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Cover page



Reflections on the Mosaics of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus

ROBERT HILLENBRAND

Like many great masterpieces, the Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus can be interpreted in several different ways, and it sends out many distinct messages. This polyvalence goes far to explain why this mosque has fascinated observers for so many centuries. This paper will reflect in particular on some aspects of its wall mosaic decoration. By way of introduction, it will be convenient to consider briefly the wider context of this mosque in earlier Umayyad religious architecture by outlining its links with the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

The connection with the Dome of the Rock

The Great Mosque of Damascus cannot be fully understood without reference to the Dome of the Rock. These two masterpieces of Umayyad religious architecture relate to each other on various levels. First, there is the personal dimension. For the caliph al-Walid I, the building most intimately associated with his father was surely the Dome of the Rock, whose multiple connections with the sacred city of Jerusalem, and with its ancient tradition of pilgrimage, lent it quite special prestige (fig. 1). It would not be strange if that should spur him to emulation. If emulation was indeed his aim, this was the building to beat. To equal that achievement in that same city was manifestly impossible.[1]

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[1]. It might be argued that the Aqsa mosque would be the obvious site to develop. But the Umayyad history of the Aqsa mosque remains deeply contested in modern scholarship, so much so that the alleged contributions of 'Abd al-Malik and al-Walid, let alone earlier or later caliphs, are impossible to identify with absolute certainty in the present state of knowledge. The archaeological evidence suggests a sequence of at least three campaigns before the later 8th century, but their dating presents major problems, not least because of the well-nigh seamless continuity of style and technique in stone carving in 7th-8th century Syria. Thus dating controls based on ornament are of little value. For a conspectus of views see R.W. HAMILTON, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, Jerusalem 1949, 70-4; H. STERN, Recherches sur la Mosquée al-Aqsa et ses mosaïques, *Ars Orientalis* 5(1963), 28-38; K.A.C. CRESWELL, *Early Muslim Architecture*, Oxford [2]1969, 1/1, 32-5 and 1/2, 373-80; B. FINSTER, Die Mosaiken der Umayyadenmoschee, *Kunst des Orients* 7(1970), 127-9; K.A.C. CRESWELL, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, revised and enlarged by J.W. ALLAN, Aldershot 1989, 8, 73-82; M. ROSEN-AYALON, *The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharif*, Jerusalem 1989, 4-7; R.W. HAMILTON, Once Again the Aqsa, in J. RABY and J. JOHNS (eds), *Bayt al-Maqdis. 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, Part One [Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX/2], Oxford 1992, 141-4; A. ELAD, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship. Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*, Leiden 1995, 37-42; R. HILLENBRAND, Jerusalem §II, 1 (iv) Aqsa Mosque, in J.S. TURNER (ed.), *A Dictionary of Art* 16, London 1996, 496-7; and

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But while Mu'awiya had built a celebrated palace in Damascus,[2] 'Abd al-Malik himself had not undertaken any significant building campaigns there, even though it was the Umayyad capital. So it was here in Damascus, not far from Jerusalem, that the opportunity presented itself for al-Walid to make his own considered statement as a patron of architecture. That said, there is no need to postulate a desire on al-Walid's part to outshine what his father did; it is equally plausible that he should wish to continue in the same vein, and himself erect a splendid monument whose reach would be as much political as religious. 'Abd al-Malik, moreover, had set the bar high in that he had devoted lavish resources to the Dome of the Rock,[3] so it is not surprising that in this respect too al-Walid should spare no expense when he came to build his imperial mosque in nearby Damascus.[4] And he did his best to give that mosque a setting worthy of it, located as it was in the centre of his capital on a site that had been hallowed by successive places of worship for the best part of two millennia,[5] even if no site quite as public and visible as that of the Dome of the Rock was available in Damascus.

The second connection between these buildings is the fact that they are, broadly speaking, contemporary with each other, and this of course made comparisons between them inevitable. Each of them was the principal architectural legacy of successive caliphs, and their completion dates are less than a generation apart. This closeness in time – and also, as it happens, in space – effectively reinforced the impact of both buildings on the people of Greater Syria and beyond in the Umayyad period. Together they presented the new religion of Islam through monuments of imposing scale and embellished with state-of-the-art decoration. Their public, proclamatory power could not be ignored. And each gained extra impact from the other.

R. GRAFMAN and M. ROSEN-AYALON, The Two Great Syrian Umayyad Mosques: Jerusalem and Damascus, *Muqarnas* 16(1999), especially 1-7.

[2]. For a detailed account, see F.B. FLOOD, *The Great Mosque of Damascus. Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture*, Leiden 2001, 147-54; for its wider context, cf. too J.M. BLOOM, The Qubbat al-Khadra' and the Iconography of Height in Early Islamic Architecture, *Ars Orientalis* 23(1993), 135.

