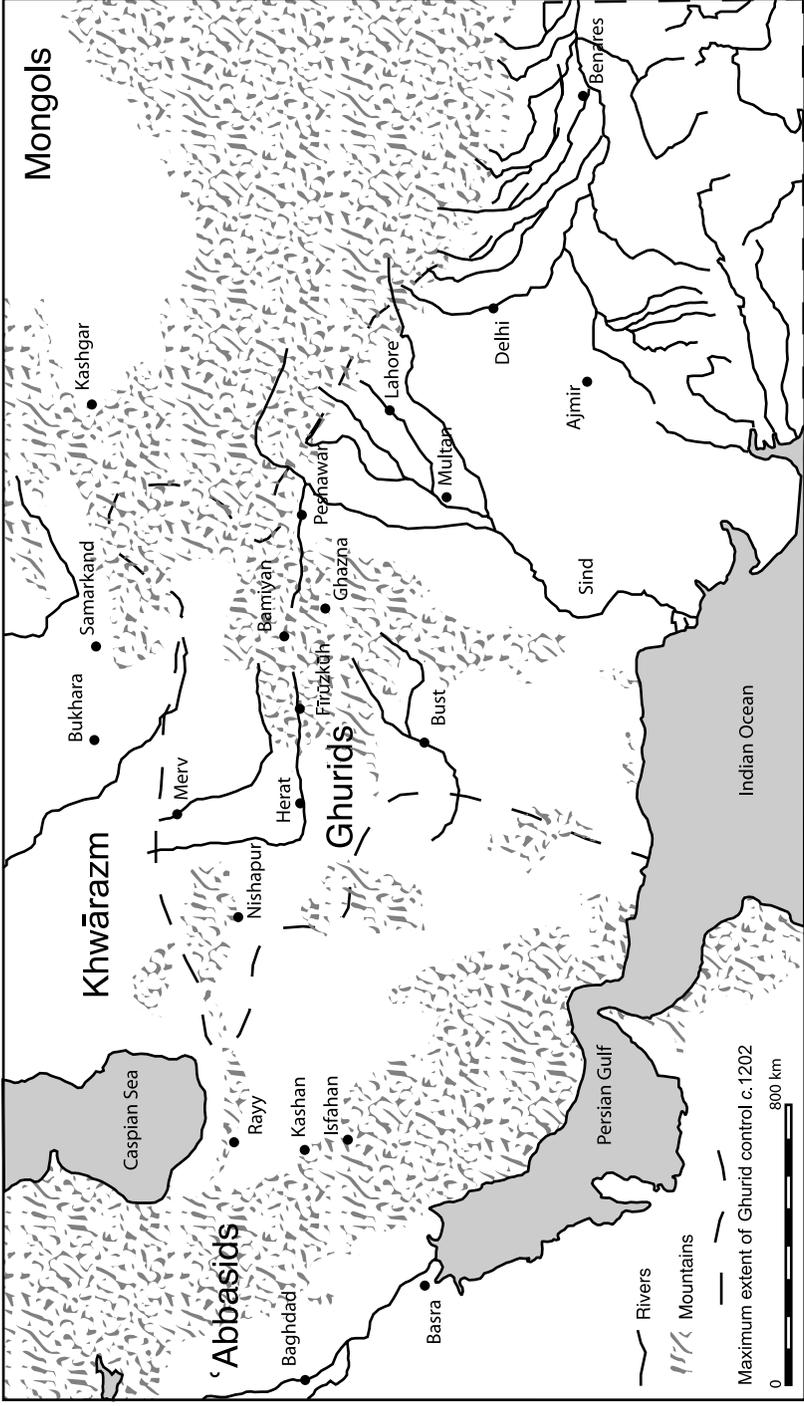
Figure 7.1 Map of the Ghurid sultanate.

Muḥammad b. Sām. Fīrūzkūh became the centre of a dominion stretching from Nishapur in Iran to Benares in eastern India, and from the foothills of the Himalayas south to Sind (Figure 7.1).[6] Ghiyāth al-Dīn used the proceeds of numerous successful military campaigns, particularly those in India, to embellish his capital and other Ghurid centres such as Herat.[7]

The Ghurids' fortunes declined rapidly following the death of Ghiyāth al-Dīn in 1203 and the assassination of Muʿizz al-Dīn in 1206: their successors reverted to internecine struggles at a time when nascent powers threatened Ghurid territory. The rapid expansion and subsequent collapse of the Ghurid sultanate is typical of other short-lived empires with charismatic rulers (the Timurid and Ch'in empires, for example), which failed to complement territorial expansion with processes of consolidation.[8] Following a series of battles, Fīrūzkūh surrendered to the Khwārazm-Shāh in 1215–16.[9] Although the Ghurids rebelled when the Mongols attacked the Khwārazm-Shāh, such opportunism could not save them – Fīrūzkūh was twice besieged by Mongol armies under Ögödei, son of Chingiz Khān, eventually falling in 1222–3.[10] The obliteration of the Ghurids was so complete that recent histories of Afghanistan devote little attention to their wide-ranging conquests and achievements.[11]

Historical sources

The main, and somewhat partisan, historical source for the Ghurids is the chronicle of al-Jūzjānī, whose mother was a foster-sister of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's daughter, Princess Māh Malik.[12] Al-Jūzjānī was living in Fīrūzkūh in AH 607 (AD 1210–11), when Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd, the popular son of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammed b. Sām, was assassinated by Khwarazmian refugees.[13] He left four years later, as court intrigues intensified, and wrote his *magnum opus*, the *Tabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, in Delhi over forty years later. Unfortunately, the *Tabaqāt* is often contradictory and incomplete: its translator, Raverty, drew on twelve copies of the chronicle for his translation and described it as 'hopelessly defective' in places.[14] Given that al-Jūzjānī completed his chronicle in 1260, long after leaving Fīrūzkūh, and that his primary focus is the history of the 'Muhammadan dynasties of Asia', it is not surprising that his description of the Ghurid summer capital is fragmentary. He does, however, tell us that the capital's founder, Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad, needed 'a suitable place' from which to rule following the death of his father: a strong fortress and a handsome city.[15]

Al-Jūzjānī states that the sultan's fortress at Fīrūzkūh surpassed others in height, area and number of buttresses, balconies and turrets.[16] It had five pinnacles inlaid with gold and two gold *humae* (a mythical bird), each the size of a large camel. A golden ring and chain and two kettle drums were suspended before the portico of the great mosque (*masjid-i jāmiʿ*). These treasures were reportedly later sent to Herat after the destruction of

Fīrūzkūh's great mosque in a flood, and used to fund the repair of the former city's great mosque, which had been destroyed by fire.[17] This transfer of highly prestigious and valuable objects suggests that Ghiyāth al-Dīn could not afford (or did not want) to rebuild both mosques, and that at this time Herat took precedence over Fīrūzkūh: Flood asserts that Herat was 'much more important to the exercise of Ghurid *imperium* and artistic patronage' than Fīrūzkūh.[18] Religious riots had broken out in Fīrūzkūh in 1199, following Ghiyāth al-Dīn's deeply unpopular official abandonment of the Karramiyya sect in favour of the more mainstream Shāfi'ī school of law.[19] Consequently, it is possible that Fīrūzkūh was in decline at the turn of the twelfth century, as the sultan sought to confirm his apparent theological and psychological shift away from the Ghurid heartland by favouring Herat, where he died and was buried only three years later.[20]

Despite the civil unrest of 1199, al-Jūzjānī paints a picture of vibrant, sophisticated urban life at Fīrūzkūh in its heyday, with court patronage of poets, respect for religious law and theological debates, and the distribution of largesse at festivals and banquets, including gold and silver vessels, embroidered silks, perfumed leather (which Raverty comments must have been 'extremely valuable in those days'), precious stones (including pearls and diamonds) and slaves acquired during 'holy wars'.[21] The treasury reputedly contained 400 camel loads of gold in 800 chests, although al-Jūzjānī's numbers need to be treated with a degree of scepticism.

As mentioned above, Fīrūzkūh fell to the Khwārazm-Shāh in 611/1215–16 as the Ghurid sultanate imploded. Nonetheless, the fortress and city were repaired and the fortifications extended to such an extent that they withstood twenty-one days of Mongol attacks in 617/1220–1 before the latter retreated at the onset of snow, a reference suggesting that the site was not solely occupied in the summer.[22] The Mongols, however, returned with 10,000 catapult workers, sweeping snow from their path, and reached Pul-i Āhangarān, near Fīrūzkūh. Their advance caused Malik Mubāriz al-Dīn to evacuate Fīrūzkūh and flee to Herat in 619/1222–3.[23] Al-Jūzjānī tells us that 'the city of Fīrūz-koh was wholly destroyed' by the Mongols, although Frye notes that, according to the *Ta'rīkh Nāma-i-Harāt*, Fīrūzkūh was still the centre of a district during the time of the Kart kings (1245–1383).[24]

Locating Fīrūzkūh

Al-Jūzjānī's geographical description of Fīrūzkūh's location is, at best, oblique, and much debate has ensued as to its identity among the myriad Ghurid fortified sites in the region. He states that Fīrūzkūh was forty *farsakh*s (approximately 200 km) from the winter capital in the region of Zamīn-i Dāwar, but this resolves little, as the actual site of Shahr-i Dāwar has not been unequivocally identified either.[25] Moreover, he describes Fīrūzkūh as the capital of both Ghūr and the Bilād al-Jibāl.[26] A somewhat exasperated

Raverty explains in the notes to his translation of the *Tabaqāt* that 'Fīrūz-koh would seem to refer to one district or territory, Ghūr to another, and the Jibāl to a third'.[27] A more precise geographical clue comes with the reference to the Mongol armies reaching Pul-i Āhangarān, near Fīrūzkūh: Pul-i Āhangarān is near Chaghcharān, modern capital of Ghūr province, about 70 km to the east of Jām. Pinder-Wilson notes that Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, writing his *Geography* in 1414–15, lists Fīrūzkūh, seat of the sultans of Ghūr, after Chisht, considerably upstream on the Harī Rūd 'where the valley was enclosed by the mountains'.[28] Given the ambiguous references, the name Fīrūzkūh may have applied to both the capital and its hinterland or surrounding province, as was the case with many medieval Islamic cities.[29]

Colonel Sir Thomas Holdich, the Superintendent of Frontier Surveys in British India, initially identified ancient remains at Taywara, a town in a wide, fertile valley in the southern part of central Afghanistan, as Fīrūzkūh.[30] Leshnik suggests that an unspecified Ghurid site in the area could have been Fīrūzkūh, supporting this identification by noting that Taywara is nearly 200 km from Girishk, which he postulates as the location of Shahr-i Dāwar, the Ghurid winter capital.[31] Ball, on the other hand, suggests that Zamīn-i Dāwar may have been centred on Shahr-i Kuhna, a walled town roughly 1 km square, 230 km to the south of Jām.[32] Clearly, archaeological fieldwork at several of these major sites is the most likely way of resolving the debate.

In 1886, Holdich published reports of a tall tower in central Afghanistan but it was not until 1943 that the minaret of Jām was 'discovered' by S. Abdullah Malikyar, the Governor of Herat, and A. 'Alī Kohzad published a report on it in Dari. A report in English followed in 1952 but the magnificent tower only received world attention in 1959, when Maricq announced the discovery in *The Illustrated London News* and suggested that its location was ancient Fīrūzkūh.[33] The description of the 62 m high structure as a 'minaret' is virtually uniform;[34] Hillenbrand notes that the *adhān* (call to prayer) could not have been heard from its summit, but this was the case with other tall minarets and so does not challenge the functional identification.[35]

Leshnik and Herberg dispute Maricq's identification of Jām as Fīrūzkūh, arguing, among other things, that Jām's remote location in a narrow part of the Harī Rūd valley meant that it was impractical as a thoroughfare for major armies, including cavalry and elephants.[36] Ball, however, points out that 'remote' Ghurid sites such as Jām are inaccessible primarily to people dependent on wheeled transport, rather than those travelling on foot or with beasts of burden.[37] However, the mountain passes giving access to Jām are challenging by any reckoning.

Leshnik also repeatedly denies the existence of 'structural remains of any kind', apart from the fortress and the minaret, and thus rejects the site as the location of Fīrūzkūh, since al-Jūzjānī refers to it as a city with gates,

large fortifications, royal palaces and a great mosque.[38] He claims that the tower was built by Ghiyāth al-Dīn to acknowledge some unspecified pre-Islamic significance of the site.[39] Numerous parallels, such as the sites of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, exist for holy sites retaining their significance through time and religious upheaval – indeed, as Sinopoli points out, the appropriation of local beliefs, deities and sacred sites is an important way in which imperial leaders seek to legitimise conquest.[40] The Masjid-i Sangī in Larwand, which is described as 'half Islamic and half Hindu', could be a precedent for this practice in Ghurid times, and Scarcia argues that it corroborates an account in the *Tabaqāt* of Ghurid sovereigns making pilgrimages to pagan temples that had been 'Islamified'.[41] However, it seems unlikely that al-Jūzjānī would have neglected to mention a major pagan site whose appropriation by Islam was symbolised by such a magnificent minaret.

The fact that al-Jūzjānī fails to mention the minaret at all may also appear problematic for the identification of Jām as Fīrūzkūh, yet this is likely to reflect the almost negligible survival of Ghurid architecture, which makes the minaret appear so exceptional today. As Moline points out, al-Jūzjānī does not mention the two towers at Ghazna, which survived the city's destruction in AD 1150, and suggests that this is because 'these minarets were nothing out of the ordinary'.[42] The Shāh-i Mashhad *madrasa* in Gargistān is another example of a spectacularly decorated Ghurid monument in what is today a very remote part of the landscape that did not merit mention by the chronicler.[43]

Various scholars have taken issue with Leshnik's observations, although his principal critic, Vercellin, acknowledges that the evidence from the *Tabaqāt* on which Maricq relied is inconclusive.[44] Vercellin suggests the possibility of a dispersed and mutating settlement in the valleys surrounding the minaret, a theory expanded upon by Ball in his thought-provoking consideration of the nature of Ghurid urban centres.[45] Vercellin argues that a loosely defined 'palace' (*kūshk*) could have extended south from the minaret for 4 km along the Jām Rūd, in an area known today as Kūshkak, but this theory appears to rely primarily on a toponym of debatable origin, rather than on architectural or archaeological evidence from this part of the site. More persuasively, Vercellin emphasizes the passage in the *Tabaqāt* recounting the assassination of the Ghurid sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd.[46] The passage refers to the assassins escaping from the sultan's fortress (*qaṣr*) by crossing the river in front of it and climbing to the top of the mountain Kūh-i Āzād to proclaim their deed. Vercellin points out that the mountain across the Hārī Rūd from Qaṣr-i Zarafshān at Jām is indeed called Kūh-i Āzād (Figure 7.2).[47]

Despite the debatable evidence, modern Jām is now therefore generally accepted as the site of Fīrūzkūh.[48] Uncorroborated reports of the looting of antiquities at Jām indicate the wealth of the site: the large caches of coins

Figure 7.2 Photograph of the minaret of Jām and Qaṣr-i Zarafshān, taken from Herberg's central 'watchtower'; Kūh-i Āzād is on the left.

and jewellery reputed to have been discovered correlate with al-Jūzjānī's account, while the discovery of Persian–Hebrew tombstones supports his mention of a Jewish trading community at Fīrūzkūh.[49]

Nomadism and Ghurid urban patterns

Unlike other Islamic capitals in Central Asia such as Merv, Bukhara and Samarkand, the settlement at Jām lacked the topographic space and prolonged occupation to allow what Bartold recognised as the threefold development of Central Asian cities: the *ark*/*quhandiz* or citadel; *shahristān*/*madīna* or inner city; and the *rabaḍ* or outer town.[50] The site's single-period occupation of about seventy-five years meant that it did not decay into an easily recognisable *tepe* or archaeological mound under the weight of the detritus and rebuilding work of successive generations of inhabitants. Yet the short life cycle of an urban centre does not necessarily result in meagre archaeological remains – the 'Abbasid capital of Samarra, for example, was founded in AD 833 but declined rapidly after the capital of the caliphate shifted back to Baghdad in AD 892. It nevertheless covers 57 km^2 and is one of the largest archaeological sites in the world.[51]

Clearly, the Ghurid summer capital was different. If we are to have a realistic chance of identifying the site of Fīrūzkūh, we need to reassess our

preconceptions of what a 'capital city' should look like in the light of Ghurid lifestyles and settlement patterns. Sourdel-Thomine, for instance, suggests that the Ghurid capital may have functioned in the sense of an *omphalos* or symbolic centre intimately connected to the ruling Ghurid elite.[52] Ball suggests that the only prerequisite for a 'capital' is that it contains the residence of a king: there is no absolute need for 'bricks and mortar', it could merely be a collection of tents, which fits with the semi-nomadic traditions of the region. He points out that al-Jūzjānī refers to the Ghurid sultans being seated in their pavilions, which were moved as the sultan travelled from district to district.[53]

The archaeological imprint of nomads on the landscape is usually subtle.[54] Although the destruction wrought by the Mongol invasions, the remoteness and inaccessibility of sites and a lack of scholarly interest are contributory factors, Ball states that, 'Nowhere in Ghur have any traces of urban remains or actual settlement been definitely recorded.'[55] Large medieval (probably Ghurid) sites, such as Shahr-i Kuhna, do exist in the region of the Ghurid winter capital to the south, raising the possibility of a dichotomy between a dispersed, upland settlement pattern in summer and a more nucleated, lowland settlement pattern in winter.

Moreover, while a form of transhumance may have applied to the semi-nomadic component of Ghurid society, the distribution of medieval hilltop forts at the intersections of many valleys to the south and east of Jām also suggests a fragmented society, with local chiefs defending their own immediate valleys; this correlates with al-Jūzjānī's portrait of Ghūr and gives another reason for the apparently limited remains at Jām. That being said, even if a significant proportion of the Ghurid population was semi-nomadic and was forced south annually by the severe winters, it seems unlikely that Fīrūzkūh was deserted in winter and the dates on tombstones from the Persian–Hebrew cemetery at Jām provide circumstantial evidence for a remnant population throughout the year.[56]

Bearing in mind Wilkinson's warning that 'the archaeologist is always in danger of basing too much on too little',[57] I will now outline the archaeological remains at Jām, assess the likelihood that they are the remains of Fīrūzkūh and suggest their relevance to our understanding of the urban vision of this atypical Muslim dynasty.

Outlining the urban remains at Jām

Jām is located about 215 km to the east of Herat, in a remote mountainous region of central Afghanistan. The modern site centres on the minaret, which stands on an eroding riverbank at the point where the Jām Rūd joins the much larger Hārī Rūd.[58] The vestiges of other archaeological remains cling to the steep valley sides, with a few apparently isolated towers and fortifications visible, perched on near-impregnable promontories and mountain tops.

These remains have fallen into such disrepair since their abandonment that visitors have found it difficult to recognise the site as an urban centre.

Archaeological research on Ghurid sites as a whole, and Jām in particular, has been made more difficult by 'development projects' initiated by successive governors of Ghūr province,[59] the conflicts that followed the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the challenges of working in such a remote, inhospitable landscape: the multifaceted approaches to fieldwork employed by the International Merv Project at Sultan Kala in Turkmenistan, for example, are unfortunately largely impractical at Jām.[60] Severe local poverty and the breakdown in the functioning institutions of the state have also resulted in the widespread looting of the site for antiquities (Figure 7.3).[61]

Herberg and others conducted brief surveys in the early 1970s upon which the recent fieldwork by the Minaret of Jām Archaeological Project (MJAP) builds (Figure 7.4).[62] We are attempting to develop a better understanding of the main features and layout of the site, the fortifications and river defences, fortresses, religious, civic and domestic architecture, and peripheral urban areas, which are discussed individually below. None of the surveys at Jām has recovered identifiable ceramics dating to periods other than the eleventh to thirteenth century, which demonstrates that Jām is a single-period, Ghurid site.[63]

Figure 7.3 Photograph of robber holes dug into the 'arcade' wall on the north bank of the Hārī Rūd; to the right of the modern, unused shop is the putative gateway.
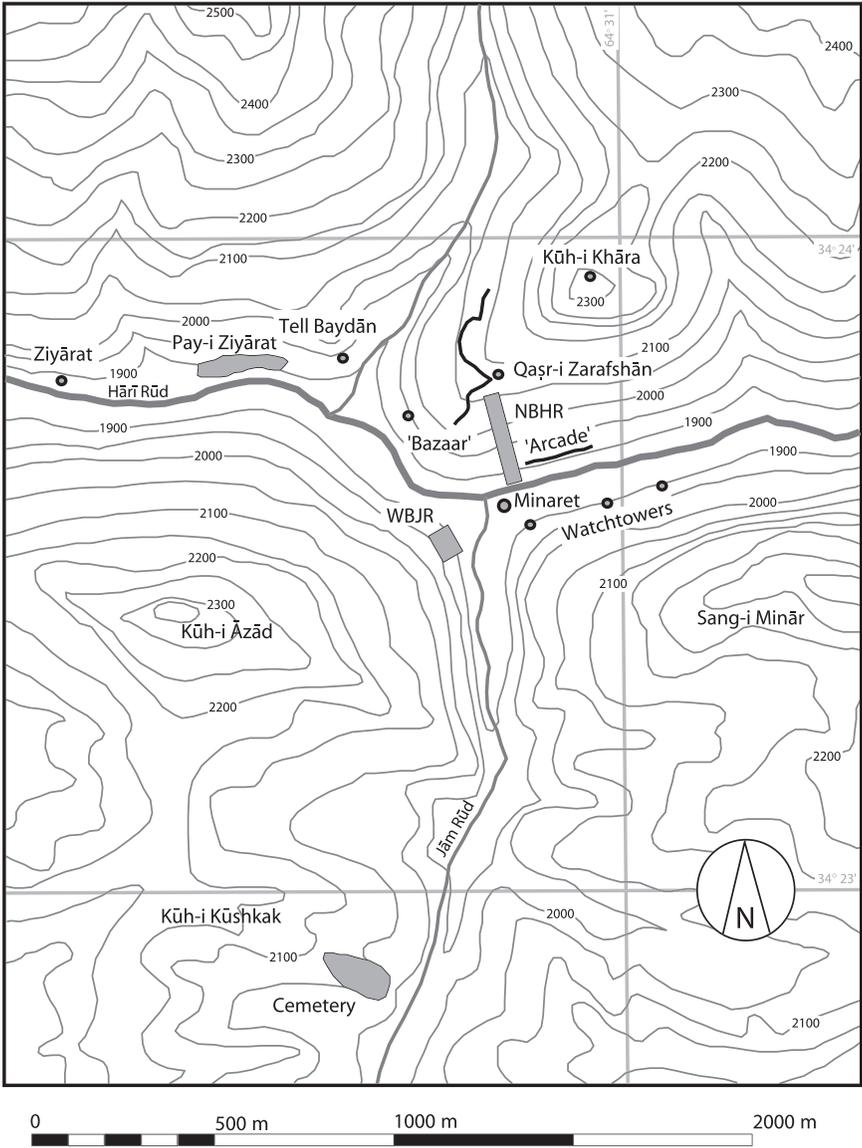
Figure 7.4 Map of Jām and its environs, after Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor' (see note 34), Lageplan, p. 61. NBHR, north bank of the Hārī Rūd; WBJR, west bank of the Jām Rūd.

The MJAP survey of the urban limits of Jām is ongoing, but has already established that the site is much larger than was previously thought. To the east of the minaret, architectural remains are visible in 70 per cent of the surveyed robber holes along a 400 m stretch on the north bank of the Hārī Rūd. This area seems to have been the core of the urban site, although a 150 m long stretch of robust river defences was found over 950 m from the minaret. This dense, presumably terraced occupation of south-facing slopes is a pattern found in traditional Afghan mountain villages, such as Kamesh in Nuristan, where few buildings are built on the north-facing slopes owing to the limited solar insulation: even if Jām was primarily occupied during the summer, at 1,900 m above sea level, its residents would presumably have welcomed heat from the sun, rather than sought to avoid it.[64]

No architectural remains were noted on the steep valley sides to the south of the minaret, along the Jām Rūd, although numerous glazed wares and diagnostic sherds were found on the scree between the cliffs and bedrock out-crops 130–195 m from the minaret. It is worth noting, however, that domestic structures were recorded in numerous robber holes on the west bank of the Jām Rūd opposite the minaret, on a steep slope whose surface had no other observable traces of architecture.[65] The apparent lack of looting on the scree slopes of the Jām Rūd valley may indicate a lack of remains, or merely the existence of more obvious and productive targets for looting elsewhere in the site. Several large buildings and a kiln were recorded close to the Persian–Hebrew cemetery 2 km to the south of the minaret, in the Jām Rūd valley. Without further fieldwork, it is impossible to ascertain whether these dispersed sites can be considered as part of one continuous settlement.

As we have seen, defining and calculating the extent of the Ghurid urban area at Jām is difficult, particularly considering the steeply sloping valley sides and incomplete nature of the surveys. High-resolution satellite images are a potentially useful tool in delimiting urban areas and locating remote sites. The satellite images of Jām, however, need to be rectified significantly, due to the distorting effects of the curvature of the earth, altitude and the angle at which the image was taken.[66] We started this process in 2005, by taking GPS readings on numerous easily identifiable geological points, and we have now succeeded in rectifying the central portion of the satellite image around the minaret. By delimiting areas on the high-resolution satellite images that we know from field survey to have architecture, scatters of ceramic artefacts and/or to have been robbed, we estimate that the urban area on this central, rectified part of the satellite image extends over at least 95,000 m^2 (9.5 hectares) (Figure 7.5). Further analysis of the uncorrected satellite image suggests a total urban area of around 195,000 m^2 (19.5 hectares), although these data are obviously less reliable.

Topography has clearly played a significant role in constraining and structuring the layout of this and other Ghurid sites. This chapter now considers the urban features that have been uncovered at Jām.
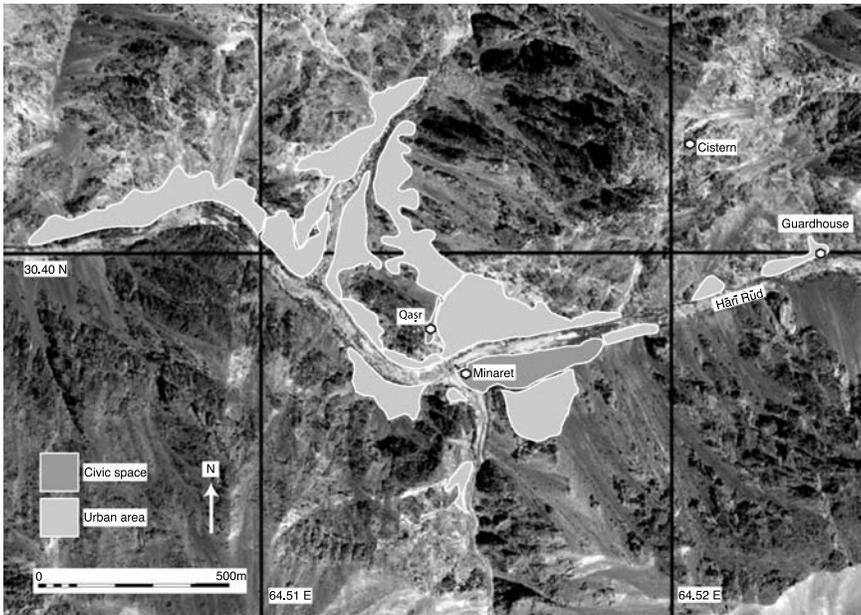
Figure 7.5 A high-resolution satellite image of the site at Jām, overlaid with hypo-
thesised civic and domestic urban areas.

Fortifications and river defences

The river defences to the east of the minaret, along the Hārī Rūd, are
associated with an apparent 'guardhouse', controlling the point where the
gorge narrows and a steep valley joins it from the north. The 'guardhouse' is
a solidly built, rectangular construction, measuring at least 13.5 by 10.5 m,
with 1.75 m thick walls standing more than 1.8 m high. The discovery of this
'guardhouse' solves one of the conundrums about Herberg's easternmost
'watchtower': although it was too dangerous to record in 2005, the eastern-
most 'watchtower' does not have a clear view upstream beyond a nearby
rocky spur, thus depriving it of its value as a look-out point from which to
monitor the eastern approaches to the site. The 'guardhouse' appears to
fulfil this function.

Urban and river defences are notoriously difficult to date – few ceramics
were found in the occasional robber holes dug behind the river defences
and the spoil around three robber holes in the 'guardhouse' also yielded
little. The scale of the river defences and the fact that they are not being
maintained today, however, suggest that they are probably contemporary
with the major period of occupation of the area, the Ghurid era.

Herberg's central 'watchtower' occupies a promontory, surrounded on three sides by sheer rockfaces. At the northern end, a room overlooks the Hārī Rūd valley. A poorly constructed tower, with twigs and sticks in its footing, guards the narrow access to the main slope. The westernmost 'watchtower', the closest to the minaret, is smaller and less complex than the central 'watchtower'. It is roughly constructed of angular, medium-sized stones. The mortar consists of mud, small stones and quite a lot of organic material, mostly in the form of twigs. The entrance again seems to have been from the south, where a stone wall survives, standing approximately 2.5 m high.

The overall impression of these 'watchtowers' is that they are poorly constructed and were not designed or built to withstand attack. Their primary purpose seems to have been, as Herberg's name implies, observation. Their location along the north-facing slopes of Sang-i Minār, overlooking the minaret and courtyard building, is curious, since they appear to be inward-, rather than outward-looking. Given the religious turmoil and rioting that occurred in 1199, and the revolt against the Khwārazm-Shāh's governor in 1220–1, do the watchtowers represent a form of 'state surveillance' of key civic buildings?

A 160 m long chain of towers and fortifications can be seen to the north-west of the Qaṣr-i Zarafshān, on the upper slopes of the east bank of the Baydān valley. Other traces of mud-brick fortifications are visible on the south side of the qaṣr, clinging to sheer cliffs – defence was clearly an important consideration to the Ghurid planners at regional, urban and intra-mural levels.

Fortresses

Despite the enduring magnificence of the minaret, viewshed analysis of a rudimentary digital elevation model of the terrain at Jām demonstrates that Qaṣr-i Zarafshān may have been the focal point of the medieval settlement. The qaṣr commands views of up to 15 km (to the south-west) along the Jām Rūd valley, and shorter views east–west along the Hārī Rūd and to the north along the Baydān valley. By contrast, the minaret affords views of only 2.5–5.5 km along the valleys, thus dispelling one hypothesis that the Mongols left it standing due to its usefulness as a watchtower.[67]

The qaṣr (fortress), measuring 55 m long and 17 m wide at its broadest, stretches along a narrow promontory on the north bank of the Hārī Rūd, above a bend in the river (Figure 7.6).[68] It thus conforms to the location of many other Ghurid forts, which, like Jām in the past, are currently not thought to be surrounded by urban sites. The best-preserved section of the qaṣr is in the north-east, where a conical tower guards the main access to the qaṣr from the west. The southern half of the tower has collapsed, although over eighty courses (about 9 m) of mud-brick or weathered baked-brick survive, built on a stone footing more than 1.6 m high.[69] The north face of

Figure 7.6 Photograph of the eastern face of Qaṣr-i Zarafshān. Note that the central breach in these walls is the result of collapse, rather than a gateway.

the tower is pierced by fifteen narrow arrow-loops on at least six different levels, with two wider, sloped openings (possibly machicolations, for harassing attackers) near the extant top. Internal wooden beams near the top of the tower indicate a wooden staircase or upper floor.

To the south of the tower, an 11 m long rectangular wing of the *qaṣr*, with robust stone walls, over forty courses high and surmounted by mud-brick superstructure, juts out to the east, following the ridge's contours. Two blocks of three narrow, rectangular rooms or magazines are discernible at the south-western end of the *qaṣr* (Figure 7.7). Although the construction techniques employed at Jām are typical of Ghurid forts elsewhere – dried brick structures built on a foundation of stone – the rough masonry component of the *qaṣr*'s walls, fortifications and watchtowers lacks the quintessentially Ghurid mud-plaster rendering carved with geometric decorative patterns. Massive decorated defensive walls are found at Qal'a-i Dukhtar, Qal'a-i Gawhargīn and Chihil Burj, although the relatively low level to which the fortifications are preserved at Jām may account for their absence at the site.[70]

The exposed sections of the *qaṣr*'s internal walls also exhibit few of the decorative features (painted plaster, stucco and carved bricks) found elsewhere at Jām, although occasional patches of white plaster were noted in some rooms. In the absence of a proper standing-building survey and excavations,
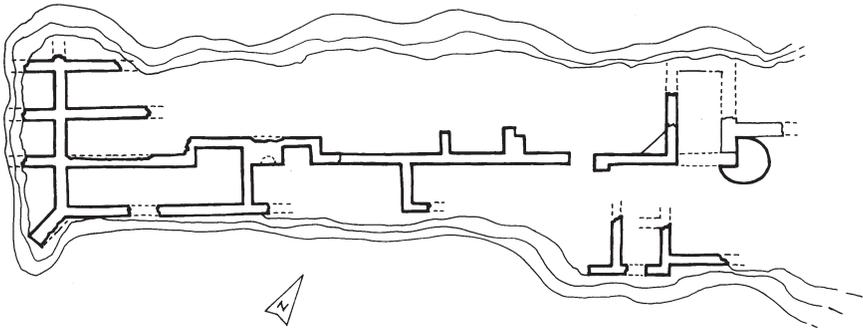
Figure 7.7 Sketch plan of Qaṣr-i Zarafshān. Drawing by Danilo Rosati.

it would be premature to interpret this as indicative of a more functional or military purpose for the *qaṣr*, as opposed to an elite or royal residence.