[3]. G. LE STRANGE, *Palestine Under the Moslems*, London 1890, 144-5, quotes from Jamal al-Din Ahmad's Muthir al-Ghiram, written in 1351 and therefore a very late source, that 'Abd al-Malik had devoted the revenue of Egypt for seven years to finance the building of the Dome of the Rock and the Aqsa Mosque. 100,000 dinars was left over at the end of the building campaign; this was used to gild the dome of the Qubbat al-Sakhra. The parallel with the seven years' worth of revenue from Syria spent by al-Walid on the Great Mosque of Damascus is suspiciously pat.

[4]. For a full discussion, see CRESWELL, EMA, 1/1, 151.

[5]. The relief of a sphinx from a temple dedicated to the god Hadad has been found on the site of the Umayyad mosque (AMIR JA'FAR 'ABD AL-QADIR [=AMIR DJAFAR ABD EL-KADER], Un orthostate du temple de Hadad à Damas, *Syria* 26(1949), 191-5. I am grateful to Dr Kassem Touweir for the information that an even earlier sherd of the 2nd millennium B.C. has been found there.

The third connection is that, when seen together rather than singly, these two monuments showed that the Dome of the Rock was not a flash in the pan but that the Muslims were fully capable of wielding the symbolic language of Byzantine architecture and its ornament for their own purposes, and that they could build creatively on the early Christian and Byzantine traditions, and the still earlier Roman tradition, instead of merely copying them. Moreover, this process gathered momentum and confidence in the brief period that separated these two buildings. In that interim, Islamic coinage had definitively broken with attempts to mould the existing Byzantine and Sasanian numismatic traditions to Islamic purposes and instead had embarked on a wholly new course, as shown by 'Abd al-Malik's reform coinage with its exclusive emphasis on the written word.[6] This evidence from a medium other than architecture puts these two religious buildings into a wider context of bold innovation. So it should not be surprising that the Great Mosque of Damascus is much more radical in its treatment of the early Christian and Byzantine heritage than was the Dome of the Rock.[7] And indeed it reconfigures the components of the standard basilica, a type built by the hundred in the first seven centuries after the birth of Christ, in unprecedented ways. These include the west front transported to the centre of the north façade; two major entrances rather than one, and both of them divorced from the east-west axis of the covered sanctuary; the atrium attached to the north rather than the west façade; and a central domed and gabled transept bisecting the covered area of the sanctuary (figs.2-3). All the forms are thoroughly familiar in themselves, but from the viewpoint of local Christian architecture every single one of them is in the wrong place. Thus the Muslim architect, or whoever was responsible for the design of this mosque, showed an impressive capacity for lateral thinking in both senses of the term. He worked stubbornly and systematically against and across the grain of local tradition. This building, then, pushed the envelope; it dramatically extended the boundaries of long-familiar architectural forms, and did so with all the authority of the greatest empire in the contemporary world. The key factor seems to have been the bold decision to use the entire enclosure of the erstwhile classical temple; no other early mosque can be proved to have had the pronounced laterality of Damascus (fig.4). If

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[6]. For the general background, see M.L. BATES, History, Geography and Numismatics in the First Century of Islamic Coinage, *Revue Suisse de Numismatique* 65(1986), 231-62; and for the 690s, W.L. TREADWELL, Abd al-Malik's coinage reforms: the role of the Damascus mint, *Revue Numismatique* 165(2009), 357-82.

[7]. This topic has not attracted as much attention as it deserves. See meanwhile CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, 117-8, FINSTER, Mosaiken, 121-6 and O. GRABAR, La Grande Mosquée de Damas et les origins architecturales de la mosquée, *Synthronon. Art et archéologie de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age: recueil d'études par André Grabar et un groupe de ses disciples*, Paris 1968, 107-14. The latter study stresses the ceremonial and liturgical imperatives which influenced the design of this mosque, but these factors are not enough in themselves to explain its spatial inventiveness. For the links with the Aqsa Mosque, based however on a reconstruction which differs in significant ways from earlier reconstructions (e.g. that of CRESWELL, EMA 1/2, fig.446 [in red] opposite p. 379), see GRAFMAN and ROSEN-AYALON, Umayyad Mosques, especially 11-12.

a totally unencumbered site had been selected the result would probably have been a mosque far more in tune with those of Kufa,[8] Basra,[9] Medina[10] and so on, with a much shorter qibla wall.[11]

The fourth connection also has to do with Christianity, but this time as a faith rather than as an architectural tradition. Here the pace has quickened in the brief interval between the two monuments. The Dome of the Rock occupies a site rich in Abrahamic and especially Jewish tradition, but it is not a site as central to Christianity as others in Jerusalem. The surviving inscriptions within the building,[12] however, do mount a full-throttle attack on the key Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity, and in contradistinction they assert the uncompromisingly monotheistic core doctrines of Islam. They do so with a remarkable degree of overlap and indeed repetition, and at great length – the band stretches to some 240 metres.[13] On the other hand, the medium is at war with the message, for this inscription is located at about 9.5 metres above the current floor level,[14] and in dim lighting. Furthermore, it is in unpointed and unvocalised Kufic script. Thus it presents multiple obstacles to understanding. Moreover, the text is of course in Arabic, not in Greek, and – set as it is within a Muslim building – it is singularly unsuited to reach the vast majority of the Greek- or Aramaic-speaking Christians of the city. The most one could say of this text, of which so much has been made in modern scholarship,[15] is that it would have reached a small handful of keen-sighted, literate and patient Arabs. Its principal role is therefore symbolic in the sense that its mere presence stamped the building as Islamic and made it a kind of sacred book. But its effectiveness as an instrument of propaganda proclaiming the supremacy of Islam over the other Abrahamic religions was severely limited. Nevertheless, the intention to assert dominance over the doctrines of Christianity was unmistakable; and the coins of the 690s tell the same story.[16]