Kūh-i Khāra, a mountain-top refuge about 250 m above Qaṣr-i Zarafshān, does, however, provide evidence of elite occupation. It is riddled with robber holes and littered with the robbers' discarded finds, including turquoise-glazed bricks, delicate glass rims and two sherds of the rare Minai ware.[71] Minai ware was made for only about fifty years at sites such as Kashan in Iran, before the kiln cities were destroyed by the Mongols. Other imported wares found at Jām include lustrewares from Iran and celadon from China.[72]

No architectural features are clearly identifiable at Kūh-i Khāra, other than a large cistern known locally as Hawz-i Dukhtar-i Pādishāh, the 'Cistern of the King's Daughter'. The scale of the cistern, which is lined on three sides with baked-bricks (carried over 400 m up from the valley below) and has a capacity of at least 85 m³ (85,000 litres), and the fact that it is the only known example in the area suggests that it supplied an elite residence.[73] Herberg categorically states that the cistern was built to supply Qaṣr-i Zarafshān, although no above-ground channels have thus far been found linking the two. Small-scale irrigation features, consisting of hollowed wooden logs and rock-cut channels are found in the valley bottoms around Jām. Although we have no evidence of the antiquity of the channels, this simple, but effective, technology may have been in use in the twelfth century. Herberg argues that the cistern was filled manually from the Hārī Rūd or (more likely, in his view) it was located above a spring that has since dried up.[74] Neither hypothesis is persuasive, although, to be fair, the evidence of habitation beside the cistern may only have become apparent since his visit, due to the looting. The cistern may have been designed to store snow or ice for the summer months and to function like the subterranean ice-houses of Central Asia, rather than to collect rainwater for the mountain-top refuge.

Neither interpretation alters the fact that considerable efforts were made to supply water to the residents of Kūh-i Khāra and/or Qaṣr-i Zarafshān, as was the norm in other medieval elite residences.

The site at Kūh-i Khāra fits al-Jūzjānī's description of an upper fortress to the north-east of Fīrūzkūh, situated on 'a lofty and overhanging mountain', where the Khwārazm-Shāh governor Malik Mubāriz al-Dīn took refuge when the people of Fīrūzkūh rose against him in 617/1220–1.[75] As such, Kūh-i Khāra may correspond with the third phase of Bacharach's typology in which elevated 'royal' citadels occupied by 'alien' rulers emerged as a common urban feature in the Islamic world from the twelfth century.[76]

Once again, however, al-Jūzjānī's account contains ambiguities. Raverty states that this is the same fortress as Bāz Kūshki-i Sulṭān.[77] If so, it was where 'Alī Shāh (a fugitive Khwarazmian prince) was imprisoned by Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd and where 'Alī Shāh's followers murdered Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd in 607/1210–11 in an ultimately successful attempt to secure his release. Al-Jūzjānī records that during the time of the Ghurids it was impossible for laden beasts to reach the upper fortress, but under Malik Mubāriz al-Dīn a rampart and road were built up to the fortress, which could quarter 1,000 men. This part of the description fits neither Qaṣr-i Zarafshān nor Kūh-i Khāra today, so it is possible that another large fortress remains undiscovered in the hinterland around Jām.

Religious architecture

The most obvious religious structure at Jām is the lavishly decorated minaret, which is dedicated to the sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad. It was probably erected in 570/1174–5 to commemorate the recapture of Ghazna from the Ghuzz Turks who had seized the city the year before.[78] On the basis of the foundation text, Sourdel-Thomine identifies the architect of the minaret as 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Nisabūrī and suggests that, as his name indicates, he hailed from Nishapur in eastern Iran.[79] She argues that the use of the entire text of *sūra* 19 of the Qur'ān, Sūrat Maryam, as part of the intricate interwoven decoration on the minaret served as a condemnation of non-Muslim monotheists. The minaret's commissioners may have specifically had the nearby Persian–Hebrew community in mind, since the *sūra* lists numerous prophets common to the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths and condemns idolatry and unbelief.[80] Flood, on the other hand, suggests a more nuanced reading related to Islamic religious debates of the day, rendering the entire programme of the minaret a 'doctrinal exposition of Karrami theology'.[81]

The minaret of Jām has been described and discussed in detail elsewhere by numerous authorities on Islamic architecture, although little consideration has been given to it as part of an urban or rural entity.[82] Consequently, I shall concentrate on this aspect of the monument: as Williams notes with

regard to Merv, individual standing monuments 'are nothing without a landscape'.[83] As has been noted above, the minaret of Jām appears to stand in splendid isolation, as do several other minarets in Afghanistan (not to mention further afield) dating to around the twelfth century: the minaret at Dawlatābād (1108–9), for example, and the minarets of Masʿūd III (1089–1115) and Bahrām Shāh (1117–53) at Ghazna. The latter two 'minarets' are regarded by some as free-standing 'victory towers', although adjacent low mounds may conceal associated buildings.[84] To the east of the minaret at Jām is the only area of flat land in the vicinity, stretching 320 m along the south bank of the Hārī Rūd, 20 m wide in the east, 48 m wide in the west.[85] Le Berre's survey in 1960 recorded a riverside containment wall of baked bricks 20 m to the east of the minaret, which he cited as evidence of a possible mosque, perhaps the great mosque of Fīrūzkūh, which al-Jūzjānī states was washed away in a flash flood some time before 1200.[86] The fact that Le Berre also observed decoration on the west side of the minaret, 4 m below the current ground level, illustrates the degree to which fluvial deposits have buried the twelfth-century surface (and archaeological remains) and may be the origin of local stories of a tunnel running from the minaret, under the Hārī Rūd up to Qaṣr-i Zarafshān.[87] Reports of similar subterranean passages are not uncommon at other fortified Ghurid sites (Qalʿa-i Gawhargīn and Kāfir Qalʿa, for example),[88] enabling the besieged inhabitants to reach a water source. A covered passageway also linked the fore-runner of the Alhambra in Granada with the lower city, and elsewhere passages could provide the ruler with 'private' access to the great mosque.[89]

These ephemeral pieces of evidence for a large building attached to the minaret have been added to significantly in recent years by the discovery of widespread baked-brick courtyard paving and architecture in robber holes and exposed sections of the riverbank up to 90 m from the minaret.[90] Each of five soundings excavated in 2003 and 2005 uncovered paving with different brick plans; the intricate herringbone design exposed in one robber hole is comparable to that found in Ghaznavid palaces at the sites of Ghazna and Lashkari Bazaar/Bust.[91] In the easternmost sounding, three parts of baked-brick columns, which seem to have toppled from the south, were found, as were numerous shaped bricks, some retaining traces of paint. Although the columns excavated at Jām are only 23 cm in diameter, and thus of limited structural use, colonnades are a common feature of religious architecture from this and other periods.[92]

The alluvial deposits overlying the courtyard paving are indicative of a major depositional event, rather than a series of variable seasonal accumulations.[93] The coarser grains higher up the deposits suggest a sudden surge of water, possibly following the collapse of a retaining wall. The alluvial deposits become thinner in the soundings to the west, as the land rises slightly: the overburden here is roughly 0.6 m deep, compared to 1.3 m in the east. If the eastern end of the courtyard building bore the brunt of the

force of the flood, the water's energy may have dissipated sufficiently by the time it reached the minaret for this structure to withstand the flood, thus removing one of the arguments against Jām being Fīrūzkūh.[94]

Other arguments have been raised against the minaret being attached to a mosque: the lack of space for a mosque proportional in size and magnificence to the minaret; the lack of remains; and 'the idiosyncratic placement of the minaret on the *qibla* (Mecca-oriented) side of a mosque'.[95] However, this is by no means unknown: the great mosque of Damascus has two minarets located either end of the *qibla* wall, as do many later Ottoman mosques. In defence of the varied placement of minarets, Pinder-Wilson gives two contrary Iranian examples: the tenth-century minaret in the south-east corner of the mosque at Na'in and the practice in Saljuq Iran of placing minarets in the north corner. He further notes that 'The precise calculation of the *qibla* seems not to have been observed by the architects in the employ of the Ghurids.' He also disputes the 'lack of space' argument.[96]

The discovery of stretches of (possibly terraced) courtyard building and river defence walls, with baked-brick and stone footings, and baked-brick and *pakhsa* (packed earth) superstructures, overrides Flood's previous suggestion that the mosque may have been constructed from less durable materials than the minaret.[97] It also seems unlikely that the Ghurids would have devoted fewer resources to the courtyard building than to the minaret. The Shāh-i Mashhad *madrasa* at Gargistān (Afghanistan) and the *madrasa* at Zūzān in Iran demonstrate the ability of architects of the period to design and build large, intricately decorated buildings, and not just towers. Unfortunately, as the fragmentary plans of these buildings show, archaeologists rarely have the opportunity to analyse complete structures from this period, the 55 m^2 great mosque at Sirāf in Iran being a notable exception.[98]

It is unlikely that the courtyard building stretched across the whole area of flat land to the east of the minaret; geophysical surveys may reveal whether other high-status buildings were constructed in this area prone to flooding, or, perhaps more likely, whether it was an open space for a market and/or nomads' tents in the summer. The available flat land, however, is relatively small, compared to the extent of the site, and could not have accommodated a large tented population. Without wishing to pre-empt the results of such a survey, the minaret is clearly located beside a large courtyard building that may have been a mosque and that was inundated by a major flood. As such, the archaeological evidence appears to corroborate al-Jūzjānī's account of the destruction of the great mosque at Fīrūzkūh, and thus strengthens the evidence for Jām being Fīrūzkūh.

Civic architecture

The most striking example of large-scale 'civic architecture' currently identifiable at Jām is the wall running for at least 100 m along the lower slopes of

the north bank of the Hārī Rūd (Figure 7.3).[99] Herberg describes the wall as the southern fortress wall (*Festungsmauer*) and regards it as part of a circuit of defences for Qaṣr-i Zarafshān, stretching between cliffs in the east and those on the east bank of the Baydān Valley in the north. Closer inspection of robber holes and erosive breaches in the wall, however, suggests that it may have had a commercial rather than a military function.

The wall consists of an eroded brick superstructure over 4.2 m high, built on top of a stone footing; it was at least 1.4 m thick and thus would have required over 500 m^3 of bricks. The wall incorporates several arches facing the river and, in at least one robber hole, an internal vault abuts the inner face of the wall, running perpendicular to it into the hillside. This 'arcade' effect was not designed to withstand bombardment and is reminiscent of the *sūq*s of Damascus and Aleppo, and the arcade of shops at the Hellenistic-Byzantine site of Umm Qays in Jordan.

A possible gateway is located midway along the wall: the protruding stone footing culminates in what appears to have been a small tower, over 6 m in diameter, with a second tower a further 6.4 m to the east. A photograph from 1959 shows two conical brick features in front of the wall, which are described as 'the mouths of well-constructed sewers'.[100] Unfortunately, these features, which if sewers would be further evidence of urban planning, have not been located recently and may have been destroyed by robber holes.

The remains of a substantial baked-brick bridge, however, noted by Le Berre in 1960, are still visible on the north bank of the Hārī Rūd, directly opposite the minaret, at a point where the river is 26 m wide.[101] The remnants of the bridge currently stand 3.7 m (51 courses) high. A 21 m stretch of brick-reinforced river bank was traced at this point of the Hārī Rūd, presumably designed to prevent erosion from undermining the bridge's foundations.

Finally, a large building, reputed to have been Ghiyāth al-Dīn's governor's house but now partly dug out by robbers, is located at Kūshkak, on the Jām Rūd, south of the minaret. Whatever its origins, it is a major structure – the internal dimensions of one room are 14.5 by 3.8 m, with 1 m thick walls. Another corner of the building was noted 5 m to the north-east. Despite its size, the building has rough stone walls – a more luxuriously furnished upper storey, for this and other buildings at Jām, may have since disappeared.

Domestic architecture

Like many chroniclers, al-Jūzjānī tells us little about everyday life in Fīrūzkūh. Consequently, given the limited opportunity for even small-scale excavations at the site, we have to rely on the investigation of robber holes for information about Ghurid domestic architecture at Jām. Our first season of fieldwork in 2003 revealed a compact network of stone and brick walls on

the west bank of the Jām Rūd, opposite the minaret.[102] The walls appear to belong to terraced dwellings because a major, well built stone wall runs perpendicular to the steep hillslope, with less solid stone, brick and *pakhsa* cross-walls abutting it. Patches of compact surfaces were found at different elevations and laid on sub-surface packing on bedrock. No stratified sequences of surfaces were uncovered, which again indicates a relatively short occupation of the structures. Several of the walls have smooth, white-plastered faces and many fragments of fine, painted (mainly blue, black and red) plaster were found in the debris filling the robber holes. Given the numerous murals uncovered at the Ghaznavid palaces at Lashkari Bazaar/Bust and the medieval fort of Chihil Burj, it is possible that some of the buildings at Jām were comparably decorated.[103] Unsurprisingly, the robber holes yielded few finds, although the decorated elongated ceramic spout, carved stucco fragment and two coins from these robber holes offer a tantalising glimpse of what has been lost to the looters.[104]

More coherent domestic architecture was found in a robber hole on the north bank of the Hārī Rūd, where a complete room measuring 9.5 by more than 6.5 m was found. Attempts to reach the room's floor surface had to be abandoned at a depth of 2.6 m below the ceiling.[105] The room's walls are made of stone, covered with two layers of coarse plaster and multiple applications of a fine, white finish. Traces of the brick roofing are still visible at the top of the northern and eastern walls; the central, plastered brick pillar was presumably designed to help support the roof. A stone-lined window ledge was noted in the western wall. Careful excavation of a lump of earth adhering to the north-east corner of the room, which the robbers had ignored, revealed an elegant, domed lamp alcove, 45 cm high. Remarkably, the alcove still contained a small ceramic lamp.[106] The traces of domestic architecture thus far exposed indicate that the residents of Jām were more than competent builders, and had a concern for aesthetics. Although some may have practised a semi-nomadic lifestyle for part of the year, their kin were equally 'at home' in a more urban context.

Peripheral urban areas

According to a common Islamic urban model evident in Samarkand, Merv, Sirāf and Nishapur, industrial activities tended to be located on the urban periphery.[107] Evidence of industrial activities (a kiln and slag) and cemeteries have been found up to two kilometres from the heart of Ghurid Jām. As noted above, however, archaeologists should be careful to avoid self-reinforcing arguments correlating features typical of 'peripheral' urban areas with the extent and continuity of the site in the broader sense of the term. If we assume that all the archaeological remains in the area date to the Ghurid period, the presence of major buildings such as the 'governor's house' (whatever its function was) near the kiln points to a more complex urban pattern

than the model suggests, although it may indicate some form of control of industrial manufacture.

The kiln is large, measuring over 4 m long, 1.7 m wide and over 1.7 m high. Part of the kiln has collapsed or been robbed out and the well pre-served vaulted structure that has been exposed probably represents the subterranean fire pit of a two-stage updraught pottery kiln, rather than the kiln's superstructure. The eastern wall has an arched stoke hole above a circular rake-out hole, with associated ash. The chamber consists of at least six arches (possibly springers supporting the superstructure where the actual pots were placed) 52 cm wide, with 12 cm wide flues separating them. The arches appear to abut the outer wall of the kiln. Much of the interior of the chamber is highly vitrified, covered in a hard, greeny-grey bubbled and molten coating, which probably represents the melted surface of the brick walls rather than firing residues. The kiln is comparable to, but much larger than, early Islamic and post-Saljuq pottery kilns found in an industrial suburb of Sultan Kala at Merv, which also exhibit the molten coating effect on their internal surfaces.[108]

A piece of slag with an embedded ceramic fragment was found at the nearby site of Khar Khūj, where a medium-sized brick building of unclear date was also noted. A more detailed survey is required to determine whether this part of the Jām Rūd valley was an industrial centre or whether the kiln is merely an isolated feature. Marl clays suitable for potting are, however, available on the hill opposite the kiln and the nearby Jām Rūd provides a steady supply of water.

Another intriguing peripheral feature is the nearby Persian–Hebrew cemetery. A total of fifty-four tombstones, inscribed with Hebrew, Aramaic and Persian names in the 'new Persian' language, but written in Hebrew script, have thus far been published, but the extent and features of this cemetery have never been investigated properly. The published tombstones date from 1115–1215.[109] Several graves are visible, eroding out of the river bank in the general vicinity of the cemetery, and an additional four tombstones, none of which were *in situ*, were recorded during fieldwork in 2005. The tombstones indicate the presence of a significant Jewish com-munity in the Ghurid summer capital for much of its existence (indeed, apparently predating the 'official' founding of the capital), just as there was in other Central Asian cities such as Nishapur, Merv, Balkh and Ghazna.[110] The location of contemporary Muslim graves at Jām is less well known. An intricately carved wooden panel, with Ghurid parallels, was rescued from robbers looting a double Islamic grave of uncertain date opposite the Persian–Hebrew cemetery.[111] Another 'holy man's grave', that of Wazīr Taymān, is located to the south of the Hebrew cemetery and is said by locals to date to the time of Chingiz Khān. Other stone slab lined graves of unknown date were noted eroding out of the river bank in the Pay-i Ziyārat area of the north bank of the Harī Rūd in 2003.

Conclusions

The archaeological remains uncovered by the limited fieldwork at Jām suggest that the site does not meet all the criteria of a typical imperial capital. However, I hope to have demonstrated that its urban layout and features are partly a product of the site's environmental setting, the nature of Ghurid society, the destructive and disruptive effects of the Mongol incursions and post-abandonment site formation processes. The newly delimited urban area is not large by comparison with other medieval capitals in Central Asia, but it does exhibit features typical of medieval cities across the Islamic world. The remnants of monumental religious and elite architecture dominate the centre of the site, with dense, more plebeian structures clinging to the south-facing valley sides in particular. The extensive defences, both on land and along the riverbank, and evidence exposed by recent widespread plundering of the site indicate urban and military planning and Jām's importance and wealth during the Ghurid period. Whether or not it is Fīrūzkūh, the sultanate's summer capital, is to a certain extent irrelevent.

The single-period nature of settlement at Jām prevents an analysis of the site's life-cycle, although the rioting in 1199, historical accounts and recent archaeological evidence of a major flood suggest that the capital's fortunes may have been declining prior to its capture by the Khwārazm-Shāh in 1215–16. Despite rebuilding and refortification, the Mongol destruction of the site merely delivered the *coup de grâce* to the capital of an empire whose halcyon days were over. Ultimately, Moline's description of Jām as 'a small fortified town' is perhaps the most apt, given the extent and characteristics of the archaeological site, albeit one at the centre of a large empire.[112]

Ethnographic work, such as Hallet and Samizay's pictorial study of traditional Afghan architecture, provides hints as to what Ghurid mountain settlements, including Fīrūzkūh, may have looked like. Building materials and technology have probably changed little in remote districts of Afghanistan over the past 800 years, but we need to remember that architecture is, to a certain extent, moulded by social praxis.[113] There are significant differences between the Nuristani and Pashtun communities Hallet and Samizay visited, and this is reflected in their architecture: in Nuristan, for example, the rooftops are communal spaces and linked by ladders, whereas in Salang, rooftops are private spaces and access to the buildings is from the side and back. Without wishing to disregard the potential social and chronological differences in domestic architecture, Figure 7.8 presents a reconstruction of what Jām may have looked like during the apogee of the Ghurid sultanate, based on the archaeological evidence discussed above.

Another important factor that has to be considered is the population-carrying capacity of the mountainous land around Jām.[114] Archaeo-environmental analysis of samples from Jām is at a preliminary stage, but the data collected thus far are informative about the Ghurid capital's
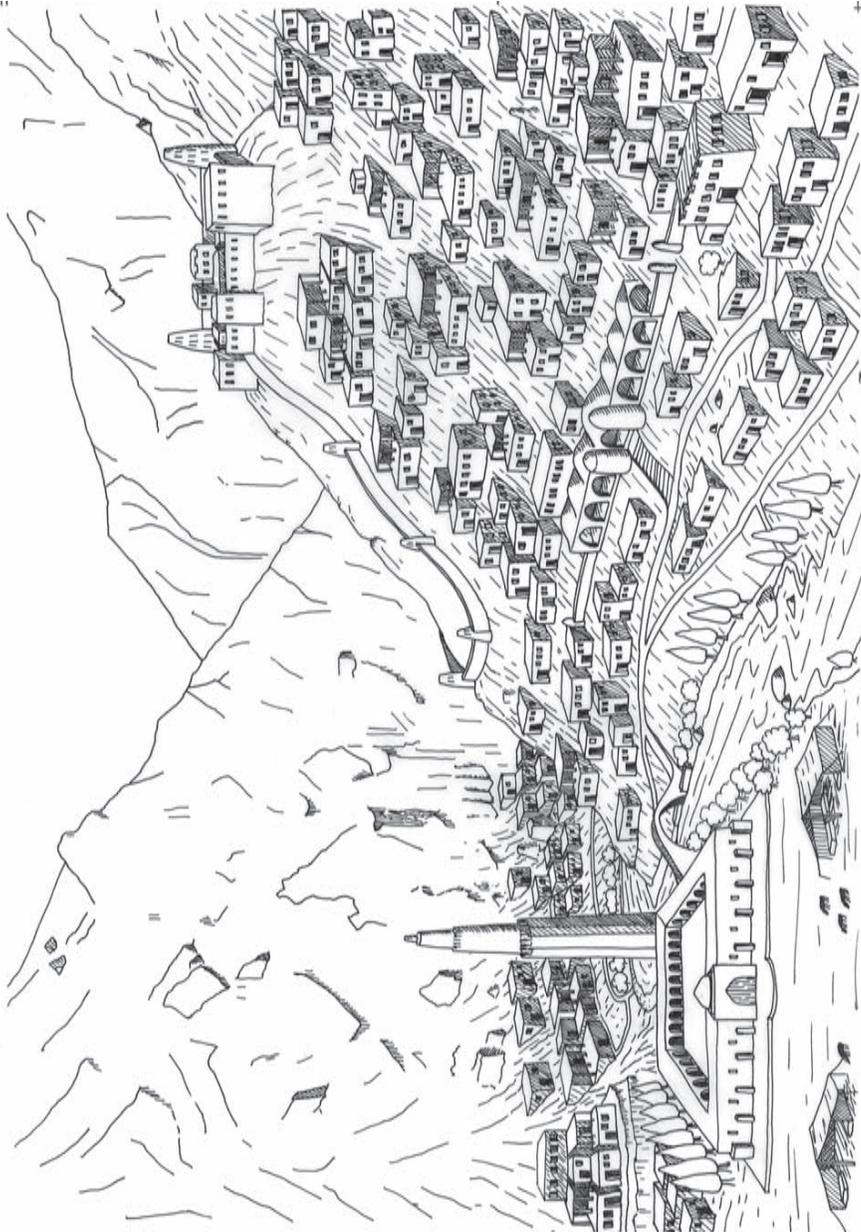
Figure 7.8 A reconstruction drawing of ancient Jām. Drawing by Catriona Bonfiglioli.

relationship to its hinterland.[115] Analysis of charcoal from flotation samples indicates the presence of riverine and steppe vegetation zones broadly similar to those found around Jām today, although a broader range of species was probably found in the twelfth century. The archaeo-zoological remains are, unsurprisingly, dominated by sheep/goat; hunting played little role in the provision of meat and we should be wary of overemphasising the importance of meat in the diet. Jām appears to have been a 'consumer' site: the sheep/goat kill-off patterns reflect a market or tax economy that was not self-sufficient. The inhabitants of Jām seem to have relied on animals surplus to requirements at 'producer' sites, probably semi-nomadic campsites similar to those found in the region today,[116] where secondary products were important. Although some of the archaeo-botanical samples may be derived from animal fodder and/or bedding, rather than produce destined for human consumption, they include a wide variety of crops, wild taxa and fruits, including hulled barley and free-threshing wheat, pulses, grapes and figs.

Further research is required to determine what proportion of Jām's foodstuffs was produced locally. The absence, thus far, of foodstuffs or wooded materials imported from significantly different or distant environmental zones contrasts with the clear evidence for imported ceramics and other artefacts in the Ghurids' material culture and described by al-Jūzjānī. This partly reflects the (literal) consumption of foodstuffs as opposed to the less destructive use of artefacts, and the different degrees of perishability, preservation, bulk and value of imported artefacts: as Abu-Lughod notes, most items traded during this period were small, light and of high value.[117] The limited available land around Jām suitable for cultivation does, however, imply some short- to mid-range importation of agricultural produce, possibly funded by the wealth reaching the capital from military campaigns and tribute around the Ghurid sultanate. One possible explanation for the abrupt abandonment of Jām following the Mongol 'interruptions' is that this mountainous region simply could not support even a seasonal dense concentration of population, without the significant inflow of booty to finance and deliver the capital's food supply. If archaeologists are given the opportunity to continue fieldwork at Jām, this hypothesis and our knowledge of this unique Ghurid urban centre in general will be enhanced significantly.

Notes

for Archaeology, for permission to work at Jām and for such a productive collaboration in the field. Finally, I would like to thank the editors for inviting me to contribute to this volume, and for their and Yvette Nash's comments on a previous draft of this chapter. Any remaining mistakes are, obviously, my sole responsibility.

1 Maulānā Minhāj-ud-Dīn Abū-'Umār-i-'Usmān (al-Jūzjānī), *Tabakāt-i-Nāṣirī: A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia, Including Hindustan, from AH 194 [AD 810], to AH 658 [AD 1260], and the Irruption of the Infidel Mughals into Islam*, trans. H. G. Raverty, 2 vols. London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1881 (henceforth TN 1 and TN 2), vol. 1, p. 355; C. E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay. The Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India 1040–1186*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977, pp. 114–17.

2 TN 1, p. 356; W. Ball, 'The towers of Ghur: a Ghurid Maginot line?', in W. Ball and L. Harrow (eds), *Cairo to Kabul. Afghan and Islamic Studies Presented to Ralph Pinder-Wilson*. London: Melisende, 2002, 21–45; W. Herberg, 'Die Wehrbauten von Ghor (Afghanistan): Zusammenfassende Dokumentation der Bestandsaufnahmen von 1975, 1977 und 1978', *Die Welt des Islams* 22, 1982, 67–84.

3 TN 1, p. 335.

4 Fīrūzkūh is usually translated as 'the Turquoise Mountain', but I am grateful to Dr Christine van Ruymbeke for pointing out that it could also mean 'Mountain of Victory' or 'Mountain of the Victorious One', due to the ambiguities created by the rendering of Persian in Arabic script.

5 C. E. Bosworth, 'The early Islamic history of Ghur', *Central Asiatic Journal* 5, 1961, 116–33, p. 119; TN 1, p. 341.

6 F. B. Flood, 'Review of J. Sourdel-Thomine Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām: un chef d'oeuvre du XIIe siècle', *Art Bulletin* 87: 3, 2005, 536–43, p. 537.

7 A. S. Melikian Chirvani, 'Eastern Iranian architecture: apropos of the Ghūrid parts of the Great Mosque of Harāt', *BSOAS* 33: 2, 1970, 322–7; R. Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets', *Iran* 39, 2001, 155–86, p. 172.

8 C. Sinopoli, 'The archaeology of empires', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23, 1994, 159–80, p. 162.

9 P. Jackson, 'The fall of the Ghurid dynasty', in C. Hillenbrand (ed.), *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, vol. 2: *The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture*. Leiden: Brill, 2000, 207–35, p. 228.

10 Jackson, 'The fall of the Ghurid dynasty', p. 232; TN 2, pp. 1047–8.

11 M. Ewans, *Afghanistan. A Short History of Its People and Politics*. New York: Perennial, 2002, p. 23; S. Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002, pp. 77–8.

12 TN 1, p. xxii.

13 TN 1, p. xxiii; Jackson, 'The fall of the Ghurid dynasty', pp. 226–7.

14 TN 1, p. 392, n. 6; p. 400, n. 3; p. 404, n. 9, *inter alia*.

15 TN 1, p. 339. For the important role that inaccessibility played in the rise and ultimate demise of Fīrūzkūh, see D. C. Thomas and I. Shearer, 'Accessing Firuzkuh, the summer "capital" of the Ghurids', in T. L. Evans (ed.), *Papers from the Archaeology of the Inaccessible Session 2005 TAG Conference in Sheffield*, forthcoming.

16 TN 1, p. 403.

17 TN 1, pp. 403–7; p. 404, n. 1.

18 Flood, 'Review', p. 538.

19 F. B. Flood, 'Ghurid monuments and Muslim identities: epigraphy and exegesis in twelfth-century Afghanistan', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 42: 3, 2005, 263–94, pp. 281–3.

20 Melikian Chirvani, 'Eastern Iranian architecture', pp. 323–4.
21 TN 1, pp. 405, n. 2; 405–6, 430, 487–8.
22 TN 2, pp. 1006–7.
23 TN 2, p. 1048.
24 TN 2, p. 1057; R. N. Frye, 'Review of Le Minaret de Djām, Mémoires de la délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan, tome XVI', *Artibus Asiae* 22:4, 1959, 344–6, p. 345, n. 6; see also L. G. Potter, 'Herat under the Karts: social and political forces', in N. Yavari, L. G. Potter and J. M. Ran Oppenheim (eds), *Views from the Edge: Essays in Honor of Richard W. Bulliet*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, 184–207.
25 Jackson, 'The fall of the Ghurid dynasty', p. 207; TN 1, p. 386.
26 Literally, 'country of the mountains', TN 1, p. 339.
27 TN 1, p. 371, n. 3; see also p. 339, n. 7.
28 Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets', p. 167 and Appendix, pp. 175–8.
29 Note also that one of the local Chahar Aymaq tribes of central Afghanistan is known as the Firuzkuh. 1891 report by Col. P. J. Maitland in L. W. Adamec (ed.), *Herat and Northwestern Afghanistan: Vol. 3 of the Historical and Political Gazeteer of Afghanistan*. Graz: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt (ADEVA), 1975, pp. 57–64, 105–113.
30 L. S. Leshnik, 'Ghor, Firuzkuh and the Minar-i Jam', *Central Asiatic Journal* 12, 1968/9, 36–49, p. 37.
31 W. Ball, with J. C. Gardin, *Archaeological Gazetteer of Afghanistan*. Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1982, vol. 1, p. 264. Girishk is 282 km from Jām, thus making Jām too distant to be Fīrūzkūh, in Leshnik's opinion.
32 Ball, *Archaeological Gazetteer*, vol. 1, pp. 212, 245; W. Ball, 'Some notes on the Masjid-i Sangi at Larwand in central Afghanistan', *South Asian Studies* 6, 1990, 105–10, p. 109.
33 A. Maricq, 'The mystery of the great minaret: the remarkable and isolated 12th-century tower of Jham discovered in unexplored Afghanistan', *Illustrated London News* 10 January 1959, 56–8; A. Maricq and G. Wiet, *Le Minaret de Djam: la découverte de la capitale des Sultans Ghurides (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)*, Mémoires de la délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 16. Paris: DAFA, 1959; W. Herberg, with D. Davary, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor: Bericht über Forschungen zum Problem Jām-Ferozkoh', *Afghanistan Journal* 3:2, 1976, 57–69, p. 57; Ball, 'The towers of Ghur', p. 21, n. 5.
34 Contra W. Trousdale, 'The minaret of Jam: a Ghorid monument in Afghanistan', *Archaeology* 18, 1965, 102–8, p. 108.
35 R. Hillenbrand, 'The architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids', in Hillenbrand (ed.), *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, vol. 2, 124–206, p. 193.
36 Leshnik, 'Ghor, Firuzkuh and the Minar-i Jam', p. 41; Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor', pp. 67–8.
37 Ball, 'Some notes on the Masjid-i Sangi', p. 109.
38 Leshnik, 'Ghor, Firuzkuh and the Minar-i Jam', pp. 42, 48; similarly, Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor', pp. 65–6, argues that the site reflects a garrison, rather than the capital of a major dynasty, and Ball, 'The towers of Ghur', p. 43, states 'there are no urban remains and there is no space in any case'; TN 1, pp. 341, 403, 417. Note, however, that Frye, 'Review', p. 346, suggests that the name Jām may derive from the *masjid-i jāmi'* of Fīrūzkūh.
39 Leshnik, 'Ghor, Firuzkuh and the Minar-i Jam', p. 49.
40 Sinopoli, 'The archaeology of empires', pp. 167–8, 171.

41 G. Scarcia and M. Taddei, 'The Masǧid-i sangī of Larvand', *East and West* 23, 1973, 89–108, p. 94.

42 J. Moline, 'The minaret of Ǧām (Afghanistan)', *Kunst des Orients* 9: 1/2, 1973/4, 137–48, pp. 146–7.

43 M. J. Casimir and B. Glatzer, 'Šāh-i Mašhad, a recently discovered Madrasah of the Ghurid period in Ǧarǧistān (Afghanistan)', *East and West* 21, 1971, 53–67.

44 G. Vercellin, 'The identification of Firuzkuh: a conclusive proof', *East and West* 26, 1976, 337–40, pp. 337–8. See also Moline, 'The minaret of Ǧām', pp. 147–8.

45 Ball, 'The towers of Ghur', pp. 42–4.

46 TN 1, pp. 406–7.

47 Vercellin, 'The identification of Firuzkuh', p. 340.

48 Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets', pp. 166–7; J. Sourdel-Thomine, *Le minaret Ghouride de Jām. Un chef d'oeuvre du XIIe siècle*. Paris: Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 2004, pp. 45–51.

49 W. J. Fischel, 'The rediscovery of the medieval Jewish community at Fīrūzkūh in central Afghanistān', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85, 1965, 148–53.

50 Cited in G. A. Fedorov-Davydov, 'Archaeological research in Central Asia of the Muslim period', *World Archaeology* 14:3, 1983, 393–405. Merv is 420 km to the NNW of Jām, Bukhara 600 km to the north and Samarkand 640 km to the NNE; Kabul is 415 km to the east of Jām.

51 A. Northedge and D. Kennet, *The Samarra Archaeological Survey*, 2003, http://www.dur.ac.uk/derek.kennet/samarra.htm (accessed 2 September 2006).

52 Cited in Flood, Review, p. 538.

53 TN 1, p. 371. Ball, 'The towers of Ghur', pp. 43–4; Ball, 'Some notes on the Masjid-i Sangi', p. 109.

54 R. Cribb, *Nomads in Archaeology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 65–83.

55 Ball, 'The towers of Ghur', p. 42.

56 E. L. Rapp, *Die persisch-hebräischen Inschriften Afghanestans aus dem 11. bis 13. Jahrhundert*. Mainz: Universität Mainz, 1971; G. Gnoli, *Le inscrizioni giudeo-persiane del Gur (Afghanistan)*, Serie Orientale Roma 30. Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estreme Oriente, 1964, *inter alia*.

57 C. K. Wilkinson, 'Life in Early Nishapur', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 9: 2, 1950, 60–72, p. 60.

58 See K. White, 'The geomorphological setting', in D. C. Thomas, K. Deckers, M. M. Hald, M. Holmes, M. Madella and K. White, 'Environmental evidence from the Minaret of Jam Archaeological Project, 2005', *Iran* 44, 2006, 253–76, pp. 256–8.

59 In 1964, the 'bazaar' district of the site was destroyed to facilitate ultimately aborted plans to build a hotel; five years later, the 'bazaar' ruins were levelled completely. Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor', p. 64.

60 G. Herrmann and K. Kurbansakhatov et al., 'The International Merv Project. Preliminary report on the second season (1993)', *Iran* 32, 1994, 53–61, *inter alia*; T. Williams, Chapter 4 in this volume.

61 D. C. Thomas, 'Looting, heritage management and archaeological strategies at Jam, Afghanistan', *Culture without Context* 14, 2004, 16–20, also available from http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/IARC/cwoc/issue14/afghanistan.htm (accessed 3 September 2006). The threats facing the site were recognised in 2002, when the minaret and archaeological site of Jām became Afghanistan's first World Heritage Site.

62 Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor'.
63 Alison L. Gascoigne, 'Pottery from Jām: an eleventh- to early thirteenth-century ceramic corpus from Afghanistan', *Iran* 45, forthcoming 2007. Bedrock is visible in some of the robber holes, again indicating that Jām was not occupied for long.
64 S. I. Hallet and R. Samizay, *Traditional Architecture of Afghanistan*. New York: Garland STPM Press, 1980, p. 79.
65 D. C. Thomas, G. Pastori and I. Cucco, 'Excavations at Jam, Afghanistan', *East and West* 54, 2004, 87–119.
66 Kevin White, personal communication.
67 Kevin White, personal communication.
68 Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor', p. 61.
69 Given the limited time available to visit the *qaṣr* in 2005 and the difficult terrain, the measurements of the extant architecture are approximate.
70 B. Wannell, 'Echoes in a landscape – western Afghanistan in 1989', in Ball and Harrow (eds), *Cairo to Kabul*, 236–47, pp. 236–7; J. Lee, 'Monuments of Bamiyan Province, Afghanistan', *Iran* 44, 2006, 229–52.
71 D. C. Thomas and A. L. Gascoigne, 'Recent archaeological investigations of looting around the Minaret of Jam, Ghur Province', in J. van Krieken-Pieters (ed.), *Art and Archaeology of Afghanistan: its Fall and Survival. A Multi-disciplinary Approach*. Leiden: Brill, 2006, 155–67.
72 Gascoigne, 'Pottery from Jām'.
73 See Gascoigne, Chapter 9 in this volume, for the more communal role cisterns played in the survival of Tinnīs.
74 Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor', p. 63.
75 TN 2, p. 1056.
76 See Bennison, Chapter 5 in this volume.
77 *Bāz Kūshki-i Sulṭān* is described in TN 1, pp. 403, 407.
78 Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām*, pp. 128–9; Flood, 'Ghurid monuments and Muslim identities', p. 273. Pinder-Wilson, however, agrees with Maricq and Wiet's reading of the foundation text, i.e. a date of 590/1193–4, and suggests that it was built to commemorate the Ghurid victory at the battle of Tarā'orī in India in 1192, and the subsequent capture of Ajmir and Delhi. Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets', pp. 169–71.
79 Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām*, pp. 133–4.
80 Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām*, p. 154.
81 Flood, 'Review', p. 542; Flood, 'Ghurid monuments and Muslim identities', p. 279.
82 See Maricq and Wiet, *Le Minaret de Djam*; Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets'; and Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām*, *inter alia*.
83 T. Williams, 'Ancient Merv: queen of cities', *World Heritage* 24, 2002, 4–15, p. 15, available from http://whc.unesco.org/whreview/article24.htm (accessed 4 September 2006).
84 J. Sourdel-Thomine, 'Deux minarets d'époque seljoukide en Afghanistan', *Syria* 30, 1953, 108–36; Hillenbrand, 'The architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids', p. 152; Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets', p. 156.
85 Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor', p. 60.
86 Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām*, pp. 31–2; TN 1, p. 407; Flood, 'Review', p. 538; Pinder-Wilson follows al-Jūzjānī more literally in dating the mosque's destruction, as 'sometime during the reign of Ghiyath al-Din' (1163–1203). Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets', p. 167.
87 Le Berre, cited in Moline, 'The minaret of Ğām', p. 147.

88 Lee, 'Monuments of Bamiyan Province, Afghanistan'.
89 Such features are still in the minds of planners today: Le Meridien Towers development, opening in 2007 a mile away from the Holy Mosque in Mecca's Al-Rawabi Ajyad district, offers access to the Mosque 'via a private tunnel, thus avoiding some of the throngs of pilgrims', http://www.wyndhamworldwide. com/media_center/pr/show_release.cfm?id=16&category=3 (accessed 23 September 2006).
90 Thomas, Pastori and Cucco, 'Excavations at Jam', pp. 91–4; Thomas et al., 'Environmental evidence'.
91 U. Scerrato, 'The first two excavation campaigns at Ghazni, 1957–1958', *East and West* 10, 1959, 25–55, pp. 30–2; D. Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar, une Résidence royale ghaznévide et ghoride*, Mémoires de la delegation archéologique française en Afghanistan 18. Paris: DAFA, 1978, plates 56b, 59c–d, 60d, 63d–e (La Cour Centrale du Grand Château), 101a (Le Château du Centre, la rampe III, background); note that the simple square brick paving exposed in 'La Mosqué de l'Avant-cour' changes alignment in the area of the *mihrāb* (pl. 23).
92 For example, at Nishapur: Wilkinson, 'Life in early Nishapur', pp. 63–4; Sirāf: David Whitehouse, 'Siraf: a medieval port on the Persian Gulf', *World Archaeology* 2: 2, 1970, 141–58, p. 147, fig. 6; 'strong square pillars' and engaged columns in the Great Mosque of Herat. Melikian Chirvani, 'Eastern Iranian architecture', p. 322, pl. 7; the mosque in the palace of Mas'ūd III at Ghazna. Hillenbrand, 'The architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids', p. 154, fig. 23.
93 White in Thomas et al., 'Environmental evidence'.
94 Leshnik, 'Ghor, Firuzkuh and the Minar-i Jam', p. 48.
95 Herberg, 'Topographische Feldarbeiten in Ghor', p. 66; Flood, 'Review', p. 538; Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets', p. 167.
96 Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid minarets', p. 167, n. 43; see also S. Blair, 'The Madrasa at Zuzan: Islamic architecture in eastern Iran on the eve of the Mongol invasions', *Muqarnas* 3, 1985, 75–91, p. 81, for a discussion of the orientation of medieval Islamic religious architecture.
97 Flood cites as a precedent the mud-brick mosque associated with the apparently stand-alone twelfth-century minaret at Qāsimābād in Iran. Flood, 'Review', p. 538.
98 Casimir and Glatzer, 'Šāh-i Mašhad'; Blair, 'The Madrasa at Zuzan'; Whitehouse, 'Siraf', pp. 146–9.
99 The wall is clearly visible in Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām*, p. 26, fig. 10, where it is described as 'an enclosure wall'.
100 A. Maricq, 'The mystery of the great minaret', p. 58.
101 Sourdel-Thomine, *Le Minaret Ghouride de Jām*, pp. 34, 40.
102 Thomas, Pastori and Cucco, 'Excavations at Jam', pp. 95–104.
103 Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar*, Appendices III–IV, plates 120–4, 141–2; Lee, 'Monuments of Bamiyan Province'.
104 Thomas, Pastori and Cucco, 'Excavations at Jam', pp. 104–9, and R. Giunta, Appendix III, pp. 117–18.
105 Thomas et al., 'Environmental evidence'.
106 Thomas and Gascoigne, 'Recent archaeological investigations of looting', fig. 8.
107 Fedorov-Davydov, 'Archaeological research in Central Asia of the Muslim period', p. 396; thirty mostly small oval or circular pottery kilns were excavated at Sirāf in an outlying suburb adjacent to the city wall (Whitehouse, 'Siraf', p. 154), while brick kilns near the city walls and domed pottery kilns have been excavated at Nishapur: Wilkinson, 'Life in early Nishapur', pp. 63, 72.

108 G. Herrmann, K. Kurbansakhatov, St J. Simpson et al., 'The International Merv Project. Preliminary report on the seventh season (1998)', *Iran* 37, 1999, 1–24, pp. 13–15, fig. 6; G. Herrmann, K. Kurbansakhatov, St J. Simpson et al., 'The International Merv Project. Preliminary report on the fifth season (1996)', *Iran* 35, 1997, 1–34, pp. 26–7.

109 E. L. Rapp, *Die Jüdisch-Persisch-Hebräischen Inschriften aus Afghanistan*. Munich: J. Kitzinger, 1965, p. 3, *inter alia*.

110 Fischel, 'The rediscovery of the medieval Jewish community at Fīrūzkūh', pp. 148–9.

111 M. Rugiadi, 'A carved wooden door from Jam – preliminary remarks', *Iran* 44, 2006, 363–5.

112 Moline, 'The minaret of Ğām', p. 132. This mirrors the Persian historian Zakariyā b. Muḥammad Qazwīnī's description of Fīrūzkūh as a *qalʿa* (fortress) rather than a city, admittedly after the Mongol sieges. Flood, 'Review', p. 538.

113 H. L. Moore, *Space, Text and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 6; S. M. Foster, 'Analysis of spatial patterns in buildings (access analysis) as an insight into social structure: examples from the Scottish Atlantic Iron Age', *Antiquity* 63, 1989, 40–50, p. 40; M. Parker Pearson and C. Richards, 'Ordering the world: perceptions of architecture, space and time', in M. Parker Pearson and C. Richards (eds), *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space*. London: Routledge, 1994, p. 3.

114 The current population of Jām amounts to little more than a scatter of households, eking out a meagre existence from animal husbandry and subsistence agriculture. Ongoing research into the urban extent and population density levels of the site in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, suggests that the Ghurid summer capital may have had a seasonal high of between 4,000 and 7,000 inhabitants.

115 See Hald (Archaeo-botanical analysis), Holmes (Archaeo-zoological analyses) and Deckers (Anthracological analysis of charcoal remains) in Thomas et al., 'Environmental evidence'.

116 F. Hole, 'Campsites of the seasonally mobile in western Iran', in K. von Folsach, H. Thrane and I. Thuesen (eds), *From Handaxe to Khan: Essays presented to Peder Mortensen on the Occasion of his 70th birthday*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004, 67–85.

117 J. L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 69.

FATHPUR SIKRI AND ISFAHAN

The founding and layout of capital cities in Mughal India and Safavid Iran

Stephen P. Blake

Introduction

Jalāl al-Dīn Akbar (1556–1605) and Shāh ʿAbbās I (1587–1629) were the institutional architects of their respective states – Mughal India and Safavid Iran. These energetic rulers established the basic military-administrative, economic and religious institutions for their fledgling empires. In addition to institutional reorganisation, these men also imposed a new architectural order. Both were responsible for planning and building imperial centres, large and magnificent capital cities that reflected the structure of their emerging states. The founding and layout of Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan and the relationships among the dominant architectural structures reflected the characteristic patterns of institutional integration in these two seventeenth-century west and south Asian states. For both Akbar and ʿAbbās, establishing a new capital was an exercise in political legitimacy. Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan each symbolised the new imperial system that its builder was in the process of introducing.

The Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire (1526–1739) was founded in 1526 by Ẓahīr al-Dīn Bābur, a direct descendant of the great Central Asian conqueror Tīmūr.[1] A mere four years after his initial victory over the Afghans, however, Bābur died and left his nascent empire to Humāyūn, his eldest son. For more than ten years Humāyūn battled the Afghans for control of the north Indian plains, but in 1540 he was defeated and forced into exile. After fifteen long years spent mostly in Afghanistan and Iran, Humāyūn returned and reclaimed his throne. A freak accident in 1555, however, deprived him of the chance to enjoy his victory and left India to his young son, Akbar.

Akbar, like 'Abbās after him, came to the throne as a callow, untested teenager (Akbar at thirteen, 'Abbās at sixteen) and like 'Abbās had to rid himself of an overbearing tutor and successive challenges to his authority. In 1571, some fifteen years after taking the throne, Akbar moved his capital from Agra, where he had (in 1565) begun renovation on the old palace-fortress, to a small village named Sikri, some 36 km to the west. In the succeeding fifteen years (1571–85) the emperor's men laid out a new capital city (Fathpur Sikri) in this rather unpromising site.

Having founded a new capital, Akbar turned his attention to institutional reform. The first problem he faced was internal: how to organise, pay and ensure the loyalty of his military followers. In 1573–4 he instituted a pro-gramme of branding, requiring that his cavalrymen's horses carry both the imperial brand and that of their captain. Although opposition to the new regulation sprang up immediately, Akbar persisted and within several years most of the important men in the empire had agreed to the new regulation. In mid-1575 and early 1576 Akbar made the first appointments in what was to develop into the characteristic feature of Mughal rule: the *manṣabdārī* or officeholder system. This system featured a ranked hierarchy, each member of which provided a certain number of armed and mounted men.[2]

At about this same time Akbar began to reorganise the administration of his rapidly expanding empire. In 1578 he established a daily routine for dealing with administrative and economic matters; in the late 1570s he set up a record office; in 1580 he divided the empire into provinces; and in 1581 he ordered a village-by-village census (probably never completed).[3] For the early modern Islamic world Akbar's new military-administrative system was unusually open to ethnic, religious and cultural differences. Unlike the Ottoman and Safavid states, where conversion and cultural uniformity were required, the Mughals decided not to restrict membership in the *manṣabdārī* system to the Central Asian Sunni warriors who had made up the bulk of the Emperor Bābur's followers and who had accompanied Humāyūn on his reconquest of India.

Akbar and his men also devoted a good deal of time to economic matters during their fifteen-year sojourn in Fathpur Sikri. Since Mughal India, like the Ottoman and Safavid empires, was an agrarian state (with, to be sure, dynamic commercial, industrial and financial sectors), this involved, for the most part, a reordering of the land revenue system. Thus, in the nineteenth year of his reign (1574–5) Akbar cancelled the land revenue assignments, transferred the freed-up lands into the imperial household domain and began to collect the agrarian taxes directly from the local land controllers, thereby allowing him to pay his military captains in cash. In early 1575 he instituted a detailed survey of the central north Indian provinces, measuring the arable land (establishing standard measurements for length and area) and collecting information on the prices and yields of the various crops. By 1580 Akbar's revenue administrators were able to publish the Ten-Year Settlement, setting a revenue rate in cash for each piece of land in the central empire.[4]

Along with economic and administrative reorganisation, Akbar had to deal with religious conflict: the tensions that arose from trying to govern a complex, multiethnic, multisectarian early modern empire. As an unsophisticated, untutored but curious believer, the emperor set aside a small building within the imperial palace for religious and philosophical discussion. Akbar's first four years (1575–9) in the 'Ibādat Khāna (House of Worship) were devoted to Islam. After 1579, however, disgusted by the petty wrangling of the various Islamic sects and increasingly interested in the other religions of the subcontinent, Akbar began to develop a new approach to the problem of cultural conflict. His new strategy, called 'ṣulḥ-i kull' or 'lasting reconciliation', was two-pronged. Towards the beliefs and practices of the non-Muslim members of his empire (both those who were Mughal officials and those who were not) Akbar demonstrated a deep curiosity and a lasting appreciation – to the extent, in some cases, of personally adopting certain doctrines and customs. The Muslims, on the other hand, while a minority in the subcontinent at large, were a significant majority of his officials and, because the Indian community, along with Muslims everywhere, had been greatly disturbed by the preaching of millennial extremists (the year 1000 of the Islamic era fell in 1592), Akbar felt the need to develop a more explicit, formal plan of action for them.

The Muslim half of Akbar's programme of 'lasting reconciliation' had three parts. First, in June of 1579 Akbar read the *khuṭba* (sermon) in the central mosque of Fathpur Sikri; second, in August of that same year the minister, Abū'l-Faḍl (Abū'l-Fazl), and his father, drew up a document granting Akbar the authority to settle questions of Islamic doctrine and practice in certain, clearly defined situations; finally, Akbar laid the foundations for a Sufi-like, imperial order, the Tawḥīd-i Illahī, with himself as master. Akbar intended these measures to bolster his authority in the eyes of his Muslim subjects.[5]

The Safavid Empire

The Safavid Empire in Iran (1501–1722) was founded by Shāh Ismā'īl (1501–24). Like his father and grandfather, Ismā'īl headed the Ṣafaviyya Sufi order and led a force of Turkish tribesmen who defeated the Aq Quyūnlū forces in 1501. After his victory, Ismā'īl proclaimed Shi'ism to be the state religion. The Twelver Shi'ism of Ismā'īl rejected the first three caliphs and honoured the twelve imams as the direct descendants of Muḥammad. Shaykh Ṣafī, according to his grandson, Ismā'īl, was a lineal descendant of the seventh imam. Ismā'īl believed himself to be a reincarnation of 'Alī and a manifestation of God himself. Both beliefs, elements of 'folk Islam', were heretical according to the religious orthodoxy of the day. The close ties between the Turkish tribesmen and the Ṣafaviyya Sufi order were based on the master–disciple (*murshid–murīd*) relationship between Ismā'īl on the one hand, and

the Turkman chiefs on the other. Shaykh Ḥaydar, Ismāʿīl's father, introduced the distinctive red turban that gave the Turkish tribesmen their name, Qizilbāsh (Redhead).[6]

Shāh Ṭahmāsp I, eldest son of Shāh Ismāʿīl, ascended the throne at age ten. His first twelve years in power (1524–36) witnessed a civil war between the Shāmlū and Ustājlū Qizilbāsh tribes. To impose order, Ṭahmāsp instituted a programme intended to control the tribes and re-establish imperial authority, a programme that was extended and brought to conclusion by ʿAbbās I. Like Ismāʿīl, Ṭahmāsp was considered religiously exalted, implicitly divine, by his Qizilbāsh followers and his efforts to spread Shiʿism were probably, in part at least, an effort to shore up his position in the uncertain political atmosphere of the day.

A prolonged period of instability (1576–90) followed the death of Ṭahmāsp. In the autumn of 1587 the sixteen-year-old ʿAbbās was put on the throne by his tutor, Murshid Qulī Khān. After establishing his independence from the *khān*, the young emperor undertook a radical reorganisation of the Safavid state. He increased the number of cavalrymen (*qūrchīs*) in his personal bodyguard to about 10,000–15,000. Loyal to the emperor rather than to their tribal chieftains, these men assumed many of the important offices of state. ʿAbbās also created a corps of household slaves (*ghulām-i khāṣṣa-i sharīfa*) composed of Armenian, Georgian and Circassian converts to Shiʿi Islam. Numbering 10,000–15,000 men under ʿAbbās, the *ghulām*s were even more dependent on the emperor than were the *qūrchī*s. Many *ghulām*s rose to high ranks and by the end of ʿAbbās's reign they, along with the *qūrchī*s, held most of the important imperial posts.

To pay for these political reforms, ʿAbbās instituted a series of economic changes intended to increase the income of the imperial household. First, he redistributed agricultural land from the domain of the tribal amirs (*mamālik*) to the domain of the imperial household (*khāṣṣa*), thereby giving him the money he needed to pay the new *qūrchī* and *ghulām* members of his bodyguard. At about the same time he began to make greater use of the Julfa Armenians as household merchants and personal envoys, mainly to market the silk from the province of Gīlān, which had been incorporated into the imperial household in 1592. To increase imperial income and to take advantage of the arrival of the European East India Companies (primarily the English and the Dutch), ʿAbbās established an imperial monopoly over the export of silk in 1619. He set a minimum price and tried to control its harvest and sale.[7]

ʿAbbās's attitude to religion seems to have been rather different from that of his predecessors. Perhaps because of the fourteen-year civil war that had preceded his enthronement and perhaps also because of the sheer passage of time, the young ruler did not receive the same veneration from his Qizilbāsh followers as had Ismāʿīl and Ṭahmāsp. Like his predecessors, however, he promoted Shiʿism. He expanded the Shiʿi mourning rituals,

both the Muḥarram ceremonies and the commemoration of 'Alī's martyr-dom, and oversaw the renovation and reconstruction of the shrine of Imām Riḍā (Riza) in Mashhad. In 1601 he made a pilgrimage on foot from Isfahan to Mashhad.[8]

The Mughal capital: Fathpur Sikri

In 1565, having achieved a measure of military dominance in north India, Akbar instructed his men to raze the old Afghan fort of Sikandar Lodi in Agra and to erect a new palace-fortress on the site. While the authorities differ on how long it took for the buildings to be completed, the emperor was in residence by 1569. This partly completed palace-fortress was not, however, to be the principal centre of rule for the young emperor. In 1571 the imperial architects laid the foundations for a new capital, Fathpur Sikri (Figure 8.1). The ostensible reason for the new capital, and the one mentioned in the contemporary sources, was the emperor's desire for an heir. None of his wives had been able to produce a son and so Akbar visited the shrine of the famous saint, Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī in Ajmir and asked for a son, vowing to walk on foot from Agra to Ajmir if his wish were granted. Mu'īn al-Dīn's descendant, Shaykh Salīm Chishtī, lived in a small compound in the nearby village of Sikri and when Akbar's Rajput wife became pregnant he sent her to Sikri. A son, the future emperor Jahāngīr, was born in 1569 and two others, Murād and Daniel, followed soon after.[9]

The palace complex in Fathpur Sikri sprawled over a high rocky ridge. Ten kilometres of stone walls enclosed an extensive area filled with schools, baths, mosques, caravanserais and the mansions of nobles and officials. Fathpur Sikri had nine gates, the three principal ones being the Agra gate to the north-east, the Ajmiri gate to the south-west, and the Delhi gate to the north. As time passed the new capital spilled beyond the city walls, and the area outside slowly filled with noble and imperial garden retreats. The literary sources suggest that the large congregational mosque was the first structure completed. Begun soon after the birth of Jahāngīr in 1569, it was finished in 1573–4. In 1569 Akbar also undertook the renovation of the nearby residence of Shaykh Salīm Chishtī, and in 1572 when the holy man died the emperor erected a magnificent marble mausoleum over his residence.[10]

The imperial complex boasted an outer public area that included a large audience hall, the 'Ibādat Khāna, and the record offices, treasuries and quarters for household workers and guards. In the secluded inner area stood a private audience hall and the palaces and gardens of the imperial family.[11] The imperial bazaar ran from the eastern gate of the palace-fortress to the Agra gate of the city. Begun some five years after the founding of the city, the bazaar was more than a kilometre long, and the shops on both sides of the road were roofed and two-storeyed. At the halfway point, where a road
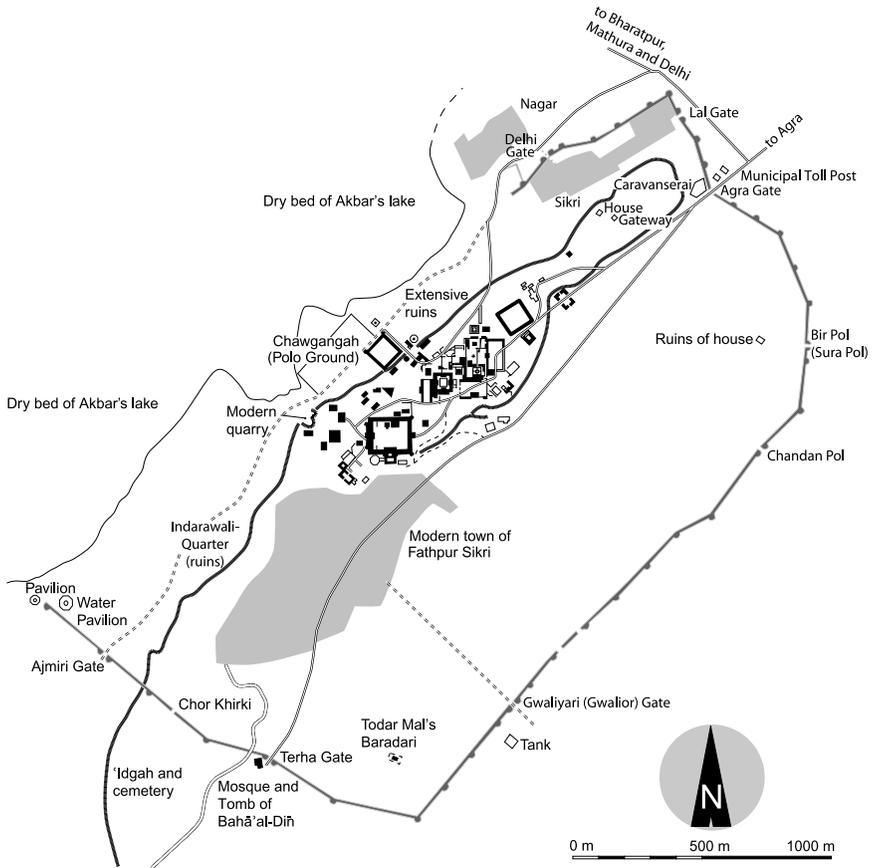
Figure 8.1 Plan of Fathpur Sikri. Drawing by Piet Collet after Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi and Vincent John Adams Flynn, *Fathpur-Sikri*, Bombay: Taraporevala, 1975, facing p. 8.

intersected the line of shops, the imperial workmen had erected a dome, converting the crossroads into a beautiful covered market.[12] The bazaar was 'filled with an astonishing quantity of every description of merchandise and with countless people, who are always standing there in dense crowds'.[13] In the *maydān* Akbar organised public spectacles and ceremonies: games of polo, receptions for ambassadors and celebrations of secular and religious holidays.

While the literary sources give gratitude (for a son) and devotion (to the shaykh) as the principal reasons for the creation of a new capital, a closer look at Akbar's decision reveals an equally important, if unstated, consideration. The site itself was radically unsuited to the establishment of a permanent capital city. Water, or rather the lack of it, was the principal

drawback. Sikri, the home of Shaykh Salīm Chishtī, had no natural, year-round water supply – no river, stream or spring – its only supply being a small tank or reservoir that was filled by the annual monsoon rains. One of Akbar's first projects, therefore, was to erect a great dam at one end of the old reservoir, creating a small lake 3 km by 0.75 km wide.[14] However, because of the exposed nature of the site and the enormous demands of the imperial court (people, animals, orchards and gardens), the water supply was precarious, depending on the vagaries of the monsoon and the emperor's schedule. For Akbar, however, the unstable nature of the site does not seem to have been a drawback. The reforms of the Fathpur Sikri period (1571–85) were radical and revolutionary, and the young emperor probably felt that he had a greater chance of success away from the established centres of political, economic and religious orthodoxy. A remote, temporary and intermittently compromised imperial centre may actually have been of great assistance during this controversial period of reform and transition.

That the new capital was intended to be a symbolic, impermanent monument to Akbar's new order can be seen by examining its history after 1585. In July of 1582, in the middle of Akbar's fortieth (solar) birthday celebration, the heavy monsoon rains caused the dam at the end of the lake to collapse. While the inhabitants and buildings of the imperial residence on the ridge were unharmed, many homes and shops in the lower city were destroyed and some merchants, artisans and soldiers were drowned.[15] Although the sources state that Akbar left Fathpur Sikri in 1585 to meet the Uzbek threat in the north-west, the damage to such a critical component of urban life must also have played a role. After 1585 Akbar visited the city only once (in 1601), and his successors returned only at infrequent and irregular intervals. Water seems to have remained the problem. In 1610, for example, an English traveller reported that the city was in ruins, 'a waste desart',[16] and in 1619 Jahāngīr wrote that the water in the reservoir was brackish and useless. A single well supplied the needs of the worshippers and attendants at Shaykh Salīm's tomb.[17]

The Safavid capital: Isfahan

Like Akbar, 'Abbās founded a new capital city (Figure 8.2). In the case of Isfahan there were also questions concerning the timing and motivation of the young emperor's decision. Until now, scholars have generally agreed that 'Abbās relocated the Safavid capital from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1597–8, some ten years after securing his throne. They have disagreed, however, on the reasons for his move. Some have put forward ecological considerations (the Zayanda Rūd and the Isfahan oasis); others geo-political (the central position of the new capital) or economic issues (proximity to the Persian Gulf and the ships of the European East India Companies); and still others political factors (distance from the tribal homelands of the Qizilbāsh).[18]
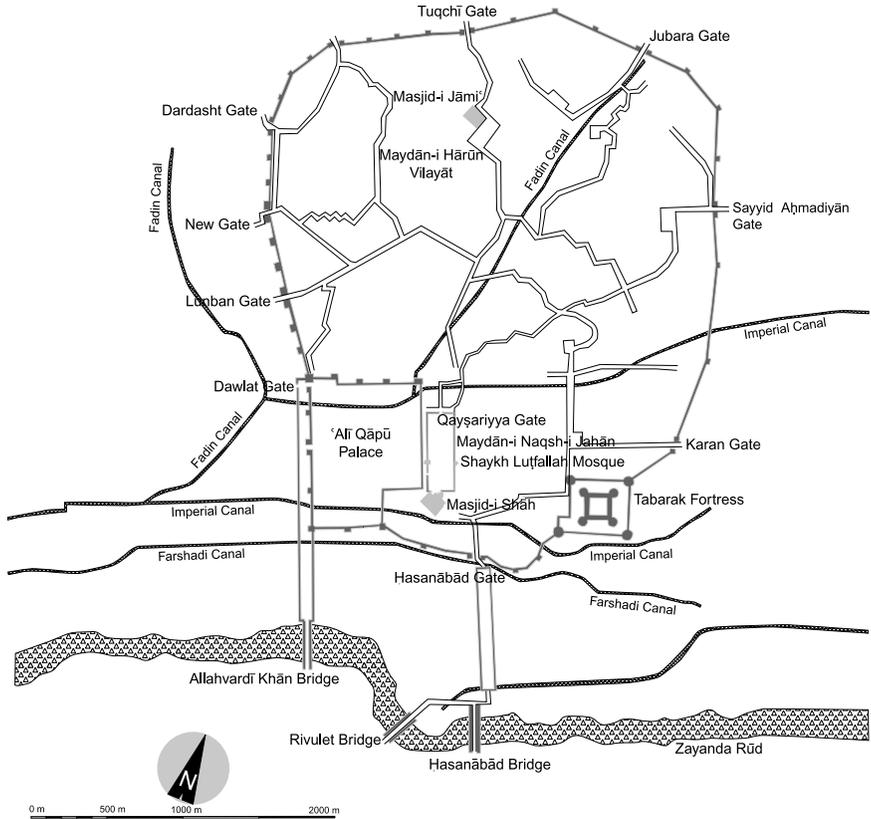
Figure 8.2 Plan of Isfahan. Drawing by Piet Collet after Blake, 'Shāh 'Abbās and the transfer of the Safavid capital from Qazvin to Isfahan', in Newman (ed.), *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East* (see note 19), p. 147.

Here, however, a different date and a different motivation are suggested. 'Abbās's transformation of Isfahan from a provincial centre into an imperial capital seems to have been a two-part process. In 1590 the emperor shifted his capital from Qazvin to the Maydān-i Hārūn Vilāyat, the centre of the old city of Isfahan. In 1602, however, he switched the location of his headquarters, building a new urban core centred on the brand new Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān. For 'Abbās, as for Akbar, an important motivation for both the initial move and the subsequent relocation was the creation of a new imperial order.

In December 1590 Shāh 'Abbās began work on the old *maydān*. He levelled and resanded the flat surface of the piazza; renovated the old bazaars, existing baths and standing caravanserais; and refurbished the palace and the

nearby Naqqār Khāna (Drum Pavilion). His only new building was the Qayṣariyya Bazaar, but it lacked a monumental gateway. 'Abbās's construction activities at this point reflected his uncertain prospects. In 1590, nineteen years old and only three years on the throne, the young emperor had just begun to reorganise his household, and it was unclear whether his efforts at state building would be successful. Reflecting this doubt, 'Abbās limited his construction activities primarily to renovation and repair.[19]

Between 1590 and 1602 the young emperor made a good deal of progress in his programme of political and economic reform. In early 1598 the Uzbek ruler 'Abd Allah II died and in the late autumn 'Abbās recaptured Herat and Mashhad. In 1602 the emperor began work on the Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān and the surrounding buildings. This construction, however, unlike his renovation of the old *maydān*, was entirely new. 'Abbās laid out a new public square in a largely undeveloped area of the city, and he and his men built brand-new structures on its perimeter: new bazaars, a new imperial palace, new mosques, new *madrasa*s, new caravanserais and the imposing new gateway of the Qayṣariyya Bazaar.

Why did Shāh 'Abbās shift his headquarters in Isfahan from the old *maydān*, the centre of the Saljuq city, to an undeveloped area to the southwest? One reason was the opposition of the economic and political elite. These men feared that 'Abbās would confiscate their property and undermine their power. Although the principal thrust of the emperor's reforms was to strengthen the imperial household in order to subdue the Qizilbāsh tribal chieftains and to defeat the Uzbeks and Ottomans, the urban notables grew nervous at the sight of the emperor's increasing might.

The other reason for laying out a new *maydān* and constructing the nucleus of an entirely new city was to symbolise the success of his state-building efforts. By 1602 it had become clear that 'Abbās would survive and that his reformed state, led by a rich and powerful imperial household, would prosper. Nevertheless, soon after founding the *maydān* and beginning construction on the Shaykh Luṭfallah Mosque and the Qayṣariyya Bazaar, 'Abbās left Isfahan for the north-west. Having reorganised the state and defeated the Uzbeks, it was time to take the field against the Ottomans. In a four-year campaign (1603–7) the emperor defeated the Turks and recaptured Tabriz, the most important city in north-western Iran.[20]

Entering the capital after the Ottoman campaign, 'Abbās returned to work on the new Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān. The long, western border of the piazza, also the outer wall of the imperial palace, was broken by the 'Alī Qāpū, the imposing palace gateway constructed between 1617 and 1624. Like the Mughal palace-fortress in Fathpur Sikri, 'Abbās's palace was divided into an outer, public area – audience halls, workshops, storerooms and apartments – and an inner, secluded area, the private quarters of the imperial family.

At the northern end of the *maydān* stood the Qayṣariyya Gateway (1617–18), the entrance to the long, winding imperial bazaar. In the first few years

after the founding of the new *maydān* in 1602 the imperial bazaar remained a skeleton, but over time shops, caravanserais, mosques, *madrasa*s and coffeehouses sprang up, so that by the reign of Shāh ʿAbbās II (1642–66) a man could ride from the gate of the city to the Qayṣariyya Gateway and down the imperial bazaar to the old *maydān* without exposing himself to sun or rain.

In 1611 Shāh ʿAbbās founded the Masjid-i Shāh at the southern end of the new *maydān*. The entry gateway (finished in 1616–17) was a great half-circle of marble covered with tiles. The central niche, a large marble tablet 10 feet tall and 3 feet wide, indicated the direction to Mecca. Above the niche the shāh's men had placed a gold-encrusted cupboard of aloe wood 1 metre tall and two-thirds of a metre wide. It held two relics: a Qurʾān, said to have been copied by Imām Riḍā, and the bloodstained robe of Imām Ḥusayn. Although it was never displayed, the robe was said to have magical powers. The Shaykh Luṭfallah Mosque on the eastern side of the piazza was begun in 1603–4. Although overshadowed by the later Masjid-i Shāh, this was also an impressive structure.