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[8]. CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, 23-6 and fig.14.
[9]. Ibid., 23.
[10]. Ibid., 27, 40, 142-9 and fig.74; J. SAUVAGET, *La Mosquée Omeyyade de Médine: Étude sur les Origines Architecturales de la Mosquée et de la Basilique*, Paris 1947.
[11]. See the Umayyad mosques listed in notes 107-9 below.
[12]. It is not known whether there were originally any external inscriptions. The investigations of H.R. ALLEN, The Original Appearance of the Dome of the Rock, in J. JOHNS (ed.), *Bayt al-Maqdis. Part Two. Jerusalem and Early Islam* [Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX/2], Oxford 1999, 197-213 suggest that it is unlikely; see his model, ibid., 202-3.
[13]. O. GRABAR, *The Dome of the Rock*, Cambridge, Mass. and London 2006, 90.
[14]. CRESWELL, EMA, 1/1, 68-70.
[15]. See especially O. GRABAR, The Umayyad Dome of the Rock, *Ars Orientalis* III(1959), 53-5; C. KESSLER, 'Abd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: A Reconsideration, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1970), 2-14; N. RABBAT, The Meaning of the Dome of the Rock, *Muqarnas* 6(1989), 16; O. GRABAR and S. NUSSEIBIH, *The Dome of the Rock*, London 1996, 48-9, 78-81 and 106-9; GRABAR, *Dome of the Rock*, 90-3.
[16]. Notice in particular the field of the obverse of the dinar and the dirham of 'Abd al-Malik's reform coinage. This bears the legend: Allahu al-ahad. Allahu al-samad. Lam yalid wa lam yulad wa la sharik lahu ("God is One. God is the Eternal. He does not beget and He is not



Fig. 1 Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock, exterior

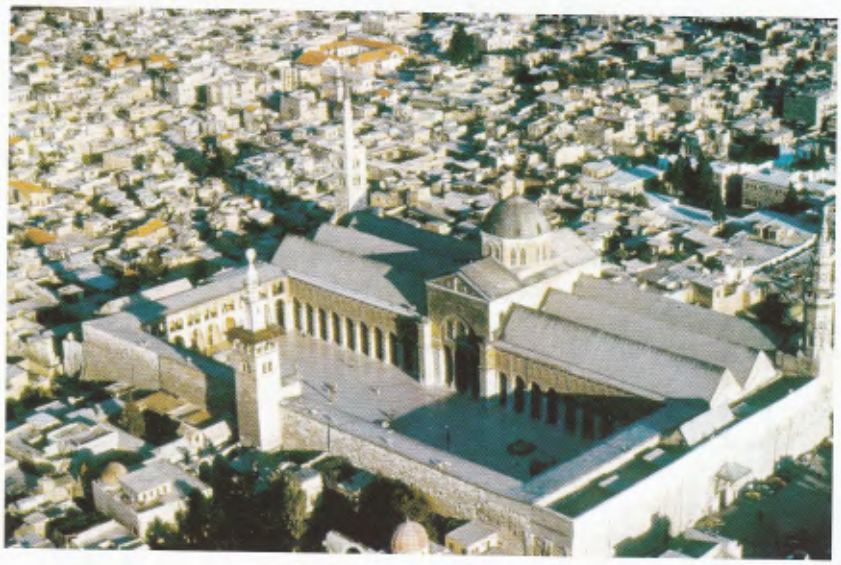


Fig. 2 Great Mosque of Damascus, aerial view

begotten and He has no associate"). The presence of the same text on both the gold and the silver coinage ensured that this anti-Christian message in theory reached everyone in the middle and higher strata of society – i.e. those involved in more expensive transactions, in other words the social, economic and political élite.