Conclusions

Following this brief discussion of the reigns of Akbar and ʿAbbās and the founding and layout of Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan, what can we say about architecture and institutions in seventeenth-century India and Iran? The first and most important point is that both rulers, though well removed from the founding fathers of their dynasties, began to impose an institutional framework on the chaotic states they had inherited. The earlier emperors, Bābur and Humāyūn in India and Ismāʿīl and Ṭahmāsp in Iran, led peripatetic, unsettled lives, in camp or on horseback, and were primarily concerned with subduing their subordinates and defeating their enemies. Unlike the capitals (or better the intermittently inhabited sites) of these men – Agra and Delhi, Tabriz and Qazvin – Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan were planned developments, architectural capstones of the newly restructured empires of their founders.

The imperial palaces erected by Akbar and ʿAbbās in Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan reflected the unfinished nature of institutional reform in Mughal India and Safavid Iran. The audience halls in these palaces, where imperial ceremonies and state festivals were held, were relatively unstructured and undifferentiated. For example, Akbar's palace in Fathpur Sikri contained both public and private audience halls, but the rooms themselves were neither divided nor stratified. On the other hand, by the time of Akbar's grandson, Shāh Jahān (1628–58), the *manṣabdārī* system had become fully developed, and the Hall of Public Audience in Shāh Jahān's new palace-fortress in Shāhjahānābād was divided into five carefully marked off areas that separated the participants in his daily assembly according to

rank and wealth.[21] In the early years of Shāh ʿAbbās's reign his palace on the new *maydān* was also unfinished. ʿAbbās and his household, returning after campaigns against the Uzbeks and Ottomans, often pitched tents within the palace precincts or camped out in the mansions of nearby nobles. In later years, however, with institutional reorganisation and military success, ʿAbbās and his successors erected separate audience halls for various celebrations and ceremonies within the palace walls. For both emperors, therefore, the informal and undifferentiated character of the imperial assembly halls reflected the incomplete refashioning of the military-administrative hierarchy.

Both Akbar and ʿAbbās had to deal with difficult (though different) problems of religious authority and legitimacy, and their solutions were reflected in the build and layout of their new capitals. For Akbar the problem was the religious and ethnic complexity of his empire. A conventional Muslim as a young man, Akbar was fascinated by the Sufi orders of his day, especially the Chishtiyya. In Fathpur Sikri the architectural expressions of Akbar's religious interests were, on the one hand, Shaykh Salīm Chishtī's mausoleum and the nearby congregational mosque and, on the other, the ʿIbādat Khāna (House of Worship). The mosque and mausoleum reflected the emperor's early piety and orthodoxy, while the House of Worship symbolised his curiosity and efforts to fashion a new cultural policy for the complex ethnic and religious environment of early modern India.

Shāh ʿAbbās, on the other hand, faced a rather different problem. By his time the quasi-divine status enjoyed by Ismāʿīl and Ṭahmāsp had begun to fade, and ʿAbbās, as a way of shoring up his religious authority, began to promote the spread of Shiʿism. In the new *maydān* this effort was symbolised by the two mosques. The dominant religious structure in the city, the Masjid-i Shāh or imperial congregational mosque, was dedicated to the Mahdī, the twelfth imam. The other smaller mosque, the Shaykh Luṭfallah Mosque, was named after a prominent member of the *ʿulamāʾ*, one of the leaders in ʿAbbās's campaign to spread the doctrines of Shiʿi Islam.

Economic reform was also critical to both state building programmes. While restructuring the land revenue system and centralising revenues in the imperial household were important for both emperors, the differences in the size and wealth of the two empires made Akbar's and ʿAbbās's programmes rather different. The Mughal Empire was large and extraordinarily rich: a fertile agrarian economy, sustained by two major river systems and an annual monsoon, supported a population of about 150 million people, and a sophisticated textile industry shipped cotton goods around the world. The Safavid Empire, on the other hand, was smaller and poorer. While early modern Iran covered a fairly large area, the land was high and dry and its agrarian potential limited. As a result, ʿAbbās probably ruled no more than eight to ten million people, and his revenues were probably no more than 15–20 per cent of Akbar's.[22]

These differences were reflected in the bazaar systems of the two capitals. Fathpur Sikri, although a new city on an almost virgin site, had from its earliest days a large and rich imperial bazaar, experienced merchants and artisans quickly responding to the new economic opportunities. The commercial and financial sectors of Isfahan, on the other hand, were comparatively less developed and, as a result, 'Abbās and the imperial household played a much larger role. The Qayṣariyya Gateway, one of the four great structures on the new *maydān*, symbolised the importance of the imperial household in the urban economy, its presence foretelling 'Abbās's establishment of a monopoly on the export of silk, early modern Iran's most valuable export.

Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan also served important legitimating functions. For both emperors the uncluttered, imposing order of the new cityscape proclaimed the new military-administrative, economic and religious arrangements of which they were the most visible embodiment. The new capitals stood forth as magnificent symbols of their young founders' ambition: a new capital for a new state.

Notes

1 For an introduction see John F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Mughal Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
2 Richards, *Mughal Empire*, pp. 29–93; A. L. Srivastava, *Akbar the Great*, 2 vols. Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwala and Company, 1962, vol. 1, pp. 188–9; vol. 2, pp. 217–21.
3 Richards, *Mughal Empire*, pp. 58–78; Srivastava, *Akbar*, vol. 1, p. 178; vol. 2, pp. 28–40, 113, 284–5.
4 Richards, *Mughal Empire*, pp. 79–93.
5 For the full argument see Stephen P. Blake, 'Akbar's new order: managing cultural pluralism in Mughal India', in Ted Farmer and Elizabeth Manke (eds), *Inscribing Empire*. Minneapolis, MN: Center for Early Modern History, forthcoming.
6 H. Roemer, 'The Safavid period', in Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (eds), *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, vol. 6. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 190–3; Andrew Newman, 'The myth of the clerical migration to Safavid Iran', *Die Welt des Islams* 33, 1993, 66–112; A. H. Morton, 'The early years of Shah Isma'il in the *Afzal al-tavārīkh* and elsewhere', in Charles Melville (ed.), *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1996, 27–51.
7 Edmund Herzig, 'The rise of the Julfa merchants in the late sixteenth century', in Melville (ed.), *Safavid Persia*, 305–22; Willem Floor, 'The Dutch and the Persian silk trade', in Melville (ed.), *Safavid Persia*, 323–68.
8 Jean Calmard, 'Shi'i rituals and power II: the consolidation of Safavid Shi'ism: folklore and popular religion', in Melville (ed.), *Safavid Persia*, 139–90.
9 For a discussion see Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry (eds), *Fathpur Sikri*. Bombay: Marg Publications, 1987.
10 Brand and Lowry (eds), *Fathpur Sikri*, pp. 1–5, 34–7, 54–5, 67.
11 Brand and Lowry (eds), *Fathpur Sikri*, pp. 33–7.
12 K. K. Muhammed, 'Bazars in Mughal India – an essay in architectural study and interpretation', *Islamic Culture* 63, 1989, 60–76.

13 *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, SJ, on His Journey to the Court of Akbar (1580–81)*, trans. J. S. Hoyland and S. N. Banerjee. London: Oxford University Press, 1922, p. 31.
14 *Commentary of Father Monserrate*, pp. 31–2.
15 Abu al-Fazl, *The Akbar Nama*, 3 vols, trans. H. Beveridge. Calcutta: Bibliotheca India, 1869–1902; reprint, Delhi: Rare Books, 1972, vol. 3, pp. 579–81.
16 Brand and Lowry (eds), *Fathpur Sikri*, p. 46.
17 *The Tuzuk-i Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir*, 2 vols, trans. Alexander Rogers, Henry Beveridge (ed.). New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968, vol. 2, p. 69.
18 Stephen P. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan*. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1999, p. 15.
19 For a fuller argument see Stephen Blake, 'Shāh 'Abbās and the transfer of the Safavid capital from Qazvin to Isfahan', in Andrew Newman (ed.), *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*. Leiden: Brill, 2003, 145–64.
20 Blake, 'Shāh Abbās', pp. 149–64.
21 Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639–1739*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 91.
22 Blake, *Half the World*, p. 5.

Part III

THE IMPACT OF RELIGION
ON URBAN LIFE

THE WATER SUPPLY OF TINNĪS

Public amenities and private investments

Alison L. Gascoigne

Introduction

The archaeological site of Tell Tinnīs is located on an island in Lake Manzala in the Nile delta of Egypt, some 8 km south-west of the modern city of Port Said (Figure 9.1). It is a large site, having an intramural area of about 93 hectares, and was clearly a great and wealthy city during the height of its prosperity around the ninth to the eleventh centuries. The situation of Tinnīs, on an island entirely surrounded by brackish, non-potable lake water, meant that the city faced a considerable challenge in acquiring and storing enough fresh water to support the needs and activities of its inhabitants. In this chapter I aim to examine the historical and archaeological evidence for water provision to Tinnīs during this period, with particular reference to the changing social organisation of access to water resources in the city and in the light of the position of Islam on the provision of water.

Many of the written sources concerning the town state that the area now beneath Lake Manzala was originally dry land, and that the town's hinterland was inundated as a result of a large earthquake, flood or tidal wave. John Cassian, who provides our earliest mention of Tinnīs (under its Coptic name ϫⲉⲛⲛⲉⲥⲟⲥ), visited the town in the late fourth century AD, some fifteen years after the great earthquake of 365.[1] In his *Conferences*, he attributes Tinnīs's island location to flooding after an earthquake, which transformed a formerly rich agricultural hinterland into salt marshes.[2] A similar history is recorded by later writers. Ibn Bassām al-Tinnīsī, writing during the eleventh or twelfth century, states that the land was flooded after an inrush of sea water from the al-Ushtūm Nile mouth either 100 or 350 years before Islam; he associates Tinnīs with the story concerning two brothers and their fertile gardens that were overwhelmed and ruined by a great flood (as told in the eighteenth *sūra* of the Qur'ān, 'The Cave').[3] Al-Masʿūdī, who died at Fusṭāṭ in 957, goes as far as to write that prior to the flooding of the area in year 251 of the era of martyrs (AD 534), it was possible to walk from al-ʿArīsh in
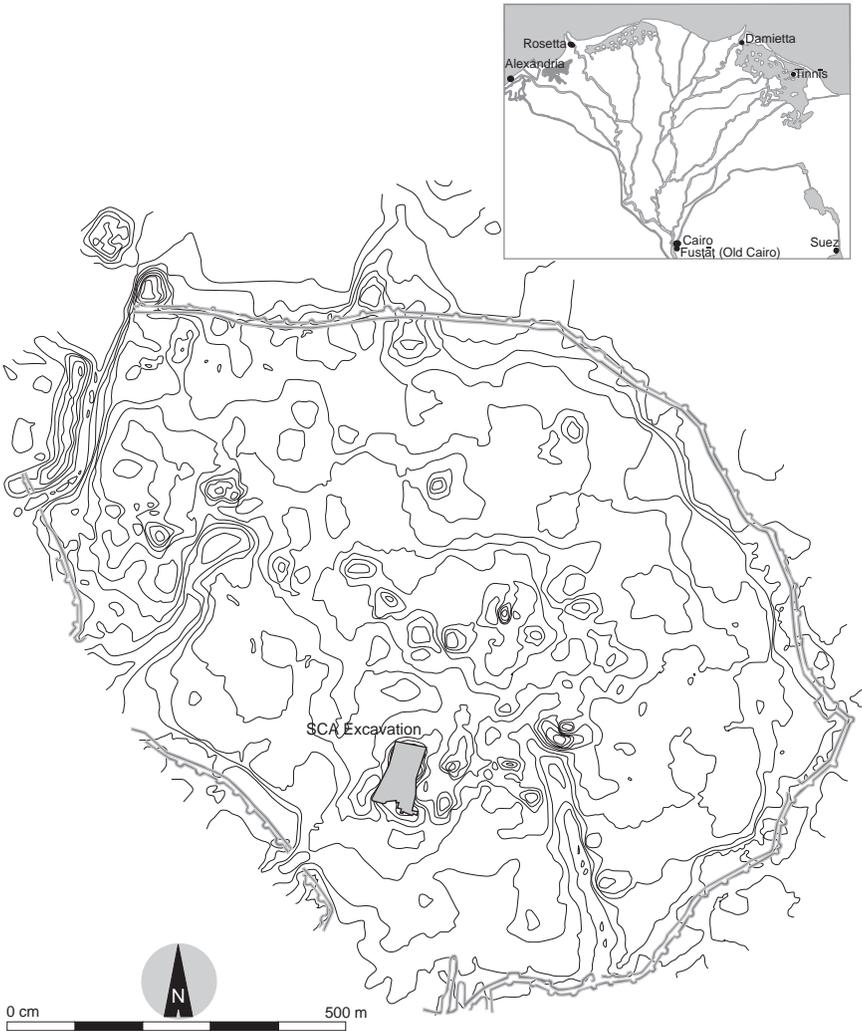
Figure 9.1 Map of Tell Tinnīs, and its location in the Nile delta. Drawing by Piet
Collet after a survey by Helen Fenwick.

north Sinai to Cyprus on dry land and that the area was second only to the
Fayyūm oasis in terms of the fertility of its agricultural lands.[4] This is clearly
impossible, and it seems likely that all these accounts are in fact mytholo-
gical. The existence of extensive and productive agricultural areas so close
to the sea is hard to reconcile with the nature of deltas, which always have
a fringe of brackish coastal lagoons around their outer reaches. Strabo, who

162

predates all the above accounts (he lived between *c*.63 BC and *c*.AD 21), noted the existence of large and contiguous lakes between the Tanitic and Pelusiac Nile branches, where modern Lake Manzala now lies.[5] It is thus hard to imagine that Tinnīs was ever anything but an island city.

It is difficult to understand why a large and wealthy industrial settlement like Tinnīs should have grown up in such an inconvenient location. During the medieval period, the town was famed as a production centre for textiles, including inscribed *ṭirāz* cloth and other high-status and expensive materials.[6] It has been suggested that humid air and damp conditions are conducive to aspects of textile manufacture, including the weaving of a strong and even thread.[7] One could infer from this that the town was from its beginnings a settlement of weavers and textile workers who deliberately chose to occupy the island for the sake of their work. However, the textile industry on Tinnīs is not explicitly attested in written sources prior to the ninth century. Furthermore, it is significant that our earliest source for the existence of the town, John Cassian, notes maritime trade as the *raison d'être* of Tinnīs, rather than textile production, and it is likely that this latter industry was a secondary development, in the early Islamic, or perhaps the late Roman, period. Parallels exist for trading centres located in places with tenuous water supplies, one such being the island of Dahlak Kabīr off the coast of Eritrea, which was equipped with over a hundred rock-cut cisterns and channels for the collection and storage of rainwater.[8] The apparently rapid growth of Tinnīs during the early Islamic period must have put a significant strain on its facilities for water provision, but the increasing prosperity of the settlement clearly made the inconvenient location worthwhile.

The town's requirement for fresh water must have been considerable, drinking water for the population being certainly the most pressing need. Various figures are recorded by historians for the population of Tinnīs, and, although the reliability of such information is always open to question, consideration of these figures does provide an idea of the size of the problem. Al-Mas'ūdī's account of the Arab siege of Tinnīs, during the conquest of Egypt in AD 642, states that an army of 20,000 men came from the town to fight the Muslim invaders.[9] Ecclesiastical sources relate that more than 30,000 Christians welcomed the Patriarch Dionysias of Antioch to Tinnīs, probably in the later 820s, while Nāṣir-i Khusraw, visiting Tinnīs in 1048, estimated the population to be 50,000.[10] Ibn Bassām, an inhabitant and government official of Tinnīs, also gives a figure of 50,000, based on his calculation of the bread ration for the town's occupants; of these, he writes that 10,000 were weavers (not including those who worked in other branches of the textile industry).[11] Lev doubts the possibility of a population as high as 50,000, and a comparison with modern densities of occupation is interesting, if ambiguous.[12] The total archaeological area of Tinnīs is roughly a square kilometre, and 50,000 occupants gives a population density about 1.6 times that of densely settled modern cities such as Mumbai, Dhaka and

Hong Kong, but a third less than that of the Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza strip.[13] Whatever the real figure, the population was clearly high for a town with no regular water supply. In addition to drinking water for the inhabitants, the town needed to provide drinking water for those coming in from sea voyages. Fresh water would also have been required for ritual ablutions in the town's mosques, of which there were 233, according to Ibn Bassām, after the conversion into mosques of the town's seventy-two churches by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim in AH 403 (AD 1012–13).[14] Tinnīs's thirty-six public baths (and presumably an unknown number of private ones) were supplied with water by the same lifting mechanisms as the town's primary storage facilities; the baths thus must have used fresh water, rather than brackish, and in considerable quantities. Some of the industries of Tinnīs, including textile manufacture, metalwork, glass-making and oil, lime and salt production, must also have needed fresh water. The preparation of flax, for example, requires fibres to be soaked prior to combing, and the dyeing of cloth also requires water; it seems unlikely that all these processes could have been successfully completed using only salt water.

The water supply: historical sources

Given that fresh water was not easily available to the inhabitants of medieval Tinnīs, we must look at the systems employed by the town to meet that need. Historical evidence for the water supply of Tinnīs can be found in the accounts of medieval authors, such as Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Ibn Bassām, Yāqūt and al-Maqrīzī.[15] As with so many aspects of life in pre-modern Egypt, the provision of water to Tinnīs relied on the annual flooding of the river Nile, as a result of which the brackish waters of Lake Manzala were inundated with fresh water, becoming sufficiently diluted as to be drinkable. Although there could be a great deal of variation in flood heights and timings from year to year, on average the water level rose around mid-July, peaking in mid-September before gradually dropping. During this period (for about two months, if Ibn Bassām is to be believed), channels from the lake were opened and water was allowed to run into cisterns and water installations in the town. This fresh water was then stored for the remainder of the year to serve the needs of the inhabitants. Apart from the Nile flood, the only source of fresh water would have been from rainfall, currently minimal at under 100 mm per year.[16] Abū'l-Makārim records that additional water was brought on boats, the trip taking a day and a night. As an alternative means of supply, this must have been expensive and impractical on a large scale, and we must conclude that this was for emergencies only.[17] The chronicle of Michael the Syrian, however, appears to indicate that shipping water from the mainland was standard practice prior to the construction of cisterns from the ninth century onwards; he quotes the complaints of the inhabitants made to the Patriarch Dionysias in c.815, that 'our town is encompassed by

water. . . . Our drinking water comes from afar and costs us four dirhams a pitcher.'[18] The construction of al-Jarawī's water-storage structures (see below) must have been already under way by the time of the Patriarch's visit, and the construction of cisterns generally must have facilitated expansion of the population and the local economy.

Ibn Bassām records details of four groups of water-storage structures, making a distinction between installations (*maṣāniʿ*) and cisterns (*jibāb*).[19] He specifically mentions:

1   Two great open-air installations attributed to ʿUmar b. Ḥafṣ, the westernmost comprising twenty-one *bayt*[an], the easternmost eighteen *bayt*[an]. This description presumably indicates uncovered tanks. It is not clear what the 'houses' referred to here might represent: possibly individual cisterns or private dwellings supplied with water, but in this context the term could be understood almost as a unit of measurement. The identity of ʿUmar b. Ḥafṣ has not been established.[20]

2   A roofed installation in the centre of the town built by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Wazīr al-Jarawī, who controlled the town during the dispute between the ʿAbbasid caliphs al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn in the early ninth century. According to Ibn Bassām, al-Jarawī's installation was filled by a water-wheel (*dūlāb*) holding sixty pots (*qādūs*[an]), over a period of two entire months by day and night, the wheel turning 1,000 times each 24-hour period. The capacity of the installation is given as three billion six hundred jars-worth (*jarra*) of water, though in fact it should be three million six hundred if the initial figures are correct.[21] The presence of a waterwheel to fill this installation is of interest: in his general description of the town, Ibn Bassām notes the existence of further such mechanisms, which were presumably animal-powered, on all sides of the town except the north. The term used for the waterwheel, *dūlāb*, may be of Persian origin and contrasts with the more commonly used Egyptian term, *sāqiya*.[22]

3   Ibn Bassām's interest in and detailed account of the capacity of al-Jarawī's installation may perhaps be explained by the fact that he himself was apparently the owner of a water installation. Ibn Bassām occupied the position of *muḥtasib* in Tinnīs, a public office introduced by the Ayyubid dynasty from Syria for the inspection of markets and the upholding of public morality. Whether his ownership of a water installation was linked with his holding of this office is not clear. Given that the *muḥtasib* was apparently a position of low social status, it perhaps seems more likely to represent private enterprise.[23]

4   Three installations built by Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn during his visit to Tinnīs in 882 and thereafter known as *al-Amīrī*. The locations of two of the three are recorded: one was in the *ziyāda* of the congregational mosque, while the other was in the *sūq*. The former must thus have been intended primarily for the provision of water for ritual cleansing, while the latter

served a more pragmatic function, addressing the multiple needs of those working in the crowded main market area.

It is not clear whether Ibn Bassām was listing all major existing installations and storage structures or merely those that were large or connected with a notable individual (in which category he, of course, included himself).

How should we visualise these 'installations'? Considering Ibn Bassām's account of the 'houses' of the facility of 'Umar b. Ḥafṣ, some at least must have comprised complexes of multiple structures. In contrast, Nāṣir-i Khusraw remarks that 'large, reinforced, underground cisterns called *maṣna'a*s have been constructed', the implication being that installations were synonymous with individual tanks.[24] It is interesting in the light of these, and other, ambiguities to compare the surviving written descriptions of the water system with the archaeological remains on the ground.

The water supply: archaeological evidence

The archaeological remains on the island of Tinnīs primarily comprise featureless mounds of fired brick, pottery and silt, damp and topped with a thick salt crust. There are no modern structures in the archaeological area, though illicit digging for reusable and saleable material by local inhabitants has clearly been a significant feature of the post-abandonment development of the site. Little archaeological attention has been paid to Tinnīs until recently. Napoleonic surveyors visited the island and described the antiquities in the late eighteenth century, mapping the visible fortifications. In 1910, a number of cisterns were excavated and planned by the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* under the supervision of architect Achille Patricolo. The only other record of archaeological work on the island is a rather enigmatic reference in an article by Henri Munier to what were apparently fairly extensive excavations directed by an unidentified individual around 1912, no traces of which now remain, and of which the local archaeological representatives have no record or memory.[25] More recently, local representatives of the Egyptian Supreme Council for Antiquities (SCA) have carried out excavation in a number of locations, clearing areas of some size. This work commenced in 1978 and continued between 1992 and 1998; the most recent season took place in 2003. Such unstratified excavations are normally discouraged by archaeologists, but in the case of Tinnīs the area of the site is so great, and the number of identifiable surface features so minimal, that the largest of the cleared areas provides an unparalleled opportunity to examine the architectural remains in detail. The dominating feature of the excavated area is the water system, the preservation of which is largely due to its situation below the medieval ground level. In an area some 40 by 100 m, seventeen cisterns and associated tanks and channels have been uncovered.

A season of fieldwork at Tinnīs was undertaken in April 2004, during which attempts were made to record the archaeological material uncovered by the SCA in a scientific manner. As part of this, an architectural survey of the standing remains of the cisterns was undertaken by Nicholas Warner; many of the observations and insights into the physical remains of the water supply at Tinnīs included here are his.[26] Two basic phases of cistern construction were identified (Figure 9.2). The earlier phase was dated, on the basis of ceramic evidence from sections left *in situ* by the SCA excavators, to the ninth century, which would make the cisterns broadly contemporary with the endowments of al-Jarawī and Ibn Ṭūlūn. The date of the later phase of cistern building is less firmly established, owing to their higher datum: there are almost no surviving deposits to provide evidence with which to establish a chronology. For the same reason, the nature of their connections to the main distribution system is often unclear. An estimated date around the eleventh century might not be too far out for this second phase.

To what extent were these surviving cisterns designed and constructed as a unified system indicative of urban planning and centralised control of town expansion and development? All the cisterns, both the earlier and the later types, have the same orientation, broadly north–south. However, this may be as much dictated by the practical considerations of connecting various parts of the system, both internally and in the context of the street layout above, as by any overall building scheme. To clarify this issue, we must examine more closely the relationships between individual structures within each phase.

Looking first at the early-type cisterns, it can be seen that they vary greatly in size and capacity. In order to establish the layout of the system, and the nature of the buildings to which water was provided, it would be useful to examine the character of the cistern superstructures. Unfortunately, during excavation, deposits were cleared very carefully from around the edges of many of the cisterns, removing much of the relevant evidence. Only for the great cistern and cistern M, and to a lesser extent cistern B, can the nature of the complex they were designed to serve be in any way elucidated; in these cases the superstructures appear to have been significant public buildings of some kind.

The structure overlying the great cistern has been almost entirely destroyed, but traces of a marble pavement over the roof of the cistern were noted, indicating that it was originally the floor of what was probably a high-status interior courtyard, such as the *ṣaḥn* of a congregational mosque. The alignment of the paving slabs, preserved as imprints in a thick layer of gypsum plaster, is slightly different from that of the cistern, perhaps to conform to the imperatives of a *qibla* orientation. The *qibla* of the Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn in Cairo is unusually oriented towards the south (although the orientation of the slabs roofing the great cistern has not yet been exactly calculated, it is close to this) and Ibn Bassām states that one of Ibn Ṭūlūn's water

TELL TINNĪS
PLAN OF CISTERNS

Earlier phase indicated in black

E

F

D

G

C

B

A

THE GREAT
CISTERN

H

I

M

J

K

P

L

O

N

0   10   20 m
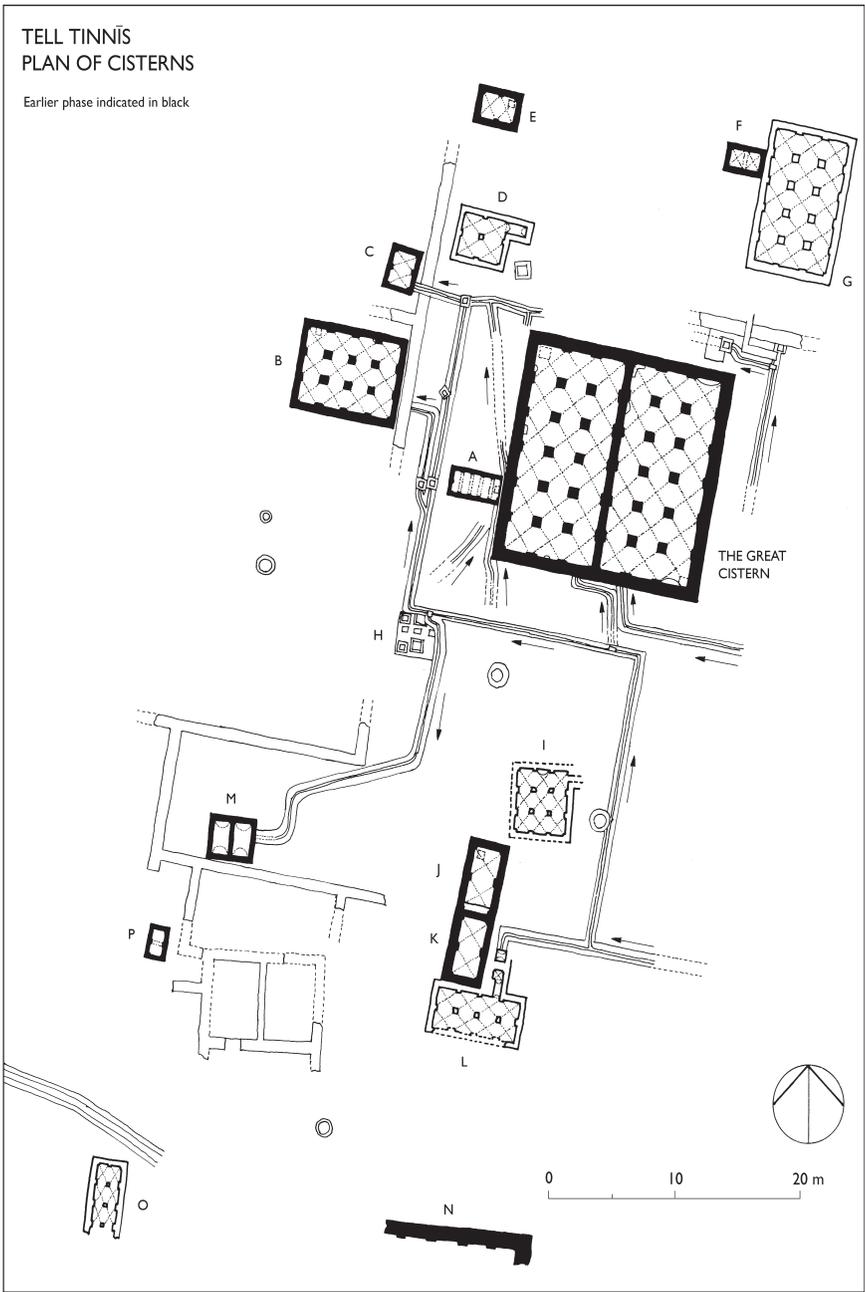
Figure 9.2 Plan of the cisterns in the largest SCA-excavated area of Tinnīs, showing earlier and later types and connecting channels. Drawing by Nicholas Warner.

168

installations was constructed in the *ziyāda* of the mosque. The remains of a marble-lined basin also survive next to the access shaft in the south-east corner of the cistern roof. As noted above, the provision of fresh water is necessary for Islamic ritual, and the combination of mosque courtyard with underground cistern is paralleled in, for example, the White Mosque of Ramla. Whatever the exact nature of the building over the great cistern, it thus seems certain that this large tank was designed to serve an official, public, need.

The nature of the building to which cistern M was connected is less clear. This small double tank was built into the 80 cm thick wall of a large building, of which it formed an integral part; the surviving rooms of the complex cover an area of some 18 by 16 m. The main structure is of fired brick reinforced with squared beams, the walls are in some places plastered with white lime and there are areas of stone and brick herringbone-patterned flooring preserved. The size of the building, in addition to the quality of the construction, mark it out from among the surrounding architectural remains. During the excavation of this complex, fibres, tools and other artefacts associated with the weaving industry were apparently uncovered;[27] the complex may thus be a textile workshop of some sort, and the cistern designed to serve the needs of those involved in the manufacturing process. Since the textile industry was, with the exception of *ṭirāz* factories owned privately by the caliph or sultan, a government monopoly, heavily regulated for taxation purposes, such workshops would have been municipal installations.[28]

No contemporary superstructure is preserved over cistern B; instead, the ruins of a later house overlie it. Fragments of a marble *stela*, engraved in kufic script with the name of the warlord or local governor ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Wazīr al-Jarawī and now on display in the Port Said National Museum, were recovered by the SCA from the rubble overlying one edge of the cistern; however, the stratigraphic relationship between this artefact and the architectural remains was not recorded. Although not *in situ*, the *stela* might nonetheless be regarded as circumstantial evidence in support of Ibn Bassām's account of the foundation of water installations by al-Jarawī, again perhaps suggesting a municipal origin for the early group of cisterns.

Another structure of considerable relevance to our understanding of the water supply is cistern H. This distinctive tank occupies a central position in the network; a large channel runs into it, while others carry water from it to other cisterns, notably M, A, B and perhaps C. Cistern H is at a lower datum than the other early-type cisterns, and is furnished with no fewer than three settling tanks and three separate access shafts. Its function might have related to water purification and/or measuring for centralised distribution. The unusual form of cistern H and its location within the network raises various points of significance. It is notable that the water flowing into the great cistern did not first pass through cistern H, so whatever the function of the latter structure, it did not affect the water stored in the largest

tank in the excavated area. Might structures such as cistern H have been at the centre of an 'installation' as described in the written sources? The presence of this central tank, feeding into individual, disparate cisterns, would again seem to support the theory that at this stage the system was at least to a certain extent under some form of unified control.

Admittedly, the above evidence for the public nature of the early-type cisterns is scanty. However, it is clear that some of the system, most notably the main feeder channels and possibly also installations like cistern H, must have been municipally maintained.[29] The town's primary fresh water inlets were located on the south side of the island in order to catch the waters of the Nile flood that flowed into the lake via the Tanitic Nile branch from the south-west. A large canal, preserved as a low-lying topographical feature running into the town from the south, was initially thought likely to be the location of the main water-intake channels. However, on consideration it seems unlikely that drinking water should be drawn from waterways apparently also associated with shipping and industry. During the survey of the site, two short and enigmatic parallel channels slightly to the west of the south canal were noted and planned. Their location conforms closely to the inlet channels depicted on the map of Tinnīs included in the thirteenth-century manuscript, probably copied from an eleventh-century original, known as the *Book of Curiosities*.[30] A narrow east–west trench cleared across the west side of the westernmost inlet revealed a wide retaining wall of fired brick with narrow, in-built channels running out from the inlet; this situation would seem to confirm that these features were associated with water uptake.

This, then, is a brief summary of the early-type cisterns, and demonstrates that by the end of the ninth century the water distribution system of Tinnīs was already very sophisticated. Although, as mentioned above, the later cisterns are less well preserved and much more difficult to place in context within the overall system, some contrasts with the earlier structures are evident. While the earlier cisterns vary in size from the 16 m^2 of the great cistern to the 3.5 m^2 of cistern F, the later ones are much more uniform in size. The tanks of the second phase were apparently incorporated to some extent into the pre-existing network of cisterns and channels, a fact that might explain their common L-shaped construction. In certain cases, the addition of larger cisterns in places where small examples of the early-type cisterns already existed seems to indicate an extension of the storage facility in those places. The structures of the later phase were thus apparently built to a different pattern from those of the earlier phase; it is likely that they served a different set of requirements, or that their design was governed by different factors.

Public systems, controlled by a single administering body, would have need of large storage cisterns with secondary small cisterns tied to individual institutions; these small tanks would store only the amount of water required

locally, thus avoiding unnecessary movement or waste of water. In a private system, such small tanks would be less economically viable, while large ones would require too much land, in addition to incurring considerable maintenance costs. (The great cistern shows signs of significant structural repair by means of internal buttressing piers, and is also bisected by an interior wall, presumably for reasons of practicality.) One way of understanding the comparative uniformity of the second-phase cisterns might be as storage facilities linked to individual dwellings or households. This was apparently the situation in colonial Tangiers, where houses were built over cisterns designed to store rainwater collected as run-off from the roofs.[31] (The Tinnīs cisterns show no evidence for vertical inlets, probably unsurprising in the light of the minimal local rainfall, although none of the later cisterns have roofs preserved.) The layout of the later group of cisterns might thus conceivably reflect the plots of individual houses or buildings above more than does the layout of the earlier ones.