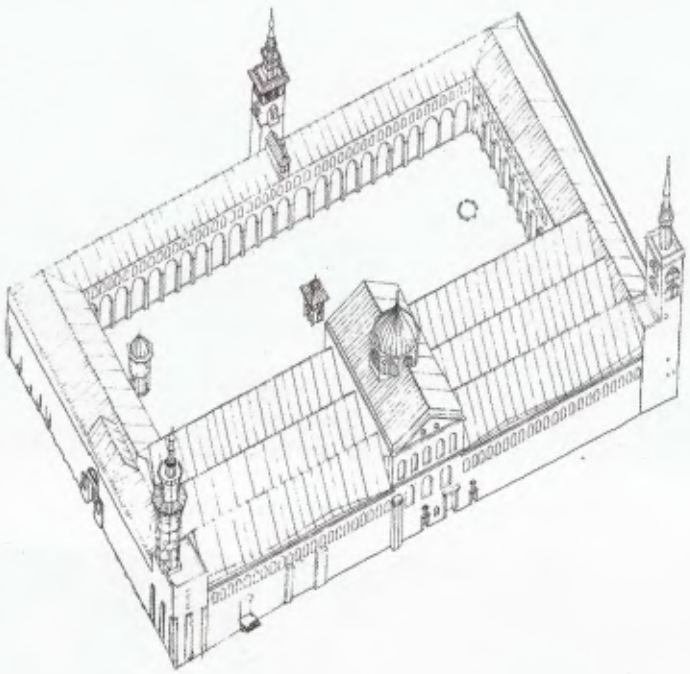


Fig. 3 Great Mosque of Damascus, three-dimensional sketch

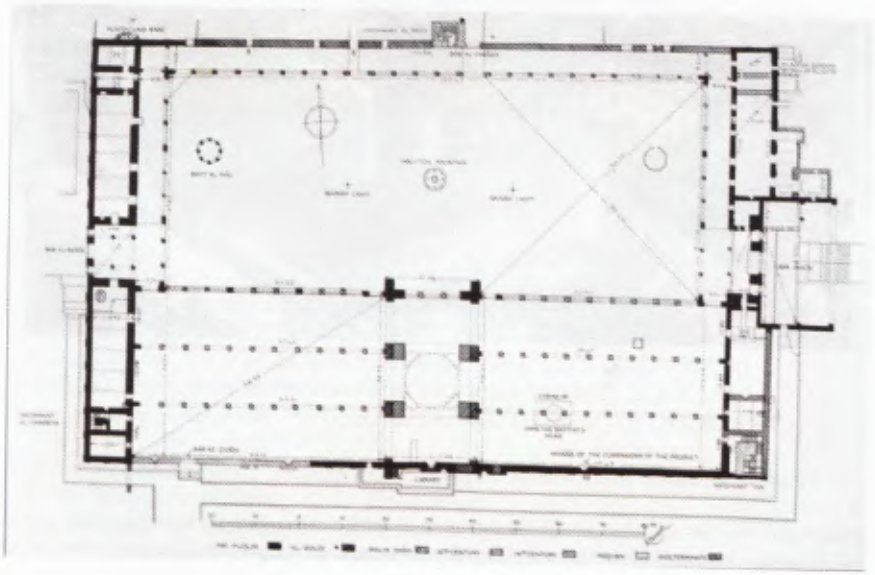


Fig. 4 Great Mosque of Damascus, plan (after Creswell)

Thus while the anti-Christian polemic of the Dome of the Rock is sufficiently clear in theory and in its intention, in practice it can only have had a very limited impact. The agenda at Damascus was similar; the difference was that its execution was a triumphant and permanent success. It is necessary at this point to recapitulate some well-known facts. As Creswell demonstrated with forensic rigour some eighty years ago,[17] the situation at the time of the Muslim take-over of Damascus in 636 was that the church of St John was the city's principal place of Christian worship. It had been built within the cleared precinct (temenos) of the Roman temple of Jupiter Damascenus, itself erected on the foundations of earlier temples (fig.5). For some seventy years Muslims and Christians used the temenos together, the Muslims worshipping in a makeshift mosque close to the Bab Jairun. In 705, however, al-Walid I demolished both the Christian church and the makeshift mosque. This left the space within the walls of the temenos entirely cleared, and it was here that al-Walid built his great mosque. The stark confessional implications of these actions could not have been plainer. A major Christian church in an overwhelmingly Christian city had been demolished by the Muslims, and a huge and visually stunning mosque had been erected on the same site. This action, seen by the Christians as illegal because it broke the terms of the treaty of capitulation,[18] had inescapably political as well as religious implications,[19] for Damascus was the capital of the vast Umayyad empire, with the prestige to match. The impact of the mosque was intensified by the sheer size and ambition of the new building, with its extensive and costly decoration in the medium par excellence of Christian churches, namely mosaic. Indeed, just as the Dome of the Rock exhibited a greater degree of external wall mosaic than any Christian church before it, so too did the Great Mosque of Damascus have a larger surface of wall mosaic in its interior than any earlier or indeed, as it proved, later Christian building.[20]

Before moving on from the immediate context of the Great Mosque of Damascus in Umayyad religious architecture, there is one last issue to be considered. This is the visual and aesthetic connection between the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus in their architectural and decorative vocabulary, and this leaps to the eye. It stands to reason that in two such splendid

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[17]. CRESWELL, EMA, 1/1, 187-96.