Islamic law and private ownership of water

The earliest historically attested water installations at Tinnīs, those constructed by al-Jarawī and Ibn Ṭūlūn in the ninth century, were clearly publically endowed. Al-Jarawī's installation might perhaps have been connected with the need to provide infrastructure for the large military force that occupied the town during his period of control.[32] The implication of Ibn Bassām's description of them is that these facilities were still functioning around the twelfth century when he was writing, and presumably they continued to address the need for public access to free water that would have remained an issue throughout the town's history. Nāṣir-i Khusraw commented on the existence of certain endowed installations from which water was distributed to foreigners; it is perhaps significant that this publicly accessible group was by then enough of an exception to make it worth singling out for special note. A letter from a Tunisian merchant, preserved in the Geniza archive and probably dating to the eleventh century, contains a rather bitter remark about the lack of facilities for visitors in Tinnīs; clearly at this time the town had something of an inhospitable reputation.[33] On the other hand, Ibn Bassām's ownership of an installation, and Nāṣir-i Khusraw's explicit statement that anyone with an excess of water would sell it to others, provide evidence for private control of water resources at this later period, around the eleventh to twelfth century. The differences in the nature of the cisterns, not in terms of their construction but concerning their situation within the network and their changing sizes and forms, might arguably confirm that the process by which cisterns were added into the water system in later times differed from the initial design and layout of cisterns in the ninth century. Overall, the combination of historical and archaeological evidence would thus suggest that the water system of Tinnīs

was broadly under municipal control during the ninth century, but that this situation was not maintained throughout the town's history, with control of water resources increasingly held by private individuals.

The position of Islamic law on the subject of water ownership was laid out by jurists between the eighth and tenth centuries, and is by no means straightforward.[34] Access to water is regarded as a basic right, and water in principle cannot thus be owned as a commodity; however, in certain situations, where water is limited, rules have to be applied to regulate the supply. In brief, a distinction is made between water from various types of source: water from large rivers or springs cannot be owned and should be freely available to all comers; however, a spring or canal belongs to the owner of the land on which it is situated and they will thus have prior access to its water, along with limited obligations to other potential users. Water may also be owned in cases where it has been appropriated and stored in some way, although this creates legal tensions concerning the point of appropriation. On the basis on these categories, Powers defines three legal statuses that can be applied to water:

> (1) Naturally occurring water is essentially 'ownerless' and is therefore the property of all human beings. Such water is appropriated among users on a first-come, first-served basis. (2) Alternatively, water may be the subject of a usufruct (*manfaʻa*) obtainable by holders according to certain specified criteria. Usufructory rights apply to water sources that are inadequate to meet the needs of all competing users (including wells and natural springs) and therefore must be granted according to specific criteria. (3) Finally, water may be the property (*milk*) of a possessor, for example, someone who appropriates water by placing it in a canal, irrigation channel, or container.[35]

Furthermore, that a charge could be made for the service of providing water is long established by the existence of, for example, the guild of watercarriers (*saqqāʼūn*), who sold water under the supervision of the *muḥtasib* to private households in medieval Cairo.[36] Into this category may also fall the water brought from the mainland and sold in Tinnīs for four dirhams a pitcher, as noted above; the charge would be as much for the inconvenience and expense of transportation as for the water itself. In some cases, the price of water brought into towns and sold could vary seasonally; since the weight remained constant throughout the year, the change in cost must have related to availability, and so either to the intrinsic value of the water itself or possibly to the distance from which it had to be brought, and thus the service of providing it.[37]

Regarding the water supply of Tinnīs, then, it would appear that the fresh flow of water into Lake Manzala during the flood season represents an

example of water with the first legal status, plentiful and available to all. During these two months, any of the population of Tinnīs would have had the right to fill their cisterns freely, although whether they were liable for charges or restrictions associated with the use of public waterwheels and maintenance of primary supply channels is not clear. However, once stored in a cistern, Tinnīs's fresh water could become the private property of the cistern-owner and thus could be sold by them for a profit if they wished. Only in times of serious shortage, one imagines, when there was danger of suffering and health problems among the general populace, would any requirement be made upon those with private supplies to distribute water freely, and even then this obligation was presumably met to a certain extent by the large endowed installations, the equivalent perhaps of Cairo's numerous surviving public fountains (*asbila*), themselves fed by the cisterns over which they were built.

To what extent would such Islamic legal positions have held sway in this city, where various historical sources record that many, perhaps a majority, of at least those inhabitants working in the textile industry were Coptic Christians rather than Muslims?[38] The early cisterns appear to have been founded by Muslim rulers, at least to some extent specifically for Muslim townspeople such as soldiers and mosque-goers. It seems unlikely that any aspect of the town as fundamental to its prosperity as the primary water supply would have been in any significant way under the control of any single body except the main governing authority, which must have operated under a Muslim legal code. Privately owned installations, however, could presumably in theory have belonged to members of any religious community, and, if we accept the theory that the second-phase cisterns could have been linked to individual house plots, then presumably a reasonable proportion of them must have been connected to the property of notable Christian and perhaps Jewish families.[39] Such owners of water would, one assumes, comply with Islamic water law only in so far as members of any society will conform to imposed rules, rather than through any personal religious conviction. It seems highly unlikely, though, that this would have made any difference to the way in which their water was treated in real terms.

The development of the water supply of Tinnīs can thus be regarded as taking place very firmly within the context of Islamic social transformation. The transition from central control of resources to increasing private control is a pattern that can be seen more generally in the medieval Middle East; for example, in economic developments such as tax farming, the increasing reliance upon individuals such as merchants in the financial administration of the country, and the politics of revenue assignment. Ultimately, these trends, with the evolution of the *iqṭāʿ* system from around the tenth century, led to the rise of powerful households and the concentration in them of political and economic power; it is interesting to note as an aside that such power was often publically asserted through the foundation

of charitable institutions involving water distribution.[40] The cisterns of Tinnīs, then, can be regarded as representative of a more general trend from the public to the private in medieval Islamic society.

Notes

1 A summary of the extensive source material relating to this event can be found in N. N. Ambrayses, C. P. Melville and R. D. Adams, *The Seismicity of Egypt, Arabia and the Red Sea: A Historical Review*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 22–3.

2 John Cassian, *The Conferences*, ed. and trans. E. Pichery. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1955–9, book 11.1.

3 Ibn Bassām al-Tinnīsī, *Anīs al-jalīs fī akhbār Tinnīs*, Jamāl al-Dīn Shayyāl (ed.). Port Said: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2000, p. 41.

4 Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ waʾl-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wʾal-āthār*, Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (ed.), 5 vols. London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2002, vol. 1, p. 478.

5 Strabo, *Geography*, trans. H. L. Jones. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1859, 17.1.21.

6 R. B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles: Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest*. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1972, pp. 135–47.

7 J.-M. Mouton, 'Tinnīs', *EI* 2, vol. 10, 531–2; al-Sayyid ʿAgamī ʿArafa, personal communication.

8 Timothy Insoll, 'Dahlak Kebir, Eritrea: from Aksumite to Ottoman', *Adumatu* 3, 2001, 39–50.

9 Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of Roman Dominion*, P. Fraser (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902, reprinted 1978, pp. 353–4; Butler suggests that a figure of 2,000 might be more plausible.

10 *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche, 1166–1199*, J.-B. Chabot (ed. and trans.), 3 vols. Paris: E. Leroux, 1899–1905, vol. 3, p. 62; see also *Chronique de Denys de Tell-Maḥré, Quatrième Partie*, J.-B. Chabot (ed. and trans.). Paris: Librairie Émile Bouillon, 1895, p. xviii; Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels (Safarnāma)*, trans. W. M. Thackston, Persian Heritage Series 36. New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1986, p. 39.

11 Ibn Bassām, *Anīs al-jalīs*, p. 40.

12 Yaacov Lev, 'Tinnīs: an industrial medieval town', in Marianne Barrucand (ed.), *L'Égypte Fatimide: Son Art et Son Histoire*. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999, 83–96, especially p. 92.

13 The intramural area of Tinnīs measures some 93 hectares. This should be rounded up to allow for the archaeological areas outside the city walls, many of which have disappeared into the lake. A total of 100 hectares is a convenient, though no doubt somewhat conservative, working estimate for the occupied area of the city. Since 100 hectares is a square kilometre, Ibn Bassām's figures would equate to a

population density of 50,000 per km^2. The most crowded modern cities have densities in the high 20,000s to low 30,000s per km^2: Mumbai has 29,650 people per km^2; Dhaka in Bangladesh 32,550; Hong Kong has 29,400 (2001 figures taken from http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf, accessed 12 September 2006). UNRWA figures from March 2005 give the population and area of Jabalia camp in Gaza as 106,691 registered refugees living in 1.4 km^2 (http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/gaza/jabalia.html, accessed 12 September 2006), a density of 76,208 people per km^2.

14 Susan Gilson Miller, 'Watering the garden of Tangier: colonial contestations in a Moroccan city', in Susan Slyomovics (ed.), *The Walled Arab City in Literature, Architecture and History: The Living Medina in the Maghrib*. London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001, 25–50; pp. 35, 44 emphasise the priority given to mosques over private houses in terms of water provision, even in areas with a scarcity.

15 Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāma*, pp. 38–40; Ibn Bassām, *Anīs al-jalīs*; Yāqūt, *Kitāb mu'jam al-buldān (Geographisches Wörterbuch)*, F. Wüstenfeld (ed.), 11 vols. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1866–71, vol. 1, pt 2, pp. 882–7; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, pp. 476–91.

16 http://www.worldclimate.com/cgi-bin/data.pl?ref=N31E032+2100+62332W, accessed 12 September 2006, records annual rainfall of 81.1 mm (3.2 inches) for Port Said, peaking in December and January.

17 *Ta'rīkh al-kanā'is wa'l-adyura*, Anbā' Samual al-Suryanis (ed.). Cairo: s.n., 1999, pp. 109–110.

18 *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. 3, p. 63; translation from Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 138.

19 Ibn Bassām, *Anīs al-jalīs*, p. 40.

20 He might conceivably be the Persian translator and architect (*muhandis*) mentioned in the *Fihrist* of al-Nadīm, Bayard Dodge (ed. and trans.), 2 vols. London and New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp. 649–50, under the names 'Umar b. al-Farrukhān and Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Ḥafṣ al-Ṭabarī, who had a known association with a patriarch called al-Baṭrīq Abū Yaḥyā b. al-Baṭrīq and who died in 815. (I am grateful to Mathieu Tillier for this information, kindly transmitted to me by Jean-Michel Mouton.) However, it has been observed that Abū Ḥafṣ is a *kunya* often associated with the name 'Umar: see Ch.-H. de Fouchécour and B. A. Rosenfeld, ''Umar Khayyam', *EI* 2, vol. 10, 827–34.

21 The Arabic reads 'thalāthat ālāf alf alf wa sittumi'a jarra'. A total of 3,000 million 600 jars seems erroneous and is likely to be a mistake on the part of the author, the copyist or the editor.

22 E. W. Lane, *Arabic–English Lexicon*. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984, s.v. *dūlāb*, vol. 3, p. 902.

23 Paula A. Sanders, 'The Fāṭimid state, 969–1171', in Carl F. Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt 1: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 151–74, p. 160.

24 Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāma*, p. 39.

25 Map of Lake Manzala in the *Description de l'Égypte ou, Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française, publié par les ordres de Sa Majesté l'empereur Napoléon le Grand*. Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1809–18; General Andréossi, Appendix 7, 'Notice sur quelques Villes qui ont des Rapports avec le Lac Menzaléh', in 'Mémoire sur le Lac Menzaléh, d'après la reconnaissance faite en Octobre, 1798', in V. Denon, *Voyages dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte pendant les campagnes de Bonaparte en 1798 et 1799*. London: S. Bagster, 1807, cxli–clxiii, p. clvii; A. Patricolo,

'Rapport sur les anciennes citernes de Tell Tinnis, dans le Lac Menzaleh', in *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, Exercise 1910, Fasc. 17*, Cairo: CCMAA, 1911, 62–8; Henri Munier, 'Vestiges chrétiens à Tinnīs', *Annales du Service des Antiquités Égyptiennes* 18, 1919, 72–4.

26 The results of this campaign will be published as a forthcoming monograph: A. L. Gascoigne (with contributions by N. J. Warner, G. Pyke and 'Abbās al-Shināwī, al-Sayyid 'Agamī 'Arafa and Tāriq Ibrāhīm Ḥusaynī), *The Island City of Tinnīs: A Postmortem* (working title).

27 Al-Sayyid 'Agamī 'Arafa, personal communication.

28 Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, pp. 138–41; Serjeant notes that workers may have acted as a form of corvée labour.

29 See Tim Williams, Chapter 4 in this volume, for a similar situation at Merv.

30 Bodleian Library Ms.Arab.c.90, fols 35b–36a. See Jeremy Johns and Emilie Savage-Smith, '*The Book of Curiosities*: a newly discovered series of Islamic maps', *Imago Mundi* 55, 2003, 7–24, pp. 17–18.

31 Miller, 'Watering the garden of Tangier', p. 36.

32 Hugh Kennedy, 'Egypt as a province in the Islamic caliphate, 641–868', in Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 62–85, pp. 80–1.

33 S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society Vol. 5: The Individual*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988, p. 30; this text apparently forms part of the archive associated with the Tunisian merchant Nahray b. Nissīm, who moved to Fusṭāṭ *c*.1045: see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society Vol. 1: Economic Foundations*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967, p. 8.

34 See David S. Powers, *Law, Society, and Culture in the Maghrib, 1300–1500*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 95–140, in particular pp. 103–5, containing further references to Arabic works of jurisprudence; also J. C. Wilkinson, 'Muslim land and water law', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, 1990, 54–72; Nicholas S. Hopkins, 'Irrigation in contemporary Egypt', in Alan K. Bowman and Eugene Rogan (eds), *Agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic to Modern Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 367–85; Saleh Lamei Mostafa, 'The Cairene Sabil: form and meaning', *Muqarnas* 6, 1989, 33–42.

35 Powers, *Law, Society, and Culture in the Maghrib*, p. 105.

36 André Raymond, 'Les porteurs d'eau du Caire', *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 57, 1958, 183–202.

37 Miller, 'Watering the garden of Tangier', p. 36.

38 Lev, 'Tinnīs: an industrial medieval town', pp. 92–3.

39 For Tinnīs's small Jewish community, see Norman Golb, 'Topography of the Jews of medieval Egypt', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33, 1974, 116–47, in particular pp. 143–4.

40 Michael Chamberlain, 'The crusader era and the Ayyūbid dynasty', in Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 211–41, in particular pp. 239–40.

HEALTH, SPIRITUALITY AND POWER IN MEDIEVAL IBERIA

The *māristān* and its role in Nasrid Granada

Athena C. Syrakoy

Introduction

Islamic Spain has left enough material remains to present a fruitful field of study for archaeologists and architectural historians. Prominent structures such as palaces and mosques have inspired many academic studies, as they have throughout the Islamic world. However, edifices such as health-care buildings do not attract the same attention. One such is the *māristān*, or hospital, founded in fourteenth-century Granada. The *māristān* of Granada is situated in a valley next to the River Darro on the periphery of the Albaicin urban area, which extends to the north. Across the river to the south rises the hill on which the Alhambra palace is located. This Muslim hospital is the only one in southern Spain that survived into modern times, but it is mentioned by only a limited number of scholars. The edifice is now reduced to ruins, so this chapter is based upon a combination of archaeological findings and historical records.

Although the *māristān* was founded in the fourteenth century, it survived as a building until the nineteenth century, changing in function several times. After the late fifteenth-century conquest of Muslim Granada by the Catholic Spanish monarchs, the *māristān* was turned into a mint known as the *Casa de la Moneda*, a role it occupied until the seventeenth century. In 1748 it became the property of the Convent of Belen. Later in the same century it was abandoned because it was in a 'state of ruin', but despite this it was taken over by a private individual who intended to use it for industrial purposes.[1] Because of its deteriorating state, Granada's local authorities authorised its demolition in 1843. However, this was not fully carried out, as the southern side had been integrated into neighbouring buildings. In the twentieth century the building was rebuilt to serve as a residence, which was

itself partly demolished in 1984. Archaeological excavations commenced the same year.[2]

These alterations to the function of the building and the various phases of demolition and reconstruction have left limited evidence concerning its original state. The nineteenth-century drawings by the architect Enriquez made prior to the destruction of the building are subject to question, since they appear to conflict with the findings from the excavations (see Figure 10.1). Furthermore, references to this hospital in sources concerning Islamic Granada are rare. Spanish scholars remark that 'Islamic authors, with the exception of the historian Ibn al-Khaṭīb (1313–79) who mentions it in his *al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*, are strangely silent about it'.[3] The *Iḥāṭa* is a biographical dictionary and the *māristān* is thus mentioned in the entry dedicated to its founder, the mid-fourteenth century Nasrid sultan, Muḥammad V:
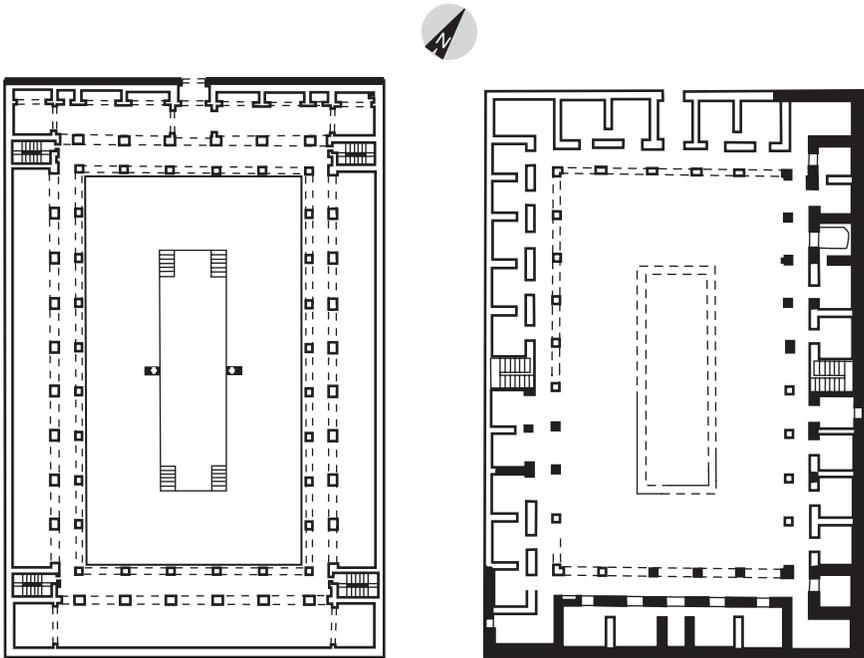
Figure 10.1 Two different ground plans of the *māristān*, as recorded by Enriquez in the nineteenth century (left) and after excavations in the 1980s. Drawing by Piet Collet after García Granados, Girón Irueste and Salvatierra Cuenca, *El Maristán de Granada: un Hospital Islámico* (see note 2), p. 12 for Enriquez's drawing; Almagro, Orihuela and Sánchez, 'Plano guía del Albayzín andalusí' (see note 2) for the drawing following the excavations.

> Among the examples of generosity and charity resulting from
> [Muḥammad V's] exceptional striving (*jihād*) of the spirit was his
> construction of the great hospital, a benefaction for these distant
> tents, and a feature of the virtuous city. No one other than him
> was rightly guided to [do] this since the initial [Muslim] conquest
> [of Iberia], despite its great necessity and the evident need. Concern
> for religion and a pious spirit spurred him on. The stance of com-
> panions, a tour of al-Andalus, a resumé of good deeds and his noble
> house brought [the project] to completion. Dwellings, a large court,
> copious flowing water and fresh air were prepared, along with store
> rooms and basins for ablutions, the regular provision of wages and
> good organisation – it was a greater [act of] philanthropy than the
> hospital in Cairo – with its wide court, sweet air, water gushing
> from fountains of marble and black stone rippling like the sea, and
> overhanging trees: he gave his agreement to me and allowed me
> to create it by his permission, and I carried it out by the goodness
> of his spirit.[4]

As a result of the paucity of evidence concerning the *māristān*, the research
that has been done has lacked a critical framework, especially in relation to
the *māristān*'s contemporary meaning and significance within the culture
of Islamic Granada. Although the work of Ibn al-Khaṭīb provides some
information about the relationship of the hospital to the rest of the city and
the wider landscape, this area requires further investigation. Even though
the aesthetic and sanitary qualities of its valley location are obvious, in my
view the placement of the *māristān* in its specific position has greater signi-
ficance. Is it purely coincidental that it was situated precisely opposite a
route leading up to Madīnat al-Ḥamrāʾ, or the Alhambra, the royal city of
the Nasrids, which presided over the civilian city from its hilltop location?
Using a combination of historical sources and archaeological evidence, the
present study seeks to understand the symbolic topography of the *māristān*
in relation to Granada and the Alhambra.

The urban development of Granada and the *māristān*

In order to understand the significance of the *māristān*'s topographical posi-
tion, we must first examine the evolution of Islamic Granada and the condi-
tions under which the *māristān* developed. Initially, the walled city of Granada
was restricted in area, centred on what is now the church of San Nicolas at
the top of the hill of the Albaicin district. This is believed to be the location
of the pre-Islamic city. Probably in existence since the seventh century BC,
this settlement was under Roman rule until its occupation in the fifth cen-
tury AD by the Visigoths.[5] In 711–12, the Iberian peninsula was invaded by
Muslim troops from North Africa, who rapidly conquered over two-thirds

of the peninsula. The south remained under constant Muslim rule until 1492, when its last Muslim rulers, the Nasrids, were defeated by Ferdinand and Isabella and their domain became part of early modern Spain.

In the first centuries after the conquest, Granada was not as important as the nearby city of Elvira (Ilbīra), located to the north-west, a Roman foundation that had also served as the Visigothic provincial capital and was used by the Umayyads as their provincial centre in turn. Elvira began to decline in the late tenth century, possibly as a result of the military reforms of the Umayyad minister, Ibn Abī 'Āmir al-Manṣūr, which weakened its defence by redistributing its Arab garrison.[6] The insecurity of the early eleventh century sealed Elvira's fate and encouraged the rise of Granada, whose location was much more defensible. The last Zirid ruler of Granada, 'Abd Allah b. Buluggīn, recounts that Elvira was located on a plain and inhabited by mutually suspicious people who nonetheless feared for their collective safety when they 'saw the dissension among the princes of al-Andalus and the outbreak of civil war'.[7] They therefore wrote to a local Ṣanhāja Berber chief, Zāwī b. Zīrī, for help and a large Ṣanhāja Berber contingent arrived in the vicinity. As civil unrest in al-Andalus grew the Zirids decided to transfer to a more defensible location than the existing settlement on the plain.[8] 'Abd Allah b. Buluggīn noted in his memoirs:

> It was unanimously agreed that the whole population would choose for themselves some high mountain and a fortified position at great altitude. There they would build their homes and then move to the new site lock, stock and barrel. They would make it their head-quarters and desert Elvira. Their eyes lighted on a lovely plain filled with both rivers and trees. All the land around was watered by the Genil, which has its source in the Sierra Nevada. They were quick to perceive that from its central position the mountain on which the city of Granada now stands commanded all the surrounding country. In front lay the Vega, on either flank al-Zawiya and al-Sath, and behind the Jabal district. They were enthralled by the site and, all things being fully considered, they came to the conclusion that it lay in the heart of a prosperous region among a concentrated popula-tion and that an attacking enemy would be able neither to besiege it nor to prevent anyone from leaving or entering on any mission required by the welfare of the inhabitants. They therefore began to build there, and all of them to a man, both Andalusian and Berber, took upon themselves the task of setting up home there. Elvira then went to rack and ruin.[9]

This account rather clearly presents the geographical advantages of Granada over Elvira. In the war-torn atmosphere of early eleventh-century al-Andalus, security was apparently of the utmost importance. Additionally, the prosperity

of the region would allow the population to thrive in a time of peace. Furthermore, the move of the Elvirans does not appear to have been marked by any discontent on the part of the Granadans. In fact they are not mentioned at all except as part of the 'concentrated population' of the region, which leads to the inference that Granada was not perceived as an urban settlement of any importance before the Zirid arrival. Although Granada was 'the oldest stronghold and township in the province', it had suffered from the period of endemic conflict between Arabs and Muwallads in the late ninth century, which had reduced it to 'no more than a large walled village'.[10]

'Abd Allah's mention of 'the mountain on which the city of Granada now stands' would indicate that at the completion of his memoirs between mid-1094 and the end of 1095, the settlement was predominantly clustered on a single peak. This must have been the hill opposite the Alhambra, across the river Darro, now part of the Albaicin area. By the late eleventh century the city had extended west and south of the old settlement (Figure 10.2). Although the *mâristân* was not to be established for another 271 years, its location already represented a significant urban space. It was occupied by a particular kind of wall system known as a *coracha* (Arabic *qawraya*).[11] Ricard defines this term as a wall formation that originated from a general enclosure such as a city's walls but extended beyond it in order to 'protect a door or to isolate a zone, almost always immediate to a river and to facilitate the access towards it [the river] and the supply of water, in case of a siege, to the defenders of the walled enclosure'.[12] Seco de Lucena maintains that 'The Muslim fortifications offer two types of *qawraya*, the simple and the double, that is, the one which consists of only one line of wall and that which consists of two lines of wall that run parallel to each other, forming what the Arabs call a *sâbât* and we call an enclosed road.'[13] He continues by noting that the Granadan *coracha* must have been a double one based on the fact that Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, a historian of the Almohad period, describes the structure as a *sâbât*, a term that generally denoted a covered, and therefore two-sided, passageway.[14] Thus, the *coracha* would have run from the city walls down the hill towards the south, crossing the river Darro by means of a bridge flanked with towers, one of which still partly survives in the form of a gate tower known today as the Puerta de los Tableros.[15] The date of the construction of the *coracha* is disputed. Seco de Lucena argues that the Granadan *coracha* existed before the Zirids took control of the city, although he also cites Gomez-Moreno's argument that it was a Zirid construction.[16]

On the hill across the river Darro leading up from the site of the *coracha*, the Alhambra complex appears today as the most prominent feature of Granada but it was a relatively late addition to the city. In the pre-Nasrid period, a small fortress known as the red citadel, *qal'at al-ḥamrā'*, was situated on the western side of the hill's summit.[17] Ruined during the ninth
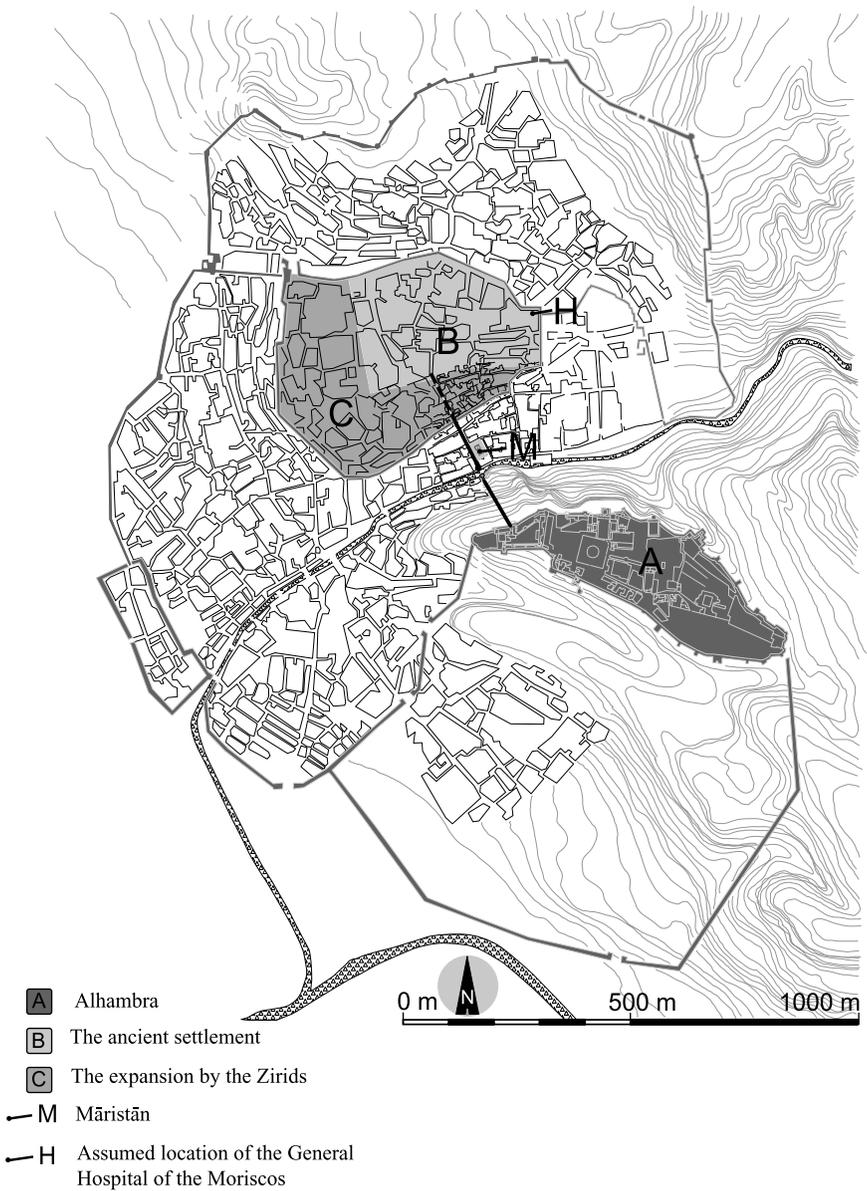
Figure 10.2 Map of the urban development of Granada. Drawing by Piet Collet after A. Syrakoy/Almagro, Orihuela and Sánchez, 'Plano guía del Albayzín andalusí'.

century, it was restored by the Zirids' famous Jewish minister, Yūsuf b. Naghrila, in the mid-eleventh century.[18] In the late eleventh century, 'Abd Allah b. Buluggīn embarked on a plan to restore and reinforce the defences of the city in an attempt to repel the threat to his autonomy presented by the Almoravids from North Africa. As part of this plan, he restored the *qal'at al-ḥamrā'* and constructed a wall connecting it to the bridge across the river Darro and the *coracha*. In this way 'Abd Allah created a strong link between the city and the hilltop fortress and defined a significant route between the two. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt's mention of the *sābāṭ* in his account of the reign of the first Almohad caliphs, 'Abd al-Mu'min (r. 1130–63) and his son Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (r. 1163–84), suggests that these structures existed into the Almohad period but were damaged when the Almohads besieged an opponent in the Alhambra fortress, known in this period as the *qaṣabat al-ḥamrā'*, the red fort.[19]

In the early thirteenth century, Almohad rule in al-Andalus and North Africa was challenged from several quarters and their *imperium* began to fragment. In the Iberian peninsula the main beneficiaries of this process were the monarchs of Castile and Aragon who conquered vast tracts of Muslim territory and reduced Muslim power in the peninsula to the small enclave of Granada where a Arab notable from Arjona, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Naṣr, known as Ibn al-Aḥmar, had established his rule. According to Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Ibn al-Aḥmar entered Granada in the final days of Ramaḍān 635/May 1238.[20] For the next 255 years, Granada was the capital of the Nasrid state.