[18]. Ibn Jubayr, admittedly a late source (late 12th century), gives details of how al-Walid's offer to give the Christians another church in exchange was rejected, whereupon the Caliph began to demolish the church with his own hands; and how 'Umar II (reigned 99-101/717-20), receiving a petition for compensation from the Christians, was minded to turn over the Great Mosque to them, but in the end granted them a great sum in compensation, with which they were content (LE STRANGE, *Palestine*, 242).

[19]. Hence the remonstrances of the Byzantine emperor as recorded by the 9th-century scholar Ibn Qutayba (CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, 152 and MARGUÉRITE GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM in her contribution to CRESWELL, EMA I/1: The Mosaics of the Great Mosque of the Umayyads in Damascus, 231).

[20]. Perhaps the closest comparators are St Mark's in Venice, where most of the mosaics date from the 12th century onwards, and the cathedral of Monreale in Palermo, where the mosaics date from 1172 onwards.

public monuments so closely linked in time, space and patronage the later one would profit from the experience acquired in completing its predecessor. Quite apart from a shared classical heritage in stone masonry, columns, capitals, arches, mouldings and window grilles – an entire architectural vocabulary unselfconsciously acquired and unselfconsciously used – the decision to use non-figural glass wall mosaics on a huge scale in both structures brought them very close together. In this respect one could indeed regard the Dome of the Rock (fig.6) as a dry run for the Great Mosque of Damascus; it certainly gave the mosaic craftsmen working on the latter building a flying start. So they used much of the vocabulary of motifs employed to such good effect in the Dome of the Rock, with clear guidelines before them as to where such motifs worked best (fig.7) and what technical challenges this medium presented. But the much more extensive surfaces of the mosque made it imperative to widen the range of motifs dramatically, while all the time avoiding the depiction of living beings. This dramatic reduction in the range of options, accompanied by an equally dramatic, indeed unprecedented, expansion in the surface area to be covered, posed a daunting challenge. The rest of this paper will try to show how it was met.

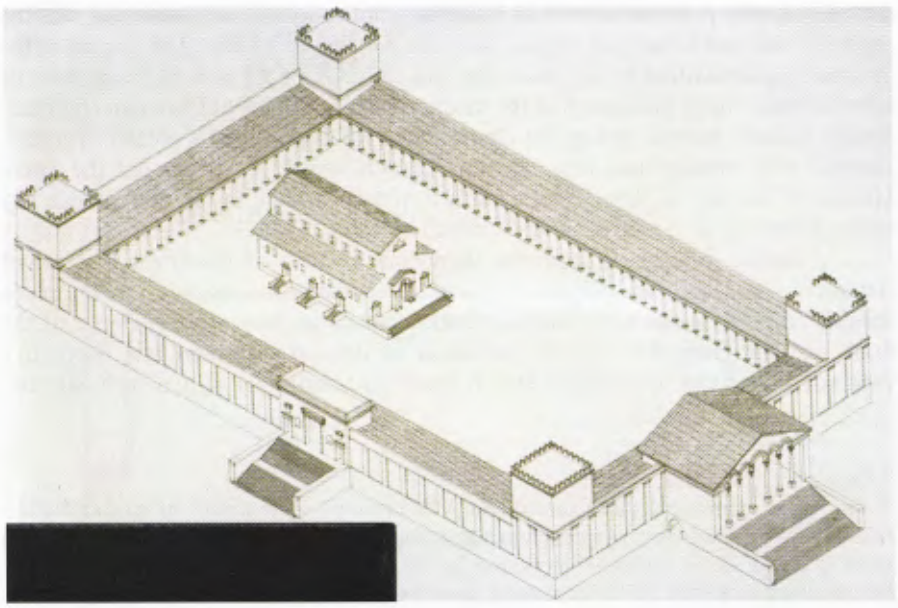


Fig. 5 Damascus, reconstructed state of the site of the future mosque, c.700 (after Creswell)

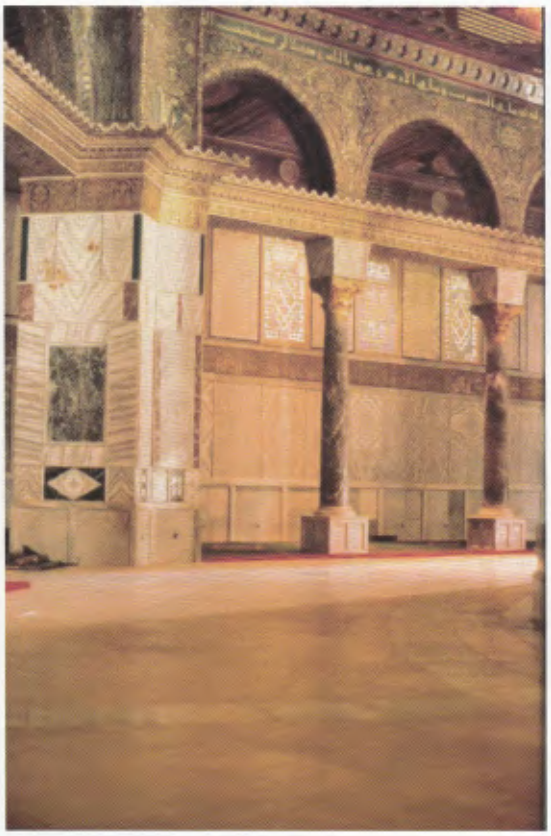


Fig. 6 Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock, interior

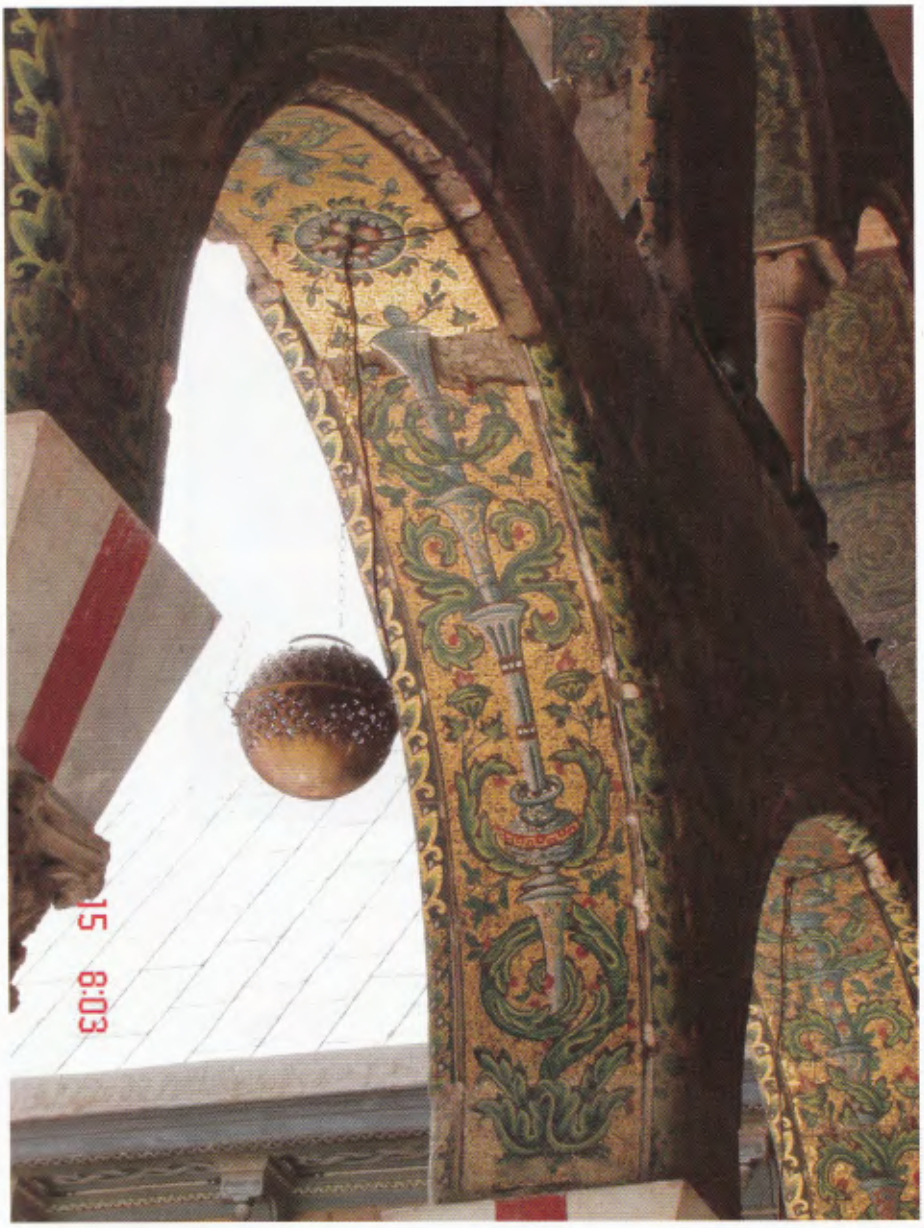


Fig. 7 Great Mosque of Damascus, courtyard, mosaic decoration on arch soffit

Problems and pitfalls in the mosaic programme

It is standard practice to place the Damascus mosaics firmly within the cadre of Byzantine church decoration.[21] Supporters of this approach can point to the report by al-Tabari (admittedly written two centuries after the event) to the effect that al-Walid, when building the Medina mosque, asked the Byzantine emperor for mosaic cubes and craftsmen to set them, and that this request was granted. Later Islamic historians ensured that this story lost nothing in the telling, and – as Creswell gleefully demonstrated - disfigured the simplicity of the original account with gross distortions and exaggerations.[22] But the arguments about whether or not this account is true tend to downplay the salient and obvious fact that at the time of the Muslim conquest of Syria, and for many generations thereafter, Syria was thoroughly Christianised and that its art was firmly within the cultural orbit of Byzantium. There was, so to speak, no other show in town unless, indeed, it was that of the Roman empire itself. When the story is seen in that context, it is cut down to size. While al-Walid may indeed have made such a request – and several motives for this might be proposed - he had no need to beg the Byzantine emperor for help; Greater Syria itself had suitable craftsmen in plenty, as the unrivalled sequence of floor mosaics in 6th- to 7th-century local churches indicates.[23] The case of Jordan is particularly instructive, since some of the finest floor mosaics there were created in the Umayyad period.[24] The celebrated comment of al-Muqaddasi to the effect that the greatest Umayyad religious buildings were a deliberate response to the splendours of local Christian architecture points in the same direction.[25] And many of the craftsmen employed for the Dome of the Rock would still have been available a mere thirteen years later. So it is safe to assume that the assembling of technically skilled craftsmen for this vast project was not a serious problem.