By this time, the city had expanded beyond the Zirid walls, incorporating the *coracha* into the built-up area. With this expansion to the banks of the river, and the subsequent construction of the Nasrid irrigation system still in existence today, the *coracha* became redundant. Its walls were apparently deliberately levelled, and it has been suggested that the walkway was filled with 'an enormous quantity of rocks of great size', a process that may have begun in the mid-twelfth century when the Almohads, based in the old fortress, besieged Ibn Hamushk in the fortress on the hill and 'cut' the *sābāṭ*.[21] Subsequently its ruined walls were covered with earth, presumably in order to provide a level and stable surface for building, and 'a series of houses was constructed'.[22] The archaeological investigations of the *māristān* that commenced in 1984 located its west and east walls almost exactly over the corresponding sides of the *coracha*.[23] More recent studies suggest that the *coracha* only occupied the western part of the *māristān* but the general correspondence between the position of the two structures is clear.[24] Excavations have also demonstrated that prior to the construction of the *māristān* another building occupied the same space. This earlier structure has been identified as a *funduq* (hostelry) on the basis of its ground-plan.[25] This same building was converted into the *māristān* between the years 1365 and 1367.[26]

By the time of the *māristān*'s foundation, the Nasrids had greatly expanded the red citadel on the opposite hill and established the Alhambra, a royal city based on both earlier Andalusi precedents and contemporary North African practice. The Nasrid Alhambra had four main gates known today as the Gate of Law, the Gate of the Seven Heavens, the Iron Gate and the Gate of Arms.[27] The last of these was situated at the end of the *coracha*–bridge–wall alignment running between the city and fort in earlier times and served as the 'entrance to the royal palace from the interior of the city'.[28] Moreover, Grabar asserts that 'it was the only gate connecting the Alhambra directly with the city of Granada'.[29] Bermudez López further states that 'the gate normally was used by residents of the city for direct access to the Alhambra when they had to resolve administrative problems, request an audience, or pay their taxes'.[30]

The hospital was thus located at the start of the main route leading from civilian Granada to the royal complex on the hill, raising the question of why such an institution was placed so prominently on the route to a royal zone described variously as a jewel,[31] a palace of 'transparent crystal', a 'boundless ocean' and the 'mansions of the sky'.[32] The question becomes especially pressing given the fact that there may have been another hospital in the vicinity, opposite the convent of Las Tomasas close to the church of San Salvador, making purely functional reasons for the location unlikely. Sources from the period after the Christian conquest of Granada speak of the General Hospital of the Moriscos. This complex, of which no trace now remains, was almost certainly a Muslim foundation despite its absence from the Islamic historical sources.[33]

The *māristān* and its environs

The Arabic term *māristān*, meaning hospital, comes from the Persian *bīmāristān*, which itself derives from the union of two words *bīmār*, meaning sick, and *ustān*, 'a term of administrative geography in the eastern Islamic world dating from Sāsānid times and surviving into mediaeval Islamic usage'.[34] Muslim hospitals were thus literally places of administering to the sick. They were divided into different sections for men and women and housed a variety of medical specialities, including surgery, ophthalmology, gynaecology and a pharmacy. In some ways they were microcosms of the world outside, including auxiliary facilities such as baths, mosques and *madrasa*s.[35]

The *māristān* of Granada was no exception to this pattern: in the area immediately surrounding the *māristān* evidence for the existence of such auxiliary structures can still be traced (Figure 10.3). Approximately 150 m north-east of the *māristān* stands a minaret, now the church tower of San Juan de los Reyes, indicating the prior existence of a mosque on the site. Slightly further away to the north-west is another minaret, now the church
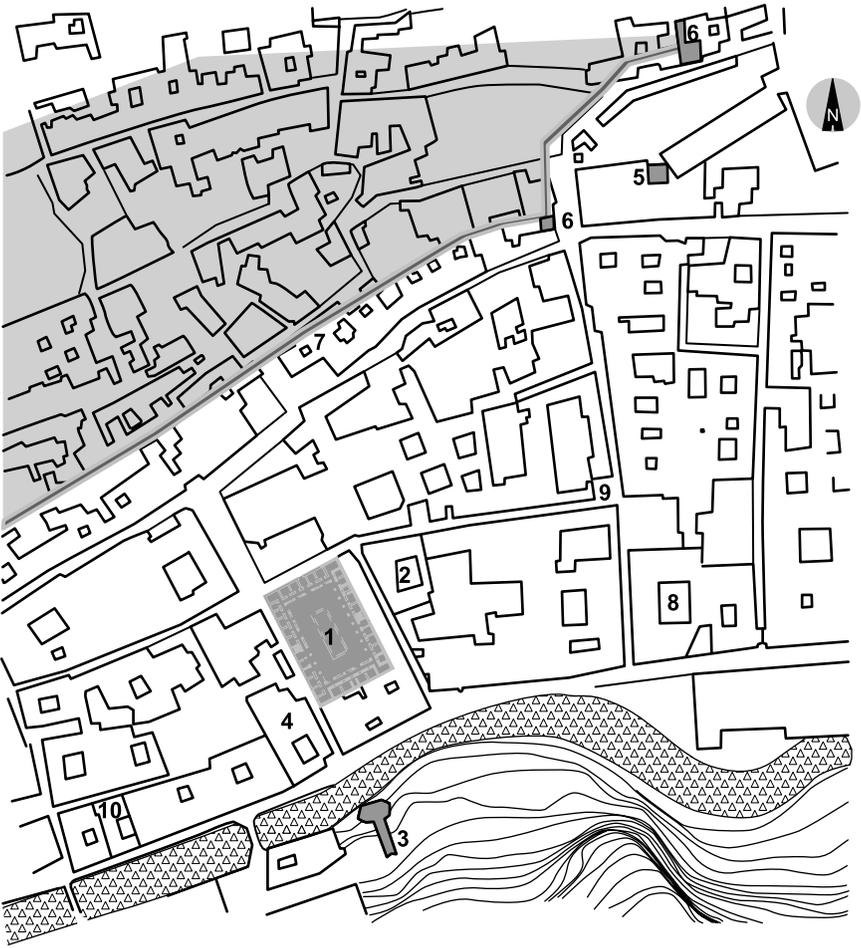
Figure 10.3 The neighbourhood of the *māristān* as it exists today. Key: 1, *māristān*; 2, fourteenth-century Arab house; 3, remains of the Puerta de los Tableros; 4, eleventh-century baths (*el bañuelo*); 5, Minaret of San Juan de los Reyes; 6, towers of the old city wall; 7, route of the old city wall; 8, Provincial Archaeological Museum of Granada; 9, remains of Nasrid gateway; 10, Arab house. Drawing by Piet Collet after García Granados, Girón Irueste and Salvatierra Cuenca, *El Maristán de Granada: un Hospital Islámico*, p. 21.

tower of San José. Finally, at the end of the street that passes in front of the *māristān* on its northern side, there is 'a simple-structured door which might have belonged to a small mosque or neighbourhood oratory'.[36] The concentration of religious institutions in this quarter is clear and shows some similarity with the clustering of hospitals and religious buildings that occurred

in Mamluk Cairo in the thirteenth to fifteenth century.[37] The famous hospital of Qalāwūn, for instance, was part of a larger complex of religious and funerary structures. A similar pattern developed in Marinid Fez.

Most *māristān*s included baths within their premises. The *māristān* in Granada appears to have lacked such a facility but a separate *ḥammām*, a Zirid construction known today as *el bañuelo*, is situated just across the street from the west side. However, Ibn al-Khaṭīb did note that the *māristān* was equipped with 'copious flowing water and fresh air', suggesting the possibility of performing ritual ablutions – which require flowing water – within it. Islamic culture connected baths with notions of spiritual as well as corporal purity and purification. An illustration of this view derives from accounts of a plague epidemic in Cairo in 1437–8, which include the comment that 'people had rumoured that men were all to die on Friday, and the resurrection would come', and as a result 'men were crowding to the baths so that they may die in a state of complete purity'.[38] The *māristān* was thus part of a cluster of religious and ritual facilities marking a transition from the mundane life of the city to the sublime realm of religion and also power represented by the Alhambra looming above. It is not coincidental that the architecture and iconography of the royal complex itself evoked the gardens of paradise.

The *māristān* and plague epidemics

The need for a hospital in the fourteenth century and thus the foundation of the *māristān* at this time might be attributed to a contemporary Muslim understanding of the economic importance of keeping the population healthy in a era of epidemic disease. Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), who was in Granada in 1362,[39] recognised that a large population creates wealth but also that cities were hotbeds of disease: the commonest cause of epidemics is the pollution of the air resulting from the denser population that fills it with corruption and dank moisture.[40] The association of hospitals with clean air and flowing water suggests their role in fighting epidemics, but this does not in itself explain the placement of the *māristān* within the city. These two aspects of the *māristān*'s development will be examined in the light of the conditions not only of Granada at that time, but also of the Spanish Christian kingdoms.

At the time of the foundation of the *māristān* in the fourteenth century, outbreaks of plague marked the history of the whole of Europe, including both Christian and Muslim Spain. The Christian kingdoms neighbouring the kingdom of Granada appear to have suffered greatly from the Black Death. Hillgarth made a direct link between the onset of the Black Death in Catalonia and the 'Catalan decline' that began shortly after, and saw a general concurrence between cycles of famine, plague and urban and economic crisis in Catalonia, Castile and Aragon.[41]

Most of the population perceived the plague in moral terms: 'the European Christian viewed the Black Death as an overwhelming punishment from God for his sins and those of his fellow Christians'.[42] In addition to the idea of the plague as punishment, epidemic disease was also conceptualised as an ordeal imposed by God in order to test faith, thus saving souls. The Church propagated these beliefs and the usual recommendations for counter-measures were limited to flight and prayer, rather than more pragmatic strategies.[43]

Hospitals did exist but they do not appear to have been fully equipped to deal with the medical as opposed to the spiritual demands created by epidemics. Hospitals were generally run by religious orders whose experience of treating the body was limited. An example comes from the Crown of Aragon, where 'Queen Constance . . . left a considerable sum of money in her will so that two hospitals could be established in Barcelona and Valencia. These were to be built close to the Franciscan houses and were to be under the direction of the guardian and friars.'[44] In addition to their medical shortcomings such foundations were not always financially secure. In the case of Constance's bequest, a site for the Valencian hospital was only purchased in 1300, ten years after the queen's death, and the hospital in Barcelona was never founded, with the money allocated to it being transferred to the one in Valencia. The economic demands of the project appear to have exceeded the original budget by some distance, and these financial difficulties continued:

> By 1326 . . . the Hospital de la Reina in Valencia was not without its problems and must have been in an impoverished state. . . . In 1333 a co-administrator was appointed and paid from the king's curia; but the hospital seems never to have been able to meet its obligations adequately, and by 1375, the year of a severe occurrence of plague, the friars could not even muster sufficient money to pay for shrouds in which to bury the dead.[45]

The hospital, after a dispute of some years, finally became the property of the city of Valencia in 1383, since 'The city *jurats* agreed that it was necessary to give it substantial help, as it was in dire need of both buildings and financial aid.'[46]

> Queen Constance would have been saddened by the fate of her legacy, but inflationary prices during the first half of the fourteenth century and the advent of the Black Death in 1348, together with other epidemics like that of 1375, had prevented compliance with her wishes. Her bequest had become a burden which the Franciscans were not equipped to bear, a fact which raises the question whether the Valencian house, after its initial prosperity . . . had fallen on

hard times, or if it was poor organization that was really respons-
ible for the financial difficulties which beset the running of the
hospital.[47]

The Hospital de la Reina in Valencia, under the direction of the Franciscan
friars and even with royal sponsorship, was not able to fulfil efficiently the
need for medical services in the city. Christian attempts to establish and
maintain a hospital in fourteenth-century Valencia were thus largely unsuc-
cessful. Inflation and financial mismanagement were partly responsible, but
it is notable that the increased demand created by the various epidemics
also formed an impediment to its smooth functioning. Its placement appears
to have been determined by available land plots and its association with the
monarchy was restricted to its name. Its association with the Franciscans
ensured that it was seen as a religious rather than a medical facility, a
hospice for the dying rather than a hospital offering remedies. Such was
the poor condition of the hospital that finally the city council decided to
take matters into its own hands, questioning the competence of both the
Franciscans and the royal house. This suggests some recognition of its
importance for the people of Valencia but also a failure to see epidemics as
a medical problem for much of the fourteenth century.

By contrast, in Granada the Black Death does not appear to have been
conceptualised in the same way and did not lead to a questioning of either
the scholarly establishment or the Nasrid rulers. In fact the second half of
the fourteenth century is often seen as a high point in Nasrid political and
economic stability. The *mār̄istān* was founded in 1365 at the height of the
first plague epidemics, making it possible that the royal endowment was
intended to be publicly recognised as an effective state response to the
epidemics. Muḥammad V would certainly have benefited from such a state-
ment of his power, legitimacy and concern for his subjects. He had returned
to power three years before, after a period of political instability and intrigue
among the Nasrid elite.[48] In this context the plague had been something of
a blessing for the Nasrids because it had destabilised their Christian enemies
to the north, Castile and Aragon, who had thus been unable to exploit the
internecine struggles in Granada. Having regained his throne after the brief
reigns of his half-brother and uncle, Muḥammad V was keen to present
the plague as a disaster for the Christians and minimise its physical and
psychological impact in Granada.

We know that the Black Death had arrived in Granada by 749/1349 when
the ruling sultan's chief minister, Ibn al-Jayyāb, was carried off by the disease.[49]
Yūsuf I appointed Ibn al-Jayyāb's secretary, Ibn al-Khaṭīb (1313–74), to his
master's former position and he continued as chief minister into Muḥammad
V's reign. In addition to being one of the greatest *literati* and courtiers of
his age, Ibn al-Khaṭīb has also gained some notoriety in the west owing
to his forthright support of the infection theory with respect to plague.[50]

'Ibn al-Khatib denied the *fatawa* or legal decisions of the jurists against the theory of contagion stating that, "The existence of contagion is well-established through experience, research, sense perception, autopsy, and authenticated information, and this material is proof".'[51] This was not necessarily the orthodox Islamic view: many Muslims, like Christians, perceived the plague as sent by God and not as a contagious disease that could be transmitted regardless of people's spiritual stature. However, Muslim attitudes to plague differed from Christian ones in significant ways. First, they perceived the plague as a form of martyrdom and mercy for its Muslims victims but a punishment for the infidel. Second, they considered it wrong for Muslims either to enter or flee from a plague-stricken area, providing some rough and ready quarantine.[52] The plague itself was presented as something over which victory could be won. 'The common designation of plague in Arabic is *ṭāʿūn* (pl. *ṭawāʿīn*). It is derived from the verb *ṭaʿana*, which has the general meaning of 'to strike' or 'to pierce'.[53] Ibn al-Khaṭīb also speaks of 'the sword of the plague' over the people of al-Andalus, implying that perhaps it could be deflected.[54]

From this it is evident that it was not necessarily the case that Muslims saw plague as an indication of their own sins, or their rulers' sins. They were more likely to see the epidemics ravaging the Iberian peninsula as a victory for Islam against the Christians of the north. Moreover, Muslims did not believe in flight and some had a sufficiently scientific approach to deal with the disease from a medical point of view. Ibn al-Khaṭīb was close to Muḥammad V and celebrated his foundation of the *māristān* as a meritorious act from both a religious and a civic perspective. It emphasised Muḥammad V's successful return to power, aided perhaps by the plague's weakening of his opponents, and his authority in both the political and religious spheres. Certainly it was important to Muḥammad V to be seen as victorious in domestic politics and in the perpetual struggle with Christendom, and his response to the plague functioned as a symbol of his victory and a much-needed public service.[55] He placed the instrument of his triumph, the *māristān*, prominently at the start of the route leading to the royal city and his presence.

Politics, faith and topography

In addition to textual references to the *māristān* of Granada we also have its foundation stone, which has a long inscription confirming the material presented above. This inscription stone was originally placed above the main entrance of the *māristān* and was moved to the Alhambra when the *māristān* was demolished in the nineteenth century.[56] Currently, it is housed in the Alhambra Museum. This *stela* provides us with valuable information about the date, sponsor and purpose of the complex and is here quoted in full:

Praise be to God. The construction of this *māristān* was ordered as an abundant mercy for the indigent sick among the Muslims and – God willing – as a beneficial [way of] drawing close to the Lord of the Worlds, to make eternal his good works in the clearest language and to perpetuate his charity down the passing of the years until God inherits the Earth and all in it – and He is the best of inheritors – by the lord imam, the gallant sultan, the great, the renowned, the pure and the knowing, the happiest of his family in his government, the most resolute of them in the path of God in his power, master of conquest and acts of giving, and open-heartedness, the one supported by angels and the Spirit, champion of the Sunna, refuge of religion, commander of the Muslims, al-Ghānī B'illah Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad, son of the great and renowned lord, the lofty and majestic sultan, the just and solemn holy warrior (*mujāhid*), the happy and sacred martyr, commander of the Muslims Abī'l-Ḥajjāj, son of the lord, the majestic, renowned sultan, the great and mighty, the victorious smiter of polytheists and oppressor of the enemy unbelievers, the happy martyr Abī'l-Walīd b. Naṣr al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī. May God in His satisfaction make his works successful, and grant him his hopes for his deep virtue and immense merit, for by [founding the *māristān*] he has performed a good deed with no precedent since Islam entered these lands, and by it he has embellished the border of honour upon the collar of the vestments of *jihād* and sought the face of God in his desire for [eternal] reward – and God is possessor of the greatest virtue – and he has prepared a light to spread before him and after him on the day when wealth and children will be of no benefit unless a man comes to God with a sound heart. Its construction began in the second third of the month of Muḥarram in the year 767 (1365–6) and what God intended was completed and the pious endowments set up in the middle third of Shawwāl in the year 768 (1366–7) and God does not allow the reward of those who do good works and charity to be lost and destroyed, May God bless our Lord Muḥammad, seal of the Prophets, his family and all his companions.[57]

This inscription naturally reflects the Muslim world view and Muslim expectations of a ruler, but also places Muḥammad V in his specific context, making the foundation of the hospital central to his fulfilment of his political and religious duties. The foundation of public buildings was the *sine qua non* of a ruler. In earlier times, a ruler indicated his power by the construction of a great mosque, which was his prerogative and that of his appointed governors. 'Abd al-Raḥmān I, for instance, only founded the great mosque of Cordoba in 787, thirty years after his arrival in the peninsula, when he had finally asserted his power over his rivals. By the Nasrid period, however,

it was the norm for rulers to found *madrasa*s, mausoleums and, on occasion, hospitals. These functioned, as great mosques had previously, to indicate the ruler's role as a representative or appointee of God. Although the primary universal religio-political position of caliph no longer existed in the fourteenth century, many western Islamic rulers perpetuated aspects of the role. This is implied in the case of Muḥammad V by his use of the title imam alongside that of sultan, the first denoting religious leadership, the second politico-military power.

Muḥammad V's regnal title was al-Ghānī Bi'llah, meaning rich or self-suffcent by (the grace) of God. This was a fairly unusual title in al-Andalus that Ibn al-Khaṭīb elaborated upon in a panegyric poem addressed to Muḥammad V, describing the latter as, 'the elect of God, the namesake of the elect, al-Ghānī Bi'llah, "the satisfied by God" to the exclusion of everyone else'.[58] This title stressed that Muḥammad V's position was a gift from God and that it transcended the political infighting in the kingdom and the potential threat from the Christian kingdoms. In this context, plague became God's mercy to Muḥammad V because it swept all aside leaving him supreme, a view later adopted by Moroccan chroniclers with respect to their own rulers.[59] He in turn showed himself to be the symbolic master of the epidemics by founding a hospital.

The *māristān* was Muḥammad V's gift and also an enduring testament to his charity that would make eternal his good works in the clearest language and perpetuate his charity with the passing of the years. It brought the sultan closer to God but also created a triangular relationship between God, the sultan and the people of Granada. It was not an obvious choice of foundation: the inscription claims that it had no precedent in al-Andalus and therefore set Muḥammad V apart from other rulers. Ibn al-Khaṭīb's reference to Cairene hospitals suggests that the inspiration came from Mamluk Egypt rather than Christian Valencia. What is particularly interesting is that both Ibn al-Khaṭīb and the inscription describe the founding of the hospital as Muḥammad V's *jihād*. Since the Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba, dedication to *jihād* had been a necessary attribute of a ruler in al-Andalus and Morocco. Although this most obviously meant resistance towards the Christian kingdoms of the north, it also meant extirpation of Islamic heterodoxy and rebellion, which now appear symbolised by the Black Death. Therefore, it was as the 'champion of the Sunna and the refuge of religion' that Muḥammad V founded the *māristān*. His right to play this role was strengthened by his lineage's claim to descent from Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, the chief of the Khazraj tribe and a companion of the Prophet Muḥammad, a fact also celebrated in the truncated genealogy on the *māristān*'s foundation stone.

The *māristān* thus made manifest the connection between ruler and ruled, and the ruler's right to mediate between God and the Muslims. Its placement at the start of the population's only means of access to the royal

presence symbolised the extension of Muḥammad V's presence into civilian urban space, and the benign but powerful character of that presence. Although other buildings might have fulfilled the same function, the *māristān* combined the temporal and religious orders in a unique way and had a particular resonance in a period when Granada, like the Christian kingdoms, was suffering grievously from plague epidemics. One may take the symbolism of the *māristān* one step further. In addition to his other writings, Ibn al-Khaṭīb wrote a medical treatise called the *Book for the Care of Health during the Seasons of the Year* or the *Book of Hygiene*, in which he describes the body as 'a city for the reign of the soul'.[60] In this sense the individual, the *māristān* and the city functioned as metaphors for each other. Within the *māristān*, the body was healed, giving the soul back its kingdom to rule. Each individual who entered the hospital thus functioned as a microcosm of Granada, the city healed by its ruler, Muḥammad V.

Conclusions

The topographical meaning of the *māristān* of Granada has formed an intriguing study. Its prominent location below the Alhambra on the main route used by the city's inhabitants to engage with royal authority posited a question that could only be answered through a thorough investigation of the meanings of the site and the hospital in fourteenth-century Granada. Historical and archaeological evidence shed much light on the urban topography and significance of the *māristān*'s position. In some ways, its positioning adhered to Islamic norms. It was located near a river with clean, fresh air in an area where religious and ritual buildings such as mosques, oratories and baths clustered. However, its precise position on the site of an earlier fortification on the main ascent to the palace depended on circumstances specific to Granada.

The *māristān* was by definition a place designated for the treatment of disturbed health, and should therefore be seen within this context. During its time, diseases, and specifically outbreaks of plague such as the Black Death, were not only common, but provided a stimulus for social change. In the Christian Spanish kingdoms, the authority of both religious and secular authorities was subject to question by the people. In contrast, in the kingdom of Granada the plague was used to reinforce the power of Islam and of the king, who was able to present the *māristān* as an expression of victory. In order for the building to play this role it needed to be sited in a clear relationship with the other burgeoning monumental expression of Nasrid success, the Alhambra. Moreover, the clustering of religious structures in the same area provided the inhabitants of the city with a transitional space through which they moved from the mundane commercial and social life of the city to the transcendent royal city above, which symbolised paradise and the role of the Nasrid sultan as mediator between God and his Muslim flock.

Notes

I would like to thank Dr Antonio Orihuela Uzal from the Escuela de Estudios Árabes of Granada, who introduced me to this subject, Dr Wendy Pullan for her valuable comments, Dr Vicente Salvatierra Cuenca for giving his permission to use some images and my family for their support. I would also like to thank the editors of this book for giving me the opportunity to publish this study and for their valuable comments, help and suggestions. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this work to Dr Layla Shamash, who passed away in 2002. By means of designing a craft centre in Granada for her studio as part of my Graduate Diploma in Architecture, I was given the opportunity to get better acquainted with the city.

 1 L. Torres Balbás, 'El maristan de Granada', *Al-Andalus* 9, 1944, 481–500, p. 485.
 2 J. A. García Granados, F. Girón Irueste and V. Salvatierra Cuenca, *El Maristán de Granada: un Hospital Islámico*. Granada: Imp. Alhambra, 1989, pp. 14–18; Torres Balbás, 'El maristan de Granada', esp. pp. 485–6; A. Almagro, A. Orihuela and C. Sánchez, 'Plano guía del Albayzín andalusí', Granada: Escuela de Estudios Árabes, 1995, http://www.eea.csic.es/albayzin.html (accessed 11 October 2006). For an account of the latest information concerning the *māristān* as well as proposals for its reconstruction and use, see A. Almagro and A. Orihuela, 'El maristán Nazari de Granada. Análisis del edificio y una propuesta para su recuperación', *Boletín de la Real Academia de las Bellas Artes de Nuestra Señora de las Angustias* 10, 2003, 81–109.
 3 Garcia Granados, Girón Irueste and Salvatierra Cuenca, *El Maristán de Granada*, p. 97.
 4 Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār Gharnāṭa*. Cairo: al-Tibāʿal-Maṣriyya, 1974, vol. 2, pp. 50–1, kindly translated by Amira K. Bennison.
 5 Almagro, Orihuela and Sanchez, 'Plano guía del Albayzín andalusí'; L. Seco de Lucena, 'Acerca de la Qawraya de la Alcazaba Vieja de Granada', *Al-Andalus* 33, 1968, 197–203, p. 198, places the centre of the pre-Islamic city at the church of San Nicolas, with its borders defined on the north by the Ermita de San Cecilio, on the south by the Cuesta del Aljibe de Trillo, on the east by the Convento de las Tomasas and on the west by the Plaza del Almirante and the streets de Gumiel and Pilar Seco, all of which are in the present-day Albaicin area. J. Bosque Maurel, *Geografia Urbana de Granada*. Zaragoza: Departamento de geografia aplicada del Instituto Juan Sebastian Elcano, 1962, pp. 55–7; p. 56 suggests that its centre was at the Placeta de las Minas, approximately 125 m west of the church of San Nicolas, and that its periphery extended further than the one presented by Seco de Lucena, but this theory is not widely accepted.
 6 Andrew Handler, *The Zirids of Granada*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1974, p. 23.
 7 Amin Tibi, *The Tibyan: Memoirs of Abd Allah b. Buluggin, last Zirid Amir of Granada*. Leiden: Brill, 1986, p. 46.
 8 Tibi, *Tibyan*, p. 47.
 9 Tibi, *Tibyan*, p. 48.
10 Tibi, *Tibyan*, p. 200.
11 Seco de Lucena, 'Acerca de la Qawraya', p. 197.
12 Robert Ricard, 'Couraça et Coracha', *Al-Andalus* 19, 1954, 149–72, p. 155.
13 Seco de Lucena, 'Acerca de la Qawraya', p. 202.
14 Seco de Lucena, 'Acerca de la Qawraya', pp. 202–3.
15 Almagro, Orihuela and Sánchez, 'Plano guía del Albayzín andalusí', number 21.
16 Seco de Lucena, 'Acerca de la Qawraya', pp. 201–2.

17 L. Torres Balbás, 'La Alhambra de Granada antes del siglo XIII', *Al-Andalus* 5, 1940, 155–74, p. 157.

18 Torres Balbás, 'La Alhambra', p. 159; Tibi, *Tibyan*, p. 75.

19 Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *Taʾrīkh al-mann biʾl-imāma ʿalā al-mustaḍʿafīn bi-an jaʿalahum Allah aʾimma wa jaʿalahum al-wārithīn*, ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Tāzī (ed.). Baghdad: Dār al-Ḥurriyya, 1979, p. 185.

20 Ahmed al-Makkari, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, trans. Pasqual de Gayangos. London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1823, vol. 2, p. 343.

21 Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann biʾl-imāma*, p. 185.

22 Garcia Granados, Girón Irueste and Salvatierra Cuenca, *El Maristán de Granada*, p. 26.

23 Garcia Granados, Girón Irueste and Salvatierra Cuenca, *El Maristán de Granada*, p. 25; see also J. A. Garcia Granados and V. Salvatierra Cuenca, 'Excavaciones en el *Maristán* de Granada', *Congreso Nacional de Arqueología Medieval Española 1, Huesca*. Zaragoza: n.a., 1985, 617–39.

24 Almagro and Orihuela, 'El maristán Nazari de Granada', p. 82.

25 Garcia Granados, Girón Irueste and Salvatierra Cuenca, *El Maristán de Granada*, p. 29; Torres Balbás, 'El maristan de Granada', p. 494.

26 Garcia Granados, Girón Irueste and Salvatierra Cuenca, *El Maristán de Granada*, p. 29.

27 O. Grabar, *The Alhambra*. London: Allen Lane, 1978, pp. 43–7; J. Bermúdez López, 'The city plan of the Alhambra', in J. D. Dodds (ed.), *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992, 153–62, p. 155, designates the gates as the Gate of Law, Gate of Seven Floors, Outer Gate and Gate of Arms.

28 L. Torres Balbás, 'Las puertas en recodo en la arquitectura militar Hispano-Musulmana', *Al-Andalus* 25, 1960, 419–41, p. 438.

29 Grabar, *Alhambra*, p. 47.

30 Bermúdez López, 'The city plan of the Alhambra', pp. 155–6.

31 'And the Alhambra (God preserve it) / Is the ruby set above that garland', Ibn Zamrak, quoted in L. P. Harvey, *Islamic Spain 1250 to 1500*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 219.

32 These three epithets are taken from inscriptions in the corridor on the left of the Hall of the Two Sisters and in the windows of the alcove in the same hall; see Pasqual de Gayangos, *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra: From Drawings Taken on the Spot in 1834 by the Late M. Jules Goury, and in 1834 and 1837 by Owen Jones, Archt. With a Complete Translation of the Arabic Inscriptions, and an Historical Notice of the Kings of Granada*. London: O. Jones, 1842, text accompanying plate 15.

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35 *Medieval Islamic Medicine: Ibn Ridwān's Treatise 'On the Prevention of Bodily Ills in Egypt'*, trans. M. W. Dols. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984, p. 26; Aḥmad ʿIsā Bey, *Histoire des bimaristans (hôpitaux) a l'époque islamique*. Cairo: P. Barbey, 1928; Joel Montague, 'Hospitals in the Muslim Near East: a historical overview', *Mimar 14: Architecture in Development*. Singapore: Concept Media Ltd, 1984, 20–7.

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47 Webster, *Els Menorets*, p. 96.
48 Harvey, *Islamic Spain 1250 to 1500*, p. 206; al-Makkari, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, vol. 2, pp. 357, 360; Muhammad Khalid Masud, 'Religion and society in fourteenth century Muslim Spain', *Islamic Studies* 17: 4, 1978, 155–69.
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51 Dols, *Black Death*, p. 93.
52 Dols, *Black Death*, p. 109.
53 Dols, *Black Death*, p. 315.
54 Dols, *Black Death*, p. 118.
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59 Abū'l-'Alā' Idrīs attributed the ability of the nineteenth-century 'Alawi sultan, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, to end seven years of revolt to epidemics sent by God fatally to weaken his opponents. Amira Bennison, personal communication.
60 Muḥammad Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Libro del Cuidado de la Salud Durante las Estaciones del Ano o Libro de Higiene*, trans. Maria de la Concepcion Vasquez de Bento. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1984, p. 33.

COMMERCE AND SPIRITUALITY

The urbanism of Riḍwān Bey

Nicholas Warner

Description of the site

The mid-seventeenth-century architectural complex of Riḍwān Bey in Cairo is located immediately to the south of Bāb Zuwayla outside the Fatimid city walls.[1] It is remarkable not only for its size, but also for the variety of its constituent parts and the ingenuity by which these parts are integrated with each other and with their urban context (Figure 11.1). The founder of this ensemble of buildings was one of the most powerful men in the city of his day, who served as Amīr al-Ḥajj (Commander of the Pilgrimage) for an unprecedented twenty-one years. The site he chose to build on is significant for many reasons. It is located at an important crossroads: a point where the ancient north–south axis of the city, variously called the Shāriʿ al-Aʿẓam or the Qaṣaba, crosses the Darb al-Aḥmar, the major east–west route to the Citadel. Both these arteries featured prominently in public ceremonials during earlier periods, and it can be no coincidence that Riḍwān, the Amīr al-Ḥajj, favoured adjacency to the processional route of the pilgrimage on its departure and return from the Hijaz when he decided to build. In addition, this area was a manufacturing centre for objects essential for both the pilgrims and those who protected them on their journey: a trade perpetuated in vestigial form on the site even today.

Riḍwān's constructions in Cairo, as well as the bequests he made outside Egypt, are described in a series of four surviving endowment deeds dating from 1629 to 1647.[2] Each successive deed adds to its precursor, and summarises previous provisions, but the sequence is incomplete. A complementary physical survey of standing remains is therefore required in order to arrive at an assessment of the probable full extent of his complex in Cairo, which has hitherto been underestimated. The complex was built in stages on either side of the Shāriʿ al-Aʿẓam, which runs from Bāb al-Futūḥ in the north of the city, through Bayn al-Qaṣrayn and Bāb Zuwayla, to the mosque of Sayyida Nafīsa and ultimately to Fusṭāṭ in the south. The land that was

developed was steadily assembled from many small plots previously owned by different parties, and the buildings themselves were funded by income from estates that had been made into *waqf* during earlier periods, which were leased on 90–99 year rents.[3] The essential components of the complex are a *qaṣr* (palace), a *sūq* (market) at ground level, a *rabʿ* (residential apartments) on upper floors, a *wikāla* (urban caravanserai), two *zāwiya*s (small prayer halls) and a *sabīl-maktab* (charitable water dispensary and school for orphans). This list shows at a glance the balance between elements of a strictly commercial nature and those dedicated to charitable or religious objects. Owing to the vagaries of the system for registering monuments in Cairo, different parts of the complex were registered on the Index of Monuments at different times under different numbers, which are marked on the ground plan of the quarter (Figure 11.1). One element (Index 409) was in fact deregistered in 1931 and another (Index 407) only has its façade registered, with the result that not all of the development has statutory protection today.[4]

At the southern end of Riḍwān's development stands a large palace for his own use,[5] built on the remains of earlier Mamluk structures.[6] Though now severely dilapidated and hemmed in by carpentry workshops, the surviving remains, when taken together with nineteenth-century documentation in the form of watercolours[7] and photographs (Figure 11.2), show the palace to have been of great size and beauty.[8] In addition to the large tripartite loggia (*maqʿad*), three major reception rooms (*qāʿa*) still stand on the first floor. All the public parts of the palace are decorated with features typical of a building of this importance and date, such as polychrome marble dados, marble columns and capitals, stained glass windows and painted wooden ceilings. The palace also has its own small private bathhouse on the first floor. The loggia and principal reception room are oriented to the north-west, taking advantage not only of the prevailing wind but also of an imposing view of the twin minarets of the Mamluk mosque of Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh built atop Bāb Zuwayla. The approach to the palace from the street is through a large double stone arched gateway (placed intentionally opposite the tomb chamber of the mosque of Maḥmūd al-Kurdī). A pair of massive stone corbels above the entry support an overhang whose wooden boarded soffit is decorated with painted and applied star motifs. This door must once have led into a small intermediate courtyard (whose boundaries are now unclear). From here, a dog-legged passageway gives separate access to the main palace courtyard and the northern section of the interior of the block. One wing of the palace overlooks the street and is built directly above commercial units, indicating the value of these units in such a location. Such a relationship is familiar from Mamluk palaces, too: the nearby palace of the fourteenth-century Amīr Bashtak, for example, is also partly constructed over shops. According to the *waqf*, somewhere in the precincts of the palace was a mill (*ṭāḥūna*), but this has since disappeared.
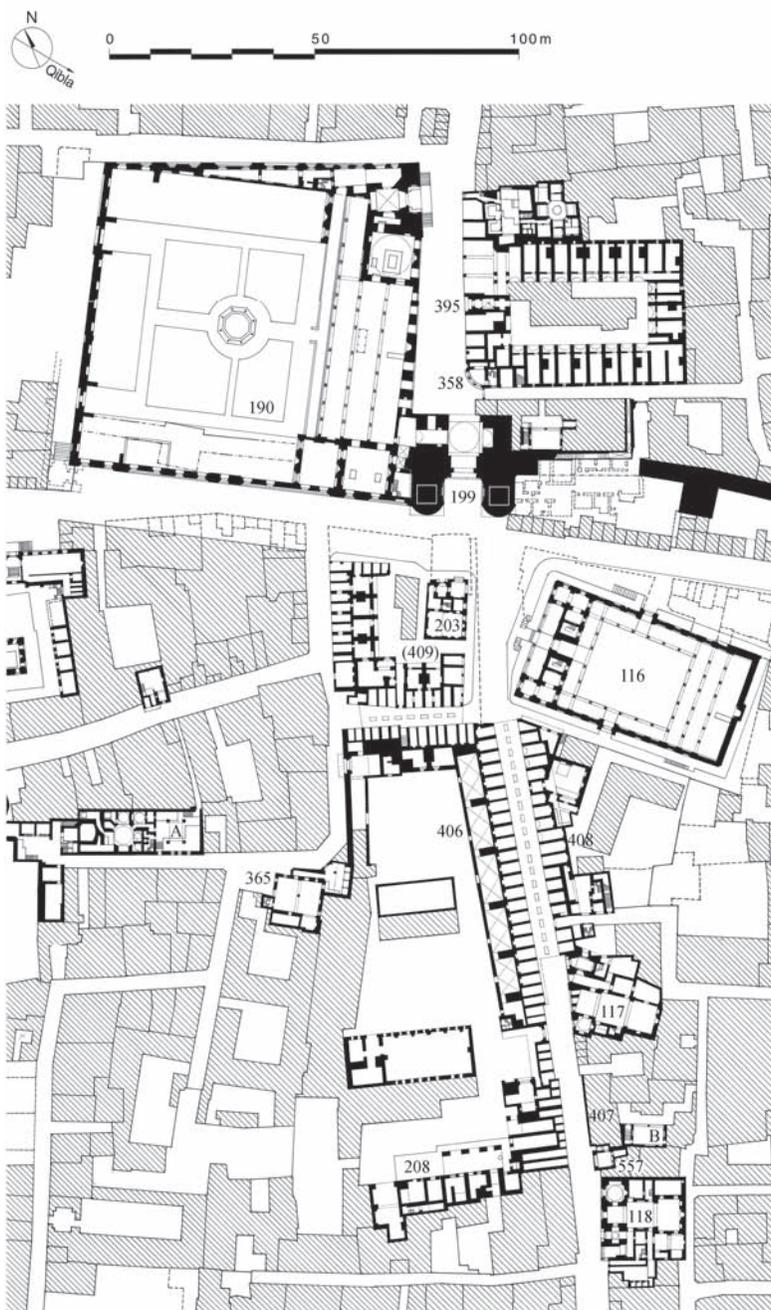
Figure 11.2 Nineteenth-century photograph showing the north façade of the palace of Riḍwān Bey. Courtesy, Creswell Photograph Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

Despite its considerable bulk, the palace nevertheless forms a relatively hidden element of the entire development. Much more obvious and imposing to the pedestrian walking along the main street is the covered market (*sūq*), known as the Qaṣabat Riḍwān (Figure 11.3). Two sections of this market (on the main street and a side street leading west called ʿAṭfat al-Qirrābiyya) are covered by a wooden roof (*saqīfa*) that is punctured by skylights. Perhaps the covered area would have been greater at one time, since a certain percentage of what we see now is the result of alterations to the original fabric carried out by the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* in

Figure 11.1 (*Opposite*) Figure-ground plan of the development of Riḍwān Bey (*c*.1632–50) in current urban context, with dotted lines indicating demolished features. Key to registered monuments by number and deregistered buildings by number in parentheses: 116, mosque of al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalāʾiʿ; 117, mosque of Maḥmūd al-Kurdī; 118, mosque of Īnāl al-Atābakī; 190, mosque of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh; 199, Bāb Zuwayla; 203, *sabīl* and *zāwiya* of Faraj b. Barqūq; 208, *maqʿad* of palace of Riḍwān; 365, *zāwiya* of Riḍwān; 406, western side of Qaṣabat Riḍwān; 407, façade of southern extension of Qaṣabat Riḍwān; 408, eastern side of Qaṣabat Riḍwān; (409), northern extension of Qaṣabat Riḍwān; 557, Sabīl al-Wafāʾiyya; ʿAʿ, Ḥammām al-Qirrābiyya; ʿBʿ, Ottoman house with *maqʿad*. Author's drawing.