The real difficulty – and it is one somewhat neglected in modern scholarship - lay in devising a suitable set of images for this enormous wall surface, most of it continuous and therefore well suited to continuously connected subject matter. And indeed a panoramic theme was the eventual choice. It was precisely in this matter of wall surface that Christian parallels were distinctly unhelpful. The iconography of Christian wall mosaics at this time was conditioned by the standard forms of church architecture. These favoured the basilica in its various forms (including the centralized multi-domed basilica) and the martyrium. Neither of these architectural forms provided a useful model for the mosaic programme at

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[21]. The connection is laid out in some detail by GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 366-72.
[22]. CRESWELL, EMA I/1, 152.
[23]. C. DAUPHIN, Mosaic Pavements as an Index of Prosperity and Fashion, *Levant* 12(1980), 112-34.
[24]. M. PICCIRILLO, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, Amman 1993, 45-7. They include Madaba, Ma'in and al-Quwaysma (ibid., pls. 22, 304 and 454 respectively), while the spectacular architectural subject matter of the mosaics in the church of St Stephen at Umm al-Rasas is dated to 756 (ibid., pls.344-58).
[25]. LE STRANGE, Palestine, 117-8.

Damascus. In the standard Christian basilica it was the central nave that bore the iconographically crucial decoration, and this could have a processional emphasis which mirrored the liturgy itself.[26] The configuration of the Great Mosque of Damascus ensured that while the building did indeed have a central nave, this was short, as were the other naves along the mosque's north-south axis. It was the east-west axis which had long sequences of arcades (fig.8); but that axis was secondary, and liturgically insignificant. So the reshuffling of the components of the standard Christian church in the Damascus mosque meant that the standard Christian iconographic solutions for those components would simply not work, because the spaces were too different.

What were those spaces? The Great Mosque of Damascus comprises quite varied surfaces, though large, unbroken, oblong expanses, for instance along the qibla wall or on the back walls of three sides of the courtyard, are the dominant accent. The numerous arcades create spandrels and soffits aplenty, and there is also a sprinkling of curvilinear surfaces; but this is emphatically not a vaulted building. A few of the spaces, such as the front of the gable or the interior of the now long-vanished Umayyad dome, were located high up in the building. The treatment of the gable suggests that in such cases the major features of the mosaic programme were correspondingly enlarged to ensure easy legibility (figs.9-10). At the other end of the spectrum, the octagonal Bait al-Mal in the courtyard has its upper external faces covered with mosaics whose every detail can be taken in from ground level (figs.11-12).[27] But exceptions apart, the main impact of the mosaics would have depended on the programmes chosen to decorate two quite different kinds of surface: firstly, the largely unbroken back walls of the courtyard and the qibla, varying in length between some 40 and almost 170 metres, with a height of mosaic-covered surface (to judge by what survives) of c.8.35 metres,[28] so that the surface area of these mosaics alone would have exceeded 3,400 square metres; secondly, the side walls of the sanctuary and its inner northern face;[29] and thirdly, throughout the mosque, the superstructure of arcades carried on more than 110 columns or piers. And each of those arcades would have had both an inner and an outer face decorated with mosaics, which would have doubled the amount of mosaics required in these areas. Nor should one forget the soffits of these arcades, the bridges between the outer and inner faces, which also bore mosaic decoration (fig.7). These second and third categories, then, also added up to a formidable surface area,

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[26]. For examples in Rome (Sta Maria Maggiore) and Ravenna (Sant' Apollinare Nuovo), see J. LASSUS, The Early Christian and Byzantine World, London 1967, colour pls. 21 and 31-2.

[27]. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 353-4, figs.417-18; G. DEGEORGE, *La Grande Mosquée des Omeyyades Damas*, Paris 2010, 129, 134, 136, 163, 186 and 209.

[28]. CRESWELL, EMA I/1, 174 gives the basis for this estimate, but does not follow up the implications.