Figure 11.3 Early twentieth-century postcard showing the southern end of the Qaṣabat Riḍwān. Courtesy, Postcard Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

the 1920s. In 1923, for example, a part of the Qaṣaba was appropriated by the *Comité* and demolished during the disengagement of the mosque of al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'i'.[9] Despite such alterations to its original appearance, the market still remains one of the most remarkable architectural 'interiors' of the city, and one of the only survivals of such a covered street in Cairo.[10] Such

covered streets were once much more commonplace in the city, although Cairo appears never to have possessed masonry-vaulted street-markets such as those found in many cities in Turkey, Syria and Iran that constitute one of the most characteristic architectural typologies of the Islamic city.

In the mid-seventeenth century, the commercial users of Riḍwān's development would have belonged to one or more guilds. André Raymond records that the prime users were shoemakers and sellers (*qawwāfīn*).[11] Its use by the tent-makers (*khayyāmīn*), however, after whom the street is commonly called today (*sūq al-khayyāmiyya*), is also documented from at least the seventeenth century.[12] The tent-makers were a particularly strong guild in Cairo, as Evliya Çelebi counted 600 tent-makers, 300 tent-rope makers and 150 tent-strap makers in the 1670s.[13] Tents were an essential component of any caravan or military campaign. The tents were fabricated from camel or goat hair, and the more elaborate examples were decorated with banners.[14] A dyeing workshop (*maṣbagha*), perhaps a part of the tent production process at the site, is one element of Riḍwān's complex,[15] though the exact position of this industrial feature cannot be determined today. Ancillary to the production of tents and their accoutrements, and the making of shoes, was the manufacture of the leather and metal components required for the saddles, harnesses and bridles of the horses and camels used by caravans. It is not documented how many of these trades were also carried on in Riḍwān's development, as most of them seem to have been grouped close to the Citadel and the Rumayla in the Ottoman period, near the main horse and camel markets.[16] The presence of traders in leather waterskins (another essential caravan item) is, however, attested in the *sūq al-qirrābiyyīn* (which also bears the name al-Qirrābiyya today), immediately adjacent to the Qaṣabat Riḍwān.[17] The leather trade is also evident in archival photographs (Figure 11.4), as well as in the few shops selling such items that survive today. Given the stability and longevity of the relation between any given trade in Cairo and its physical location, the presence of the saddle-makers in the Qaṣabat Riḍwān is likely to have been established early on in the life of the complex, perhaps in tandem with the shoemakers.

The total estimated number of commercial units on the ground floor of the entire complex is well over a hundred. Included in this figure are those units that occupy the partly demolished block (marked 'A' on Figure 11.5) immediately to the south-west of the *sabīl* and *zāwiya* of Faraj b. Barqūq: Riḍwān's structures must have originally adjoined the earlier building on the southern and western flanks, forming an entire separate *wikāla*.[18] Surviving fragments of this building indicate that it had a structure typical of the *wikāla*, with a courtyard and first-floor gallery giving access to the residential units on the upper floor. An existing narrow passageway connects this courtyard to the side street behind, but the main entrance must have been originally located on the north side of the block on the main street called Taht al-Rabʿ. The cohesion of this grouping has now been destroyed by the

Figure 11.4 Early twentieth-century photograph showing saddle shops and shoe-makers at the northern entrance to the Qaṣabat Riḍwān. Courtesy, Archive of the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe.*

physical dislocation of the *sabīl* and *zāwiya* and the widening of the street that occurred in the 1920s.[19] Other parts of the development are clearly identifiable as contemporary on stylistic grounds despite their current ruina-tion (marked 'B' and 'C' on Figure 11.5). Block 'B', which is unregistered, occupies a plot directly facing the eastern end of 'Aṭfat al-Qirrābiyya, and retains the massive stone corbelling on its façades that are typical of the rest of the development. It contains eleven commercial units on the ground floor, with either apartments or a single residential unit above. Block 'C' lies between the mosque of Maḥmūd al-Kurdī (Index 117) and the Sabīl al-Wafāʾiyya (Index 557). Half of this block has been demolished, but the
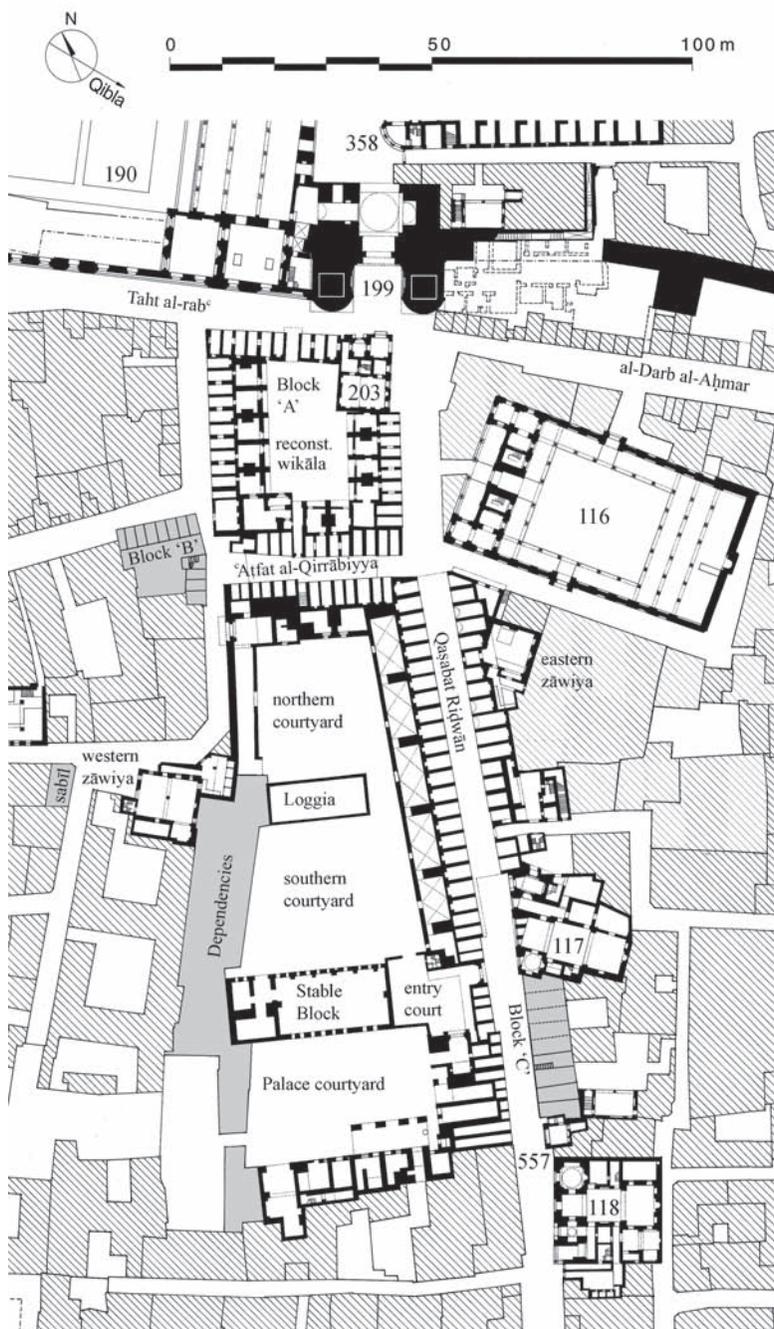
Figure 11.5 Figure-ground plan of complex of Riḍwān Bey showing reconstructed elements (unsurveyed sections in grey). Author's drawing.

surviving section comprises five corbelled bays (ten shops) and a staircase to apartments on the upper floor. What remains of the façade, which would have originally extended between the two earlier monuments, is separately listed (Index 407). Immediately to the east of Block 'C' are the remains of an Ottoman house with a *maqʿad* (unregistered), which may also be of the same period, although it is not known whether this formed a part of Riḍwān's development.

All the shops in the development would once have been fronted by stone benches (*maṣāṭib*) where the shopkeepers would have sat.[20] Since the level of the streets has risen considerably (by at least 1.2 m) in the centuries since Riḍwān Bey constructed his buildings, these benches would now be below ground level if they survive. On the western side of the main street (Index 406), shops run in a continuous line, unbroken except by the entrance to the palace compound. The situation is more complex on the eastern side of the street (Index 408). Here, the shops include two pairs of brick-vaulted units (unlike the remainder of the units, which have timber-beam roofs) and all units have small rectangular ventilation holes above their principal openings. The continuity of the shops is also broken by a shallow-arched stone doorway that leads to a small side street. This door still preserves the pivot-emplacement for a large wooden gate, which means that it once provided a controlled access to an independent *ḥāra* (closed quarter of dead-end streets).[21] Immediately within this gate are two staircases that lead to the residential apartments on the upper floors.

The distribution of shops on the east side is further interrupted in plan and elevation by a square-headed door, framed by stone-carved strapwork, that leads to a small *zāwiya*. This prayer-hall has no windows because of its location within the block: it is lit by a central rooflight and ventilated with a *malqaf* (wind-scoop). The *mihrāb* has a high pointed-arch hood flanked by octagonal marble columns with tulip-form capitals and bases. Most remarkably, the recent removal of modern plaster from the *qibla* wall has revealed traces of an elaborate painting at high level, made directly upon the limestone of the wall without using a plaster substrate and apparently contemporary with the original foundation.[22] This painting is symmetrically composed, with arabesque elements on an upper register, a central 'trompe l'oeil' bull's eye window above the *mihrāb* and a naive perspectival representation of the buildings of the Qaṣabat Riḍwān on the lower level. The buildings are identifiable through the representation of the distinctive cornice that crowns most of the internal and external façades of the complex, as well as of the fenestration patterns. The painting stops on a line at the height of the springing of the hood of the *mihrāb*, which implies that a decorative cladding (probably a marble dado) once lined the *zāwiya*. Architectural representations, particularly of known structures, are extremely rare in Cairo, and their appearance on the *qibla* wall of a mosque is highly unusual. A self-referential painting in such a context may well be unique.

Above the shops throughout the development are residential apartments that overlook the street (Figures 11.6 and 11.7). These standardised units conform to the relatively well known, and sophisticated, typology (continued from the Mamluk period) of the *rab'*.[23] This form of collective, vertically arranged, housing is something of a Cairene speciality and most likely owes its origins to Roman *insulae*.[24] The units are of a two-storey modular design, paired back to back to minimise the construction of dry-drop latrine shafts. They are accessed from the street by staircases and long corridors located to their rear. Within each unit are secondary stairs that give access to smaller rooms at the upper level and an enclosed roof terrace above this. In plan and section the units are skilfully arranged to incorporate natural ventilation and lighting, and a hierarchical range of spaces. The largest and most important of these is the *riwāq*: a double-height living space with a dropped entry zone (*durqa'a*) and *īwān* with windows onto the street flanked by niches with shelves. The *riwāq* is preceded by an anteroom, where the stairs (with latrines beneath them) are located. These lead to subsidiary smaller rooms for sleeping on the upper level and the roof. In the case of Riḍwān's *rab'*, the units in the residential ranges on the east and west of the street vary in their size and design, indicating different construction dates and builders as well as specific site constraints (see Figure 11.7 for the variations between the standard units in each range). On the eastern (hitherto undocumented) side, the units are more compressed from front to back. They occupy three bays in width, perhaps to compensate for the more restricted available area. The units on the western side are more spacious, and occupy two bays in width. They even possess simple limestone *suffra*s or shelves projecting from within a niche, supported on a pair of arches, for the placement of vessels associated with water. In more lavish houses, the *suffra* is a feature that is usually made from marble inlaid with polychrome geometric patterns.

The residents of such a *rab'*, as Raymond has demonstrated,[25] were mostly lower middle-class artisans and shopkeepers. They probably worked locally, conceivably within the same building at ground level. As the residential units have no obviously identifiable food-preparation area or anything more than a latrine, the occupants would have made regular use of the many local cook shops and food vendors, as well as nearby public bathing facilities, to fulfil their bodily needs. They almost certainly utilised the roofs of their apartments for cooking or for rearing animals, much as is practised today. Two other units of a more complex design than that of the standard *rab'* apartments survive on either side of the western end of the side street, 'Aṭfat al-Qirrābiyya. The northern unit has already been well documented,[26] but its southern counterpart has hitherto been ignored. This has a more ambitious design that includes a large *qā'a*, oriented north–south with a *malqaf* at its northern end and stained glass windows (*qamariyyāt*). The latrine in this unit is also distinctive, possessing a ventilation shaft capped by a pierced stucco
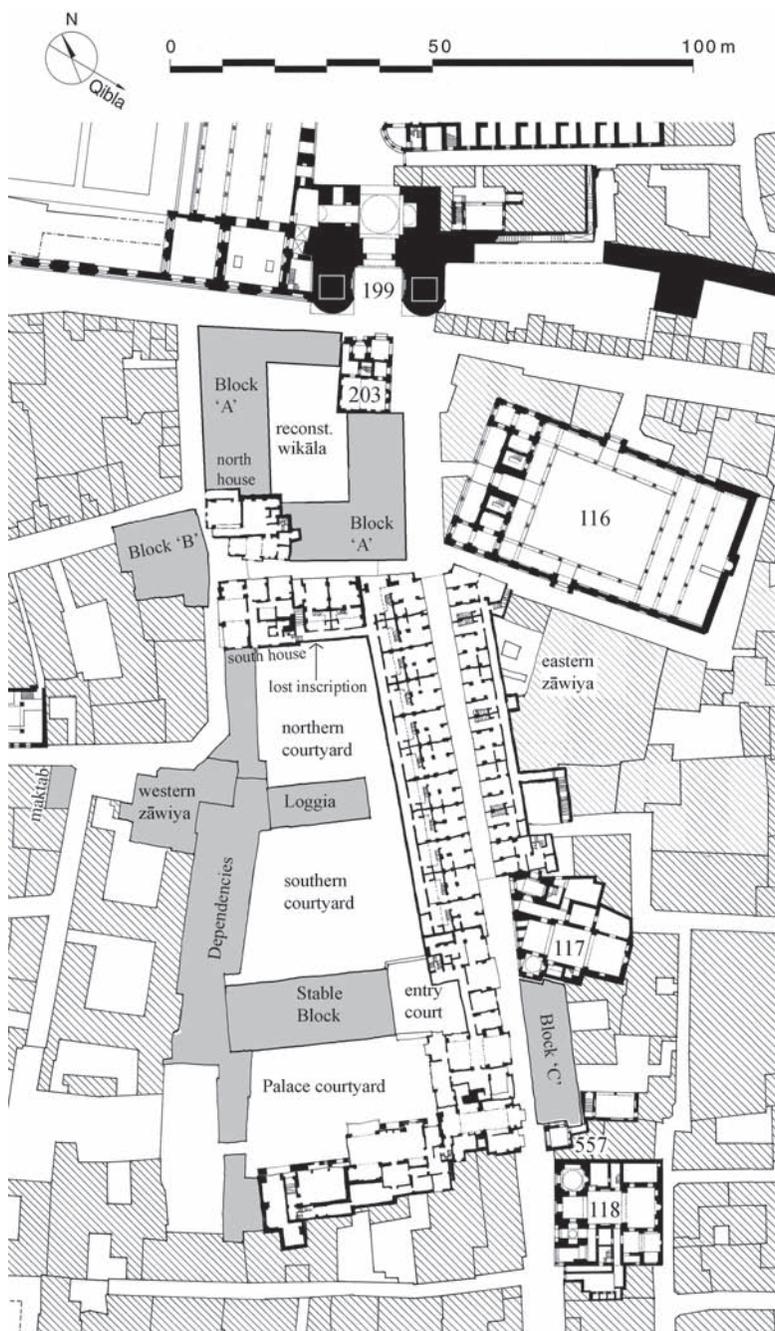
Figure 11.6 First floor sketch plan of complex of Riḍwān Bey (unsurveyed sections in grey). Author's drawing.
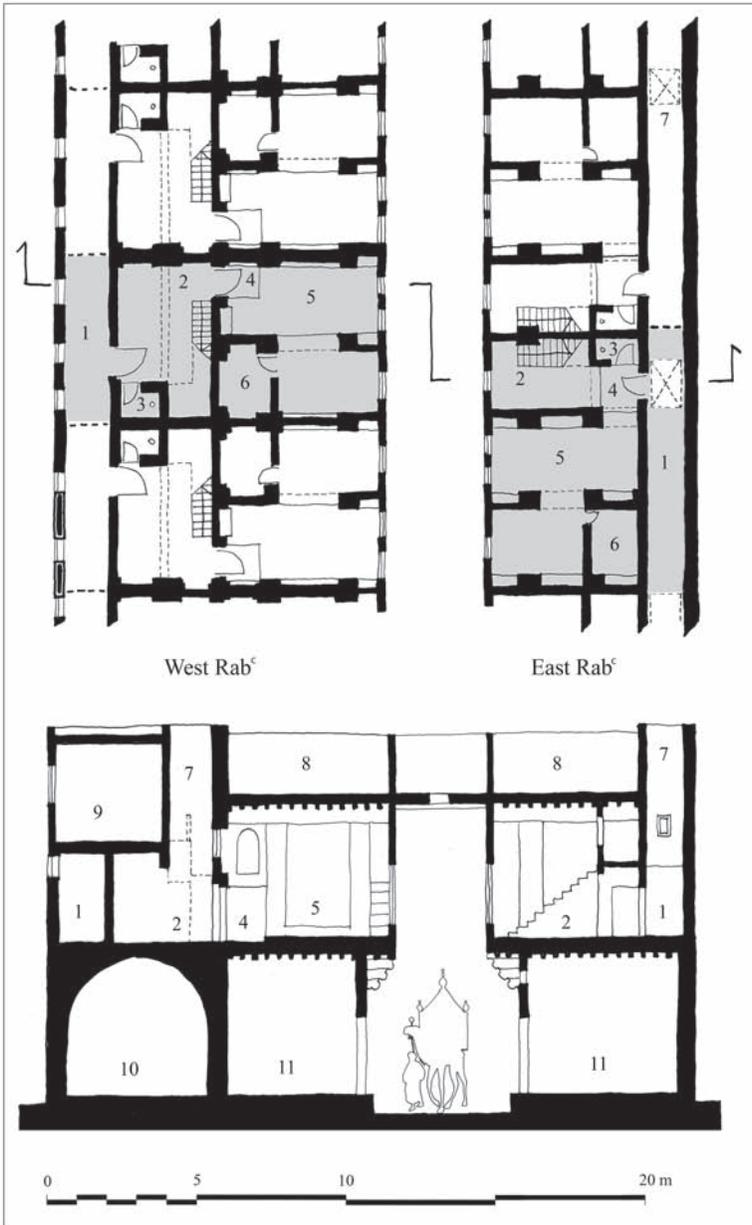
Figure 11.7 Sketch plan of typical apartments in eastern and western blocks with area occupied by each unit shown in grey (top). Typical section through street (with *maḥmal* in profile), shops and apartments (bottom). Key: 1, corridor; 2, stairs to upper floor; 3, latrine; 4, *durqā'a*; 5, main *riwāq*; 6, service space; 7, light well; 8, roof terrace; 9, bedroom; 10, storage; 11, shop. Author's drawing.

cupola. One may speculate that such a unit may have served as the domicile of the *nāẓir* (administrator) of the *waqf* who would have been in charge of the collection of rents and maintenance for the whole development.

On the west side of the complex is a separate large stone arched and gated entrance to the interior of the block, which has previously been considered as a *wikāla*. Its unusual design, however, argues for a alternative interpretation. This area of the site has been almost totally obliterated, but the approach through a dog-legged corridor survives, as does the basic division of the area into two courtyards, and the distribution of ground-floor storage units beneath the *rab'*. The northern courtyard is separated from the southern by a freestanding stone building whose walls survive to first floor level. Traces of stone carved geometric patterns and strapwork indicate that this structure was originally an arched loggia (*maq'ad*),[27] oriented to the north. The remains of another stone structure separate the southern courtyard from the main courtyard of the palace. This building shares the same orientation as the *maq'ad*, and once had a cantilevered upper storey: it has been suggested that these were stables, with barracks above them, that may have been used by a contingent of Janissaries serving Riḍwān.[28] The presence of such elements as the stable block and secondary loggia would certainly seem to suggest that the design of this part of the complex was intended to serve more ceremonial or official requirements. Perhaps this was as a direct result of the role of the Amīr al-Ḥajj, and therefore related to the needs of the pilgrims' caravan. One tiny clue that corroborated this theory (unfortunately swept away by recent restoration) was the presence, at high level on the wall of the *rab'* directly facing the loggia, of a plaster inscription in raised relief, containing the name of Allah. Such an inscription would, perhaps, be less likely to be found in the purely commercial context of a *wikāla*.

The construction of the ground floor of the entire complex is of limestone masonry, with only selected parts of the palace extending above the ground floor in stone. Marble is used only for the columns of the palace loggia. Otherwise, fired brick rendered with a lime plaster (externally and internally) is used for the upper floors. On the street-facing façades the openings to the shop units are spanned with flat stone lintels composed of interlocking voussoirs with relieving arches above them. Huge stone corbels, with timbers spanning between them, support the upper floors. The limestone masonry on these façades is painted at ground level with red ochre horizontal stripes to create the *ablaq* effect so popular on religious monuments. It is not known if this was part of the original design of the structure, or whether it dates to the nineteenth century, when the painting of such stripes on buildings was particularly popular. The design of the *mashrabiyya* (turned-wood) windows of the residential units facing the streets is also unusual, as they are of a vertical sliding-sash pattern rather than fixed units.

To the west of the main block of the development stands another small *zāwiya*, of a similar scale to that embedded within the plan of the eastern

section of the *rabʿ* on the main street but with a slightly different *qibla* orientation. This is a simple limestone structure approached through an unadorned square-headed door. The roof of the building is supported by a single, centrally positioned, spoliated Roman marble column and Corinthian capital. Natural light and ventilation is provided by numerous windows around the perimeter, and the interior is unadorned except for a painted wooden inscription band running immediately below the ceiling.[29] To the right of the *qibla* wall is a separate small chamber containing the tomb of an unknown saint. It remains unclear whether Riḍwān's provision in his endowment of six Qur'ān readers[30] was for this *zāwiya* or that on the eastern side of Shāriʿ al-Aʿẓam. Opposite the *zāwiya* are the scant remains of a *sabīl*, and it seems reasonable to assume by virtue of its proximity to the main complex that this may in fact be the site of the *sabīl-maktab* (fountain-school) that is mentioned in one of the *waqf* documents as part of the development. This is dated to 1650, making it one of the last components of the project to be constructed.[31] In the adjacent side street is a small bathhouse, known as the Ḥammām al-Qirrābiyya, whose exact foundation date (as with many of the bathhouses of Cairo) is uncertain. This may have provided the residents of the complex with their bathing facility, but in addition there are no fewer than three other bathhouses within a radius of 400 metres of Riḍwān's development: the *ḥammām* of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, the Ḥammām al-Sukkāriyya and the *ḥammām* on the Darb al-Aḥmar.

Riḍwān's market, together with the palace and other elements of the complex, demanded the acquisition of a considerable amount of land, as well as the selective demolition of earlier structures. At least one parcel is known to have come through his wife's inheritance of the palace. Along the main street he took care to incorporate within his new constructions all pre-existing religious or charitable foundations. These are (proceeding from north to south along the street), the *sabīl* and *zāwiya* of Faraj b. Barqūq (Index 203), the mosque of Maḥmūd al-Kurdī (Index 117), the Sabīl al-Wafāʾiyya (Index 557) and the mosque of Īnāl al-Atābakī (Index 118). The façade and entrance of the Fatimid mosque of al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalāʾiʿ (Index 116) were most probably already obscured by other buildings when he came to build, but Riḍwān may also have continued the eastern façade of his market in front of this mosque. He may even have constructed the replacement minaret over the entrance to the mosque that was subsequently demolished by the *Comité* and the Ministry of Endowments in 1924.

Riḍwān not only respected pre-existing buildings physically, incorporating them into a new urban landscape, he also cared for them in his endowments. These include, for example, payments for a servant of the mosque of al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalāʾiʿ and for a *kātib* (reader) at the mosque of Maḥmūd al-Kurdī.[32] Furthermore, when the main street itself was widened and made consistent in its width,[33] existing alleyways to the east and west were incorporated into the overall design. Parallels to this scale of architecturally coordinated

development on either side of a heavily built-up thoroughfare in Cairo are few. They are found in Mamluk foundations on the same street such as that of Sultan Qanṣūh al-Ghūrī, some 500 metres to the north, or of the Amīr Shaykhu, nearly 2 kilometres to the south at the intersection with Shāriʿ Salība.[34] These are useful precedents since in addition to their purely religious components, the former complex also incorporates a covered street market and a *wikāla*, and the latter a bathhouse. In the seventeenth century, as Raymond points out, there is only one contemporary development that is in any way comparable to Riḍwān's work: the constructions of Ibrāhīm Aghā al-Mustaḥfiẓān, built along the Darb al-Aḥmar with the mosque of Aqsunqur as their focal point.[35]

The patron

So what of the patron of the largest real-estate development in Ottoman Cairo? Most historians agree that Riḍwān was a Mamluk of Dhū'l-Fiqār Bey, an important amir who gave his name to the Fiqārī faction that remained politically dominant for most of the seventeenth century.[36] Following the common practice of Mamluks marrying the wives of their deceased masters, Riḍwān married Dhū'l-Fiqār's widow. The chronicler al-Jabartī, writing more than a century later, describes Riḍwān Bey thus: 'He held the command of the Pilgrimage for many years and was a pious man, observing the fast, prayer, and the *dhikr*. He built the quarter known by his name outside the Zuwayla gate by his house, and established a *waqf* for his freedmen and for pious and charitable objects.'[37]

This rather bald description can be fleshed out with other details that may further illuminate Riḍwān's ambitions for himself and for his urban enterprise. He is further described by al-Jabartī as *ṣāḥib al-ʿimāra*,[38] or 'Master of Building', possibly in reference to his constructions in Cairo, or alternatively in recognition of his putative role in rebuilding the Kaʿba in 1630–1. It has been plausibly suggested that Riḍwān Bey was sent in 1630 by the then Governor of Egypt, Meḥmed Pasha, to Mecca to supervise the restoration of the Kaʿba, which had been seriously damaged by a flood, whose waters rose 'to the level of its keyhole'.[39] Prior to this mission, Riḍwān was promoted from the rank of Aghā to Beg, or Bey. His task was to coordinate the construction project (for which the majority of building materials were imported from Egypt), and to execute the works on this sensitive structure with the consent of the religious authorities and notables of Mecca (a process fraught with complexity). On completion of the project and in recognition of his services, Riḍwān was presented with a complete *kiswa* (the cloth covering of the Kaʿba discussed below) by the Sharīf of Mecca, which he then donated to the Sultan's treasury.[40]

If, indeed, it was the Fiqārī Riḍwān Bey who was charged with this project rather than a homonym (such as the contemporary, but junior, Riḍwān

Abū'l Shawārib), then it must have given him an even stronger claim to the mantle of piety he assumed, as well as a potent personal connection with the epicentre of Islam and an excellent foundation for his many years' service as Commander of the Pilgrimage. It may also serve to explain the attempt he made to associate himself, through the creation of a spurious genealogy, with the tribe of the Quraysh, and through them the Prophet Muḥammad himself.[41] The anonymous author of the genealogy, titled 'A cogent demonstration of the lineage of the Circassians from Quraysh', wrote it in January 1632 just after the completion of the restoration of the Ka'ba. By situating the Circassian Mamluks, and most particularly himself, as descendants from the Quraysh – the Prophet's own tribe responsible for the rebuilding of the Ka'ba in the seventh century – Riḍwān seems to have wished to validate his own role as 'Guardian of the Holy Places' and Amīr al-Ḥajj.[42]

Riḍwān commanded the title of Amīr al-Ḥajj for two periods: 1632–7 and from 1640 until his death in 1656. During the Mamluk period, the control of this office was considered a mark of prestige, and the majority of those who held it continued to be Mamluks even during Ottoman rule.[43] On a practical level it gave the holder significant financial and military support. In addition to buying and transporting the supplies for the caravan itself, the Amīr al-Ḥajj and his staff[44] had to organise the parallel transport of both cash and grain to the Ḥaramayn, and were ultimately responsible for the physical protection of the whole expedition from marauding Bedouin. By the mid-seventeenth century expenses associated with the caravan were so high that, despite certain not inconsiderable state subsidies, a large amount of the private revenue of the Amīr al-Ḥajj was spent on the pilgrimage. Riḍwān had the reputation of being a generous sponsor.[45] Study of the will of Sulaymān Jāwīsh, a *sirdār* of the Ḥajj who died in 1739 just before setting off on the pilgrimage, sheds light on the economics of the Ḥajj in the succeeding century.[46] For him, the investment made in the pilgrimage caravan represented a third of his total fortune, which he hoped to recoup through trade. Luxury goods (such as textiles from the Languedoc) were routinely transported with the caravan to Mecca and there exchanged for spices and coffee.[47] As the caravan was protected by an armed guard, it was one way for this trade to be carried out in safety.

To facilitate the passage of the caravan, Riḍwān also made charitable endowments for a mosque and storage facilities along the route. Caravanserais provided shelter for pilgrims at key way-stations, and were provisioned (for human and animal needs) in advance by supplies from Cairo taken over land or by sea. In addition to supplying pilgrims during their journey, and enabling merchants to indulge in commercial speculation, the caravan was also the mechanism for the transport of large quantities of cash and grain to the Hijaz by the state. This Mamluk custom was continued into the Ottoman period. Çelebi describes numerous large grain silos dedicated to supplying the Hijaz near Old Cairo in the late seventeenth century. At least

two *wikāla*s in Cairo still bear the name of the twin sanctuaries (al-Ḥaramayn) for which, presumably, their goods were intended.[48] Further to developing the route of the caravan, Riḍwān in his *waqf*s also endowed Qur'ān readers and muezzins at both Mecca and Medina, and gave charitable support to the indigent of both cities. More unusually, he made a separate provision for the eunuchs (*aghawāt*) of the Ka'ba, one branch of society that controlled access to and cleaned the holiest of holies within the Prophet's Mosque and the Ḥaram al-Sharīf.[49] This may be an acknowledgement of the close working relationship he must have developed with the eunuchs when rebuilding the Ka'ba.

Riḍwān Bey died on 18 April 1656.[50] Although it is likely that he was buried in the southern cemetery of Cairo (a favoured resting-place for many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mamluk beys), the attribution[51] of a tomb there dated to 1686 (Index 384) seems questionable and it must be assumed that this was built for another bey with the same name.[52]

Ceremonies of pilgrimage

Until the twentieth century, the start of the Ḥajj in Cairo was celebrated with an impressive ceremonial procession (Figure 11.8). This seems to have been initiated by Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars.[53] The route of this procession linked all the major centres of the city prior to the departure of the pilgrimage itself. The symbolic focus of the ceremony was upon three objects: the *kiswa* (the embroidered brocade covering for the Ka'ba that was renewed every year), the *sanjaq* (originally the banner of the Prophet Muḥammad) and the *maḥmal* (a litter-like canopy carried by a camel). These three objects need some further explanation, as they appear among Riḍwān's titles: 'the Commander of the noble Flag and Bearer of the eminent *maḥmal*',[54] and they provided an important symbolic link between Cairo and Mecca that was reforged on an annual basis.

In the year 1263, al-Maqrīzī records an urban procession through Cairo and Fusṭāṭ in which the various parts of the *kiswa* were displayed.[55] These were the four side sections, the four sections of inscription band (the *ḥizām*) and the curtain that was hung in front of the entrance to the Ka'ba. Owing to its large size and weight, the *kiswa* was always paraded in pieces:[56] it was only completely assembled in Mecca, when the Ka'ba was ritually washed and 'dressed'. Some fragments of the *kiswa* would have returned to Cairo (in even smaller pieces), as the previous year's *kiswa* was traditionally cut up for souvenirs and sold to pilgrims by the Sharīf of Mecca on conclusion of the pilgrimage. The *kiswa* for the Ka'ba was supplied by Egypt from 1263 until 1962 with only two breaks: one in 1517 due to the Ottoman conquest,[57] and from 1926 to 1936 due to political problems created by the Wahhabis. In the Ottoman period until at least 1834, the *kiswa* was woven in the Qaṣr al-Ablaq in the Citadel.[58] In the second half of the nineteenth century a
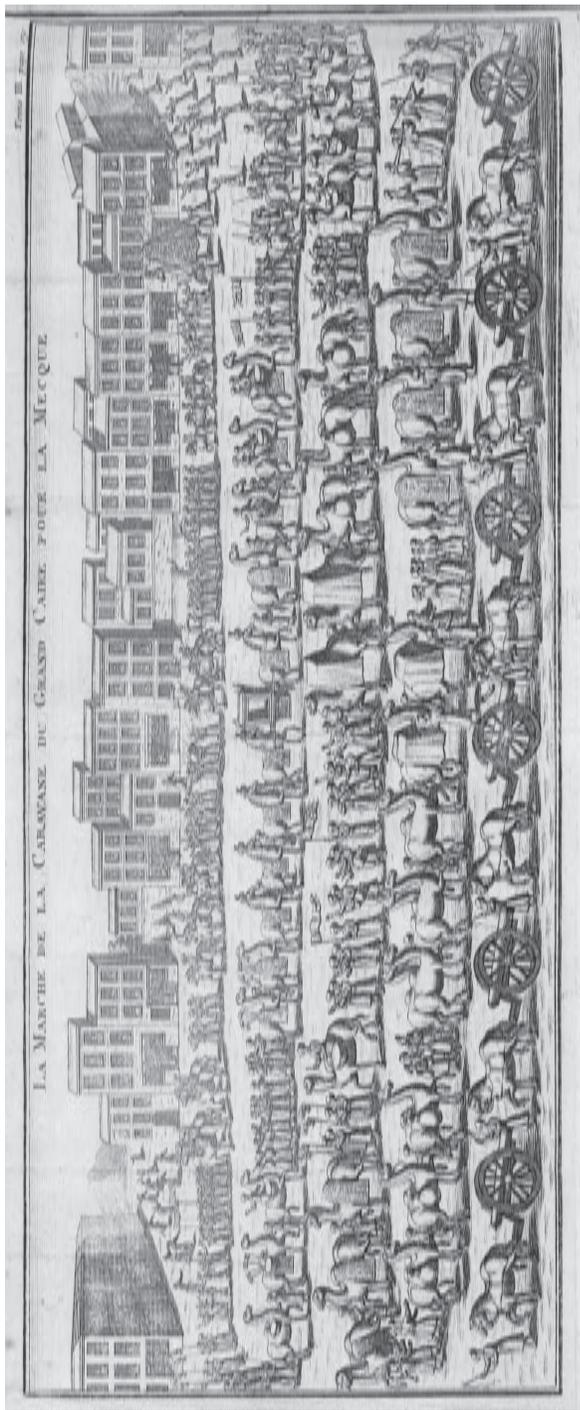
Figure 11.8 The *maḥmal* procession departing the Qara Maydān below the Citadel. This is the earliest printed European representation of the ceremony. Copper engraving on fold-out plate, from *Voyage du sieur Paul Lucas, fait en M.DCC.XIV, &c. par ordre de Louis XIV. Dans la Turquie, l'Asie, Sourie, Palestine, Haute & Basse Egypte, &c*, 3 vols, Amsterdam: Aux dépens de la compagnie, 1744, vol. 2, opposite p. 131. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

factory for the production of the *kiswa* – the *dār al-kiswa* – was constructed in Shāri' Khurunfīsh within the boundaries of Fatimid Cairo. Until 1603, the whole *kiswa* was sent to Mecca from Egypt, but after this date the covering evolved into an inner and an outer layer: the inner ones made in Istanbul and the outer ones in Cairo.

The colouring of the *kiswa* was also subject to change, challenging our contemporary 'iconic' image of the Ka'ba as a black-clad cube. In the late twelfth century, for example, the *kiswa* was made of green silk with red inscription bands.[59] The late sixteenth century saw experimentation with a white covering and black lettering in order to avoid the rapid bleaching of black dyes in the strong Arabian sun.[60] In later history, the Wahhabis adopted a red covering.[61] Black, however, was the commonest colour used for the *kiswa*. The inscriptional content of the main covering, the *ḥizām* and the curtain seem to have varied with time, but it seems that the principal inscription gave the name and titles of the reigning sultan. Qur'anic inscriptions were not always used.

The *sanjaq* was the sacred black standard of the Prophet first carried in military campaigns against the Quraysh, and in many subsequent battles waged by rulers of the Muslim world.[62] It was probably brought to Cairo with the transfer of the caliphate in the time of Baybars, and was one of the relics of the Prophet captured from the Mamluks by the Ottomans in 1517.[63] From Cairo it was transported to Istanbul, where it remains on display in the Topkapı Saray. Although the *sanjaq* was replaced at the end of the seventeenth century by three green silk banners, on to which small pieces of the original had been stitched, it is not clear whether these were used in subsequent pilgrimage processions. The use of some sort of emblematic substitute seems likely. The appearance of the banner in the Cairo Ḥajj procession in the second half of the seventeenth century is well attested by, for example, Çelebi.[64]

Many theories have been advanced for the appearance of the *maḥmal*, and whether it contained anything.[65] E. W. Lane draws attention to two small copies of the Qur'ān (one on a scroll and one in book form) that were attached to the outside of the structure.[66] Çelebi reports that the *maḥmal* was thought to have originally held the personal possessions of the Prophet, such as his gown, toothbrush, wooden clogs and an ewer for ablutions.[67] European commentators repeatedly, and erroneously, referred to the *maḥmal* as the 'Holy Carpet', perhaps due to a confusion with the *kiswa*. It seems the *maḥmal* was, in fact, empty; thus its despatch should primarily be interpreted as an act that was symbolic of Mamluk, and later Ottoman, political and military hegemony of the Muslim world. Its religious meaning was derived by association. The oldest surviving *maḥmal* is that of Sultan al-Ghūrī, but later examples can be seen in Damascus and Cairo.[68] The appearance of the *maḥmal* itself changed according to practical requirements: the litter had both processional and day-to-day coverings: the former a rich embroidered

brocade with pom-poms and tassels, and the latter a lighter material.[69] The primary colours of the Egyptian *maḥmal* seem to have been red and green. The texts embroidered upon the coverings were always pious but not always Qur'anic. The Mamluks and Ottomans sent *maḥmal*s to Mecca not only from Cairo, but also from Damascus (during the period 1293–1914).[70] *Maḥmal*s were also sent from Basra (from 1319), Ṣanᶜā' (from 1297) and Istanbul. In Istanbul, the ceremony appears to have further evolved into a ritual where the *maḥmal* itself processed, but did not actually leave the city. *Maḥmal*s from Egypt, Syria and Yemen are represented in the harem palace of the Topkapı on a panel of seventeenth-century tiles depicting the Holy Places.[71] Their appearance in this context can only reinforce the idea that they were symbolic of the domination of the Ottoman Sultans in whose names the *maḥmal*s were sent out, and served as a reminder of the unity and size of their empire.

Only the Egyptian *maḥmal* procession, originating in Cairo, will be considered here. This was undoubtedly the most significant of these processions, and must have been a natural development of the ceremony involving the *kiswa* that al-Maqrīzī described for the year 1263. The history of the procession is both political and religious, and is marked by rivalries between competing individuals as well as empires. Egypt was of great importance to the Hijaz as the main source of grain (from at least the Mamluk period if not earlier), and Egyptian influence continued in the region long after the Ottoman conquest. The guardianship of the Holy Places was, for example, exercised by a society of eunuchs who had retired from service in Egypt, supported by generous endowments in that country.[72]

As one of the most colourful of the annual public celebrations in Cairo, the *maḥmal* procession was extensively described by numerous visitors to the city, from both Europe and the Maghrib.[73] It was also the subject of a didactic treatise dating to 1554.[74] This is the manual composed by an official responsible for the Pilgrimage Office in Egypt (*dīwān al-ḥajj*), one 'Abd al-Qādir al-Anṣārī al-Jazarī al-Ḥanbalī, entitled 'The Book of Unique and Valuable Pearls Concerning Reports of the Hajj and the Glorious Route to Mecca' (*al-Durar al-farā'id al-munaẓẓama fī akhbār al-ḥajj wa ṭarīq Makka al-muᶜaẓẓama*). The work was intended to give the Amīr al-Ḥajj all the knowledge of Arab tribes, itineraries, gifts to make and functionaries[75] that he would need successfully to complete his task. It is not known whether Riḍwān Bey ever consulted this text, but his unqualified success in the role is attested by the number of years he spent doing it.

At least three distinct parts to the *maḥmal* ceremony can be determined, which probably all had their origins in Mamluk practice and were continued in the Ottoman period.[76] Records of a procession (*dawarān al-maḥmal*) through the city with both the *maḥmal* and the *kiswa* (rather than solely the latter) go back to 1277.[77] The precise processional routes used on each occasion, together with their timings, are not adequately documented and are

assumed to have varied according to period. The most plausible of these routes are shown on Figure 11.9, and it is probable that at one or more of its stages, the procession passed directly through the covered street created by Riḍwān. In later times, the first two parts of the ceremony, prior to the departure of the pilgrimage caravan, may have been condensed into a single event, as seems to have been related by E. W. Lane.

The first, and most elaborate, of these occasions took place in the middle of the month of Rajab, when the *maḥmal* was shown to the people of Cairo to remind Muslims that the time of pilgrimage was soon approaching.[78] The starting point was outside the doors of the mosque of al-Ḥākim, between Bāb al-Futūḥ and Bāb al-Naṣr on the north side of the city.[79] From here the *maḥmal* proceeded south to Bāb Zuwayla[80] and then on to the Citadel via the Shāriʿ al-Aʿẓam or the Darb al-Aḥmar. While the *maḥmal* was in the Citadel, lance exercises were held in the Qara Maydān below the fortress walls. These games were initiated by the Mamluks, and continued by the Ottomans, and were a popular part of the entertainment afforded by the celebration.[81] Exiting the Citadel, probably on the following day, the *maḥmal* was accompanied by the Amīr al-Ḥajj, his guards, and water porters. Once outside, in the Maydān al-Rumayla, the procession was joined by the four *qāḍī*s, the *muḥtasib* (Inspector of Markets), representatives of the guilds[82] and other notables of the city. From here, the procession made its way to Fusṭāṭ, on roads that had been decked out with flags, before returning to the mosque of al-Ḥākim, sometimes taking in the port of Bulāq on the way back. Sometimes there was a considerable time lag (up to several months) between this first procession and the actual departure of the caravan.

The second phase of the ceremony started in the month of Shawwāl, when the *maḥmal* left the mosque of al-Ḥākim, and proceeded to the Citadel, probably via the Shāriʿ al-Aʿẓam. It then returned via the Darb al-Aḥmar, the Qaṣaba and Shāriʿ al-Jammāliyya to Bāb al-Naṣr in company with the various components of the *kiswa* and the *sanjaq*. This was a more limited route and was also decorated by tradition: shops adjacent to the circuit were given three days' notice to adorn their street frontages with flags. An early twentieth-century photograph gives an impression of the density of this parade (Figure 11.10). During the procession, considerable *baraka* was to be gained from touching parts of the *kiswa* or the camel carrying the *maḥmal*. There was even the custom of women, watching the procession from the seclusion of the upper storeys of adjacent buildings, hurling long scarves down to make contact with the top of the *maḥmal* and thereby gain *baraka*. In Ottoman times, such behaviour, which paralleled heterodox Islamic practice at shaykhs' tombs, was frowned on by stricter theologians, but their disapproval had little impact on the festivities. If anything there seems to have been an increase in the number of Sufi brotherhoods joining the procession.[83] Once arrived at the mosque of al-Ḥākim, the *maḥmal* waited
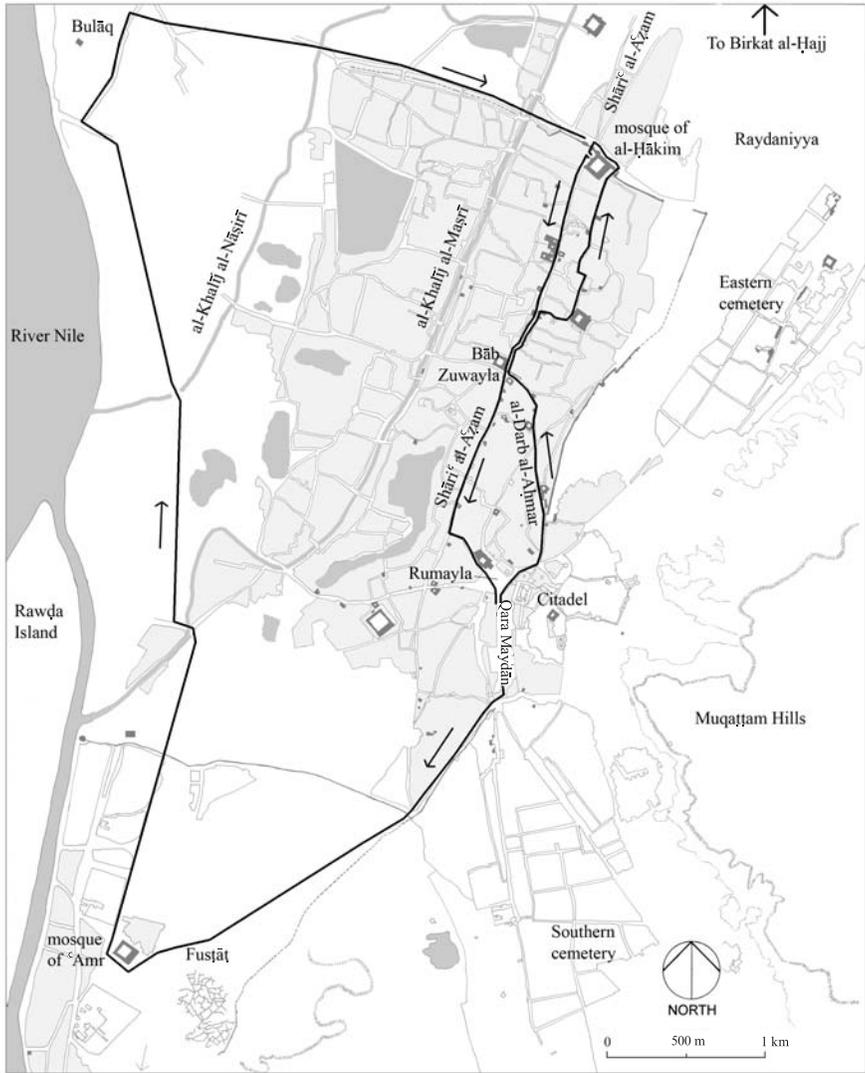
Figure 11.9 Map of Cairo, based on the *Description de l'Égypte* plan of the city, showing longer and shorter circuits of the *maḥmal* procession through the city. Author's drawing.

there until the final departure for the Birkat al-Ḥajj, the first stop on the route to Mecca.

The third, and final, part of the ceremony was carried out on the return of the pilgrimage, when the route followed by the *maḥmal* through the city upon its departure was reversed. From 1937 to 1952, when the *maḥmal* (but

217

Figure 11.10 Photograph *c*.1930 by KAC Cresswell showing the *maḥmal* procession passing the Rabʿ al-Tabbāna on the Darb al-Aḥmar. Courtesy, Creswell Photograph Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo (Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology Creswell Archive negative EA.CA.1782).

not the *kiswa*) was refused by the Wahhabis, the procession took place only in Cairo.[84] There were thirty-four stages of between 45 and 50 km on the route from Cairo to Mecca. The round trip took approximately 100 days, including 20 days at the Holy Cities.[85] While at Mecca, and at Arafat, the *maḥmal* was placed in a position where it could clearly be seen by all the pilgrims.[86] Both Syrian and Egyptian *maḥmal*s are illustrated in a nineteenth-century 'Mecca Certificate' given as a proof of the pilgrimage to participants.[87] Until the latter part of the twentieth century, representations of the *maḥmal* commonly used to be painted on the walls of houses to celebrate the successful return of a pilgrim. Today, such wall paintings are mostly seen on rural houses, though they may have previously been as common in urban contexts.

Conclusion

Riḍwān Bey inserted his foundation into a rich existing ceremonial, social and architectural context. As far as architecture is concerned, his buildings had to combine two factors of great importance in Cairo: respect for the *qibla* and respect for the street. This he successfully did on a large scale. All cities of the Muslim world have embedded within them, due to the *qibla* orientation of their religious structures, an explicit reference to an alternate city: Mecca, the 'City of God', with the Ka'ba at its heart. Recalled five times a day at prayer, Mecca becomes an imagined extension of the host city. Only for those who fulfil one of the pillars of Islam by carrying out the pilgrimage is this city of the imagination – a city that is only rarely shown in schematic representations – truly reified. In Cairo, reference to Mecca is reflected in the physical adjustments (be they subtle shifts or major contortions) that are made in the ground plans of nearly all religious buildings to accommodate the conflicting imperatives of mundane versus divine orientation.

Riḍwān also related his buildings to the wider landscape of the city by using them to frame the existing architecture and making them part of the backdrop to the *maḥmal* ceremony. The relationship between Cairo and Mecca, visible in the physical orientation of religious structures, was also annually confirmed by the procession of the *maḥmal*. Such an event made manifest in the life of the city the cycle of religious time, and was analogous to the *mawlid* of the Prophet and other saints' days. It differed from the other dramatic urban ceremonial that took place annually in Cairo: the celebration of the forces of nature in the form of the seasonal rise of the river Nile and its flood (*wafā' al-nīl*). The inclusive nature of the *maḥmal* ceremony is apparent in the way that it physically linked the centre of Cairo to its outlying centres, Fusṭāṭ and Bulāq, in a single itinerary passing through a landscape that was transformed by ephemeral decoration. It is also demonstrated by the composition of the accompanying cavalcade. This reflected the diversity of the city's population: everyone from great nobles, civil administrators, judges, jurists, Qur'ān readers, Sufis, imams of mosques, water porters and representatives of the guilds to members of the various corps of the army seems to have participated. However much the ceremony was degraded over time, it still retained a powerful hold on the collective consciousness of the city's inhabitants (until the mid-twentieth century) and provided a yearly reminder of the connection, created through the pilgrimage, between Cairo and Mecca.

Riḍwān's personal link to the sacred geography of the Hijaz, and most particularly to Mecca, was created with a variety of tools ranging from a commissioned text (his genealogy) to private endowments and public office. His virtual appropriation of the command of the Egyptian pilgrimage, with the spiritual and political authority that this embodied, over many years was accompanied by his providing for the pilgrims' welfare on their journey,

and the continued welfare of the physical sites that were the focus of that journey. The example of Riḍwān's building activity, from a period relatively late in the development of Cairo, is a demonstration of consistent themes in urban evolution. Among them are the longevity of architectural typologies, the intertwining of material and spiritual concerns generating construction and the persistence of ceremony in the public life of the city. It also demonstrates the limited utility of attempting to comprehend each of these themes without reference to, and understanding of, the others.

Notes

1 The only published study of the complex to date is that of André Raymond, 'Les grands waqfs et l'organisation de l'espace urbain à Alep et au Caire à l'époque Ottomane (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 31, 1979, 113–28, esp. pp. 120–1.

2 Ministry of Awqaf, nos 994 (1629), 995 (1630), 996 (1638), 998 (1647). The *waqf* of 1638 is transcribed and partly translated by H. Sayed in his unpublished PhD thesis: 'The rabʿ in Cairo: a window on Mamluk architecture and urbanism', Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1987, Appendices I and II.

3 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule: Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo (16th and 17th Centuries)*. Leiden: Brill, 1994, pp. 155 and 170.

4 The eastern and western ranges (nos 408 and 409) have been in the process of restoration since 1999 by the Supreme Council for Antiquities. This has involved major reconstruction of the western range from the ground up on the side of the courtyard.

5 The property of his first wife, the widow of Dhū'l-Fiqār Bey. See Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment*, pp. 120–1.

6 Bernard Maury et al., *Palais et maisons du Caire 2: Époque Ottomane (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)*. Paris: CNRS, 1983, p. 134; Jacques Revault and Bernard Maury, *Palais et maisons du Caire du XIVe au XVIIIe siècles*, vol. 1. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1975, p. 67; R. B. Parker, R. Sabin and C. Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo. A Practical Guide*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1985, p. 121. The latter states that the palace was later the property of ʿAysha Khātūn, a daughter of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, then owned by Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd (al-Kurdī) who built the mosque opposite.

7 Such as those of the Victorian artist Frank Dillon in the Searight collection in the Prints and Drawings Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

8 For a full architectural description of the palace, see Maury et al., *Palais et maisons du Caire*, pp. 132–40.

9 *Bulletin du Comité pour la Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* (henceforth *BCCMAA*), 1930–2, p. 67. For other reports relevant to the whole complex see *BCCMAA*, 1894, p. 106; 1895, p. 34; 1900, p. 34; 1901, pp. 43, 49; 1902, pp. 36, 83; 1909, p. 115; 1910, pp. 17, 49, 54, 75; 1911, pp. 111–12; 1912, p. 83; 1917, p. 575; 1920–4, p. 231, 1930–2, pp. 66, 67 (classifications) and *Rapport* 646 on the *zāwiya* (Index 365); 1932, p. 146; 1933–5, pp. 44, 148; 1940, pp. 279, 282. Part of the northernmost of the blocks forming the development facing the mosque of al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalāʾiʿ was, in 2006, reconstructed to match the original façades more closely.

10 Examples of other covered streets are the silk merchants' bazaar between the *madrasa* and the mausoleum of Sultan al-Ghūrī, and the Bedestan in the Khān al-Khalīlī. The former is now in the process of being reconstructed.

11 André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1974, vol. 1, p. 264; André Raymond and Gaston Wiet, *Les Marchés du Caire. Traduction Annotée du Texte de Maqrizi*. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1979, p. 255, n. 103. For the guilds and their role in seventeenth-century Cairo see Gabriel Baer, *Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times*, Oriental Notes and Studies 8. Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1964.

12 Raymond and Wiet, *Marchés du Caire*, pp. 250–1, no. 65. In earlier times the tent-makers' market was located near al-Azhar: see Raymond and Wiet, *Marchés du Caire*, p. 93, pp. 138–9.

13 Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, vol. 1, p. 349.

14 A variety of tents are illustrated in the *Description de l'Égypte, ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française, État Moderne*, vol. 2. Paris: Imprimerie imperiale, 1809–22, plate GG.

15 Raymond, 'Les grands waqfs', p. 121.

16 See Raymond, 'Fabricants et marchands d'articles de voyage', *Artisans et commerçants*, vol. 1, 348–50.

17 Raymond and Wiet, *Marchés du Caire*, p. 255, n. 105.

18 This portion of the complex is omitted by Raymond in his analysis. Although the *wikāla* is mentioned in the *waqf* of Riḍwān, it has hitherto been thought to have occupied the interior of the block behind the main eastern range of buildings. It is not unusual to find *wikāla*s built in tandem with *sabīl*s in Cairo, or for *sabīl*s to be added to *wikāla*s (or vice versa). See, for example, the *wikāla* of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (Index 411), the Wikālat al-Ḥaramayn (Index 433), or the nearby *wikāla* and *sabīl* of Nafīsa al-Bayḍā' (Index 395/358, seen in Figure 11.1).

19 For a discussion of twentieth-century urban changes in this area see N. Warner, *The Monuments of Historic Cairo*. Cairo: American University in Cairo, 2005, pp. 68–71.

20 For an illustration of a typical shop of this period, see E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. London: John Murray, 1860, p. 314.

21 Such *ḥāra*s are a characteristic, and much-commented upon, feature of 'Islamic' cities. In Cairo, the French occupying army dismantled most of the gates leading to the *ḥāra*s at the end of the eighteenth century. For a synopsis of the *ḥāra* see André Raymond, 'La géographie des *hara* du Caire au XVIII siècle', in *Livre du Centenaire [de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale] 1880–1980*. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1980, 415–31.

22 The paintings were awaiting further conservation treatment in September 2006, which is expected to reveal further details.

23 For the typology see Laila 'Ali Ibrahim, 'Middle class living units in Mamluk Cairo: architecture and terminology', *Art and Architecture Research Papers* 14, December 1978, 24–30; Mona Zakariya, 'Le rab' de Tabbāna', *Annales Islamologiques* 16, 1980, 275–97; André Raymond, 'The *rab'*: a type of collective housing in Cairo during the Ottoman period', *Architecture as Symbol and Setting: Aga Khan Award for Architecture Proceedings of Seminar 4*, 1980, 55–61; J. Depaule et al., *Actualité de l'habitat ancien au Caire: le rab' Qizlar*, Centre d'études et de documentation économique, juridique et sociale (CEDEJ) Dossier 4. Cairo: CEDEJ, 1985; Sayed, *The Rab' in Cairo*.

24 Raymond, 'The *rab'*', p. 61.

25 Raymond, 'The *rab'* ', p. 57.
26 For a detailed study of this unit see N. Hanna, 'La maison waqf Ridwan au Caire', in *L'habitat traditionnel dans les pays musulmans autour de la Méditerranée*, vol. 1. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1988, 61–77.
27 Also noted in Revault and Maury, *Palais et maisons*, pp. 80–1.
28 Maury et al., *Palais et maisons*, pp. 134, 136.
29 The inscriptions are all sections of the *Burda*, which is more commonly found in domestic contexts in Cairo. For the text, see Bernard O'Kane (ed.), *Documentation of the Inscriptions in the Historic Zone of Cairo*, Egyptian Antiquities Project, American Research Center in Egypt, forthcoming.
30 Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*, p. 170.
31 André Raymond, 'Les fontaines publiques (*sabīl*) du Caire à l'époque Ottomane (1517–1798)', *Annales Islamologiques* 15, 1979, 235–92, p. 252 n. 33.
32 Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*, p. 170.
33 Noted by Raymond, 'Les grands waqfs', p. 121.
34 See Warner, *The Monuments of Historic Cairo*, map sheet 20 (al-Ghuri) and 23–4 (Shaykhu).
35 Raymond, 'Les grands waqfs', pp. 121–3; Warner, *The Monuments of Historic Cairo*, map sheet 15.
36 For biographical details see Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*, pp. 121, 132–3; P. M. Holt, 'The exalted lineage of Ridwan Bey: some observations on a seventeenth-century Mamluk genealogy', *BSOAS* 22, 1959, 221–30, pp. 223–4.
37 The description, here in translation by P. M. Holt, appears in a necrology of amirs. See 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār fī'l-tarājim wa'l-akhbār*, 4 vols. Cairo: Bulāq, 1880, vol. 1, p. 91. An alternative translation of the relevant passage is found in T. Philipp and M. Perlmann (eds) *'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti's history of Egypt*, 4 vols in 2 with guide. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1994, vol. 1, p. 149.
38 P. Holt, 'The Beylicate in Ottoman Egypt', *BSOAS* 24, 1961, 214–48, p. 213; Holt, 'Exalted lineage', p. 225.
39 See Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans. The Hajj under the Ottomans 1517–1683*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 113–20 for the rebuilding of the Ka'ba in 1630 under the direction of Riḍwān Bey, and p. 204, n. 101.
40 Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, p. 119.
41 Holt, 'Exalted lineage', pp. 220–30. See also P. M. Holt, 'Literary offerings: a genre of courtly literature', in T. Philipp and U. Haarman (eds), *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 3–16, pp. 14–15. Hathaway puts forward an opposing argument for Riḍwān Abū'l Shawārib to be the subject of the genealogy, but concrete proof is lacking for either attribution. See J. Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions. Myth, Memory and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003, pp. 152–3.
42 Hathaway remarks that the genealogy is obsessed with the Bayt al-Ḥarām in Mecca and, if anything, seems to create a case for Riḍwān's appointment as pilgrimage commander. See J. Hathaway, 'Mamluk households and Mamluk factions in Ottoman Egypt: a reconsideration', in Philipp and Haarman (eds), *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, 107–17, pp. 113–14 and n. 23.
43 For the history of the office of the Amīr al-Ḥajj in the sixteenth century, see M. Winter, 'The re-emergence of the Mamluks following the Ottoman conquest', in Philipp and Haarman (eds), *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, 87–106, pp. 101–4.

44 J. Jomier, *Le mahmal et la caravane Égyptienne des pèlerins de la Mecque (XIIIe–XXe siècles)*, Recherches d'Archéologie, de Philologie et d'Histoire 20. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1953, pp. 108–24, lists the staff of the caravan and their respective roles.

45 Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*, p. 132.

46 Michel Tuchscherer, 'Le Pèlerinage de l'Émir Sulaymân Ǧâwîš al-Qâzduǧlî, *sirdâr* de la caravane de la Mekke en 1739', *Annales Islamologiques* 24, 1988, 155–206.

47 Tuchscherer, 'Le Pèlerinage de l'Émir Sulaymân Ǧâwîš al-Qâzduǧlî', pp. 181–2. See Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, vol. 1, pp. 126–36 for the continuation of this trade into the eighteenth century.

48 The two *wikāla*s are Index 433 and Deregistered Index (501). See also Raymond and Wiet, *Marchés du Caire*, pp. 284–5 (no. 249) and p. 286 (no. 258). For Egyptian foundations benefiting the Holy Cities see Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, pp. 80–2.

49 Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*, p. 170.

50 Holt, 'Exalted lineage', p. 224.

51 V. Seton-Williams and P. Stocks, *Blue Guide Egypt*. London: A. and C. Black, 1988, p. 386.

52 The tomb in question is in fact dated AH 1162/AD 1748–9. I am grateful to Bernard O'Kane for supplying this information derived from the *Documentation of the Inscriptions in the Historic Zone of Cairo* project.

53 Jomier, *Le mahmal*, p. 3.

54 Holt, 'Exalted lineage', after the biographer al-Muḥibbī, p. 223. This seems to contradict Hathaway's claim that Riḍwān Abū'l Shawārib had exclusive use of the latter title.

55 Jomier, *Le mahmal*, p. 37.

56 See Lane, *Manners and Customs*, pp. 481–2 for an inventory of the parts of the *kiswa*.

57 Holt, *Beylicate*, p. 184.

58 Nasser Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture*. Leiden: Brill, 1995, pp. 153–4; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 481.

59 Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst. London: Jonathan Cape, 1952, p. 79.

60 Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, p. 105.

61 A. J. Wensinck and J. Jomier, 'Ka'ba', *EI* 2, vol. 4, 319.

62 See A. H. de Groot, 'Sandjak i-Sherîf', *EI* 2, vol. 9, 13–15.

63 For the moving of certain of the relics of the Prophet see Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment*, p. 236 and p. 238.

64 For Çelebi's description see Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, p. 37.

65 See Jomier, *Le mahmal*, p. 19. The appearance of the *mahmal* must have had a close relationship with various types of palanquin used primarily by women of nomadic societies across North Africa and the Arabian peninsula.

66 Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 440 and illustrated on p. 439.

67 Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, p. 39.

68 Four surviving *mahmal*s are known. The *mahmal* of al-Ghūrī and another of Sultan Abdülhamid can be seen in Istanbul (the former in the Topkapı), one of King Fu'ād at the Museum of the Royal Geographic Society in Cairo, and one dating to 1911 in the Azem Palace in Damascus. See Jomier, *Le mahmal*, pp. 10–17 for comparative descriptions of al-Ghūrī's and Fu'ād's *mahmal*s, and J. Jomier, 'Le maḥmal du Sultan Qânṣûh al-Ghûrî (début XVIe siècle)', *Annales Islamologiques* 11, 1972, 183–8.

69 F. Buhl and [J. Jomier], 'Mahmal' in *EI* 2, vol. 6, 44–6, p. 44.

70 For a comparison with the Syrian *maḥmal* see R. Tresse, *Le pélerinage Syrien aux villes saintes de l'Islam*. Paris: Chaumette, 1937, pp. 89–93.
71 Buhl, 'Mahmal', p. 45.
72 See S. E. Marmon, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
73 Such as Ibn Battuta, Thévenot, Brocardo, Vansleb, and Pococke.
74 Jomier, *Le mahmal*, p. viii. The work survives in two manuscripts.
75 Buhl, 'Mahmal', p. 46.
76 The main sources used to reconstruct the ceremony are Jomier, *Le mahmal*, pp. 35–42 and 62–7; Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, pp. 37–40; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, pp. 440–2 and 480–7; B. Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 70–2; Buhl, 'Mahmal'.
77 Jomier, *Le mahmal*, p. 36.
78 Jomier, *Le mahmal*, p. 37.
79 Perhaps this choice of starting point was a reflection of the fact that al-Ḥākim was the first Fatimid Caliph to send a *kiswa* from Cairo to Mecca. See J. Jomier, 'Aspects politiques et religieux du pèlerinage de la Mekke', *Livre du Centenaire [de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale] 1880–1980*, 391–401, p. 398.
80 By the 1880s, the ground level of the road had risen so high due to accumulated dirt that the stone lintel of the Bāb Zuwayla was removed to allow the *maḥmal* to pass under it. See Amelia B. Edwards, 'The destruction of Cairo', *The Academy* 22, no. 546, Saturday 21 October, 1882, 301–2.
81 David Ayalon, 'Notes on the Furusiyya Exercises and Games in the Mamluk Sultanate', *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 9, 1961, 31–62; D. Behrens-Abouseif, 'The Citadel of Cairo: stage for Mamluk ceremonial', *Annales Islamologiques* 24, 1988, 25–79, p. 65.
82 Baer, *Egyptian Guilds*, pp. 116–17; Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, vol. 2, pp. 577–8.
83 Jomier, *Le Mahmal*, p. 63.
84 Buhl, 'Mahmal', p. 46.
85 Tuchscherer, 'Le Pèlerinage de l'Émir Sulaymân Ğâwĩŝ al-Qâzduġlî', p. 163 and map on p. 165.
86 Buhl, 'Mahmal', p. 45.
87 See S. M. Zwemer, *Arabia, the Cradle of Islam. Studies in the Geography, People, and Politics of the Peninsula with an Account of Islam and Mission-work*. New York: Revell, 1900, pp. 324–5 for an annotated facsimile.

INDEX