[29]. For the latter, see a water-colour by R.P. SPIERS made before the fire of 1893 (FLOOD, Damascus, colour pl. II) and photographs and drawings made after that fire but while the remnants were still in fair condition (GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 354-60 and figs. 419-26).

though one that would be much more difficult to calculate. And then the gable and the treasury must be taken into consideration too, though these are of minor importance in terms of sheer surface. The second and third categories of wall surface as defined above, constantly interrupted as they were by arcuated forms and thus of dramatically unequal surface area, would also have been much less suited to bear any continuous, connected iconographic programme. Rather would this arrangement favour a series of individual vignettes, and this is exactly what is visible today. Sometimes these vignettes comprise trees (fig.13, which may contain post-Umayyad elements), sometimes buildings, and sometimes floral or geometric ornament,[30] so they echo the main themes of the much longer panorama. Happily the surviving mosaics give examples of both types of programme - i.e. both the continuous and the disconnected variety - and thus permit a tentative reconstruction of the scheme as a whole.

In any case, whatever the nature of the surfaces to be covered, Christian iconography was of course fundamentally unsuitable from the theological point of view as a model for the decoration of the Damascus mosque. It seems that – as the experiments in Umayyad coinage had already shown – a distaste for figural imagery in a religious context had already established itself by this time, so the processions of holy people (saints, martyrs, apostles) and narratives of Old and New Testament scenes, let alone large-scale images of Christ and the Virgin Mary, were equally unsuitable as sources of inspiration for those charged with the design of the Damascus mosaics.

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[30]. Sometimes they echo the repertoire of the Dome of the Rock, for example in the use of cornucopiae depicted as narrow verticals.

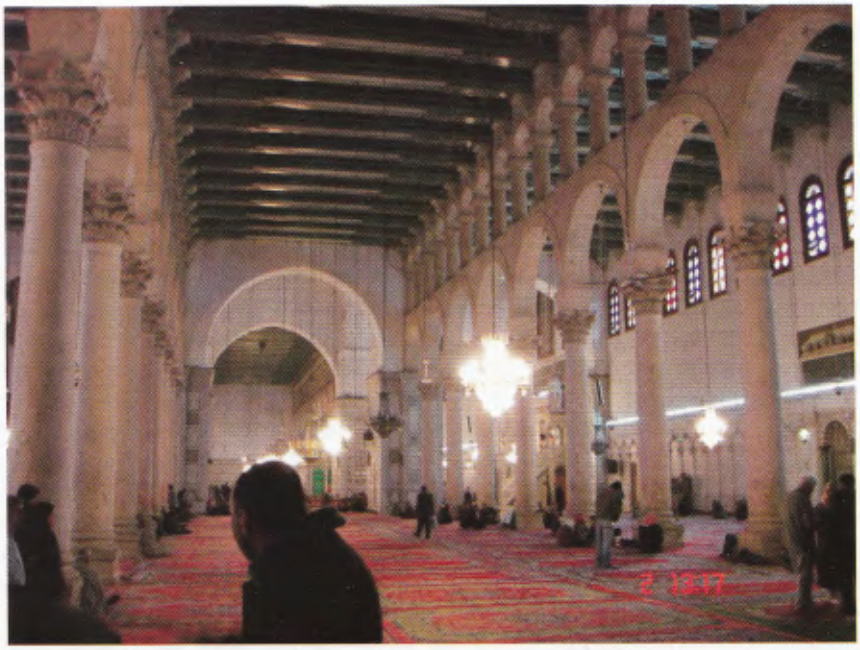


Fig. 8 Great Mosque of Damascus, interior view of sanctuary along the east-west axis



Fig. 9 Great Mosque of Damascus, exterior gable

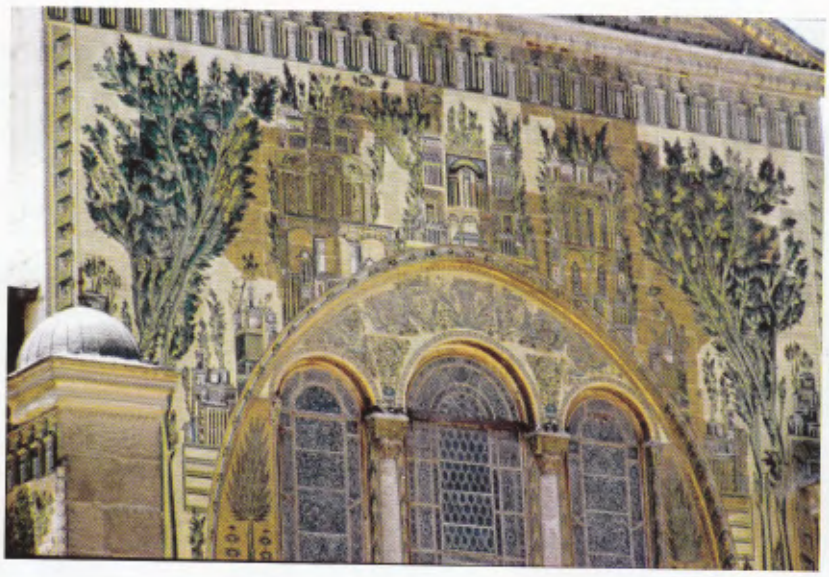


Fig. 10 Great Mosque of Damascus, exterior gable, detail



Fig. 12 Great Mosque of Damascus, Bait al-Mal, detail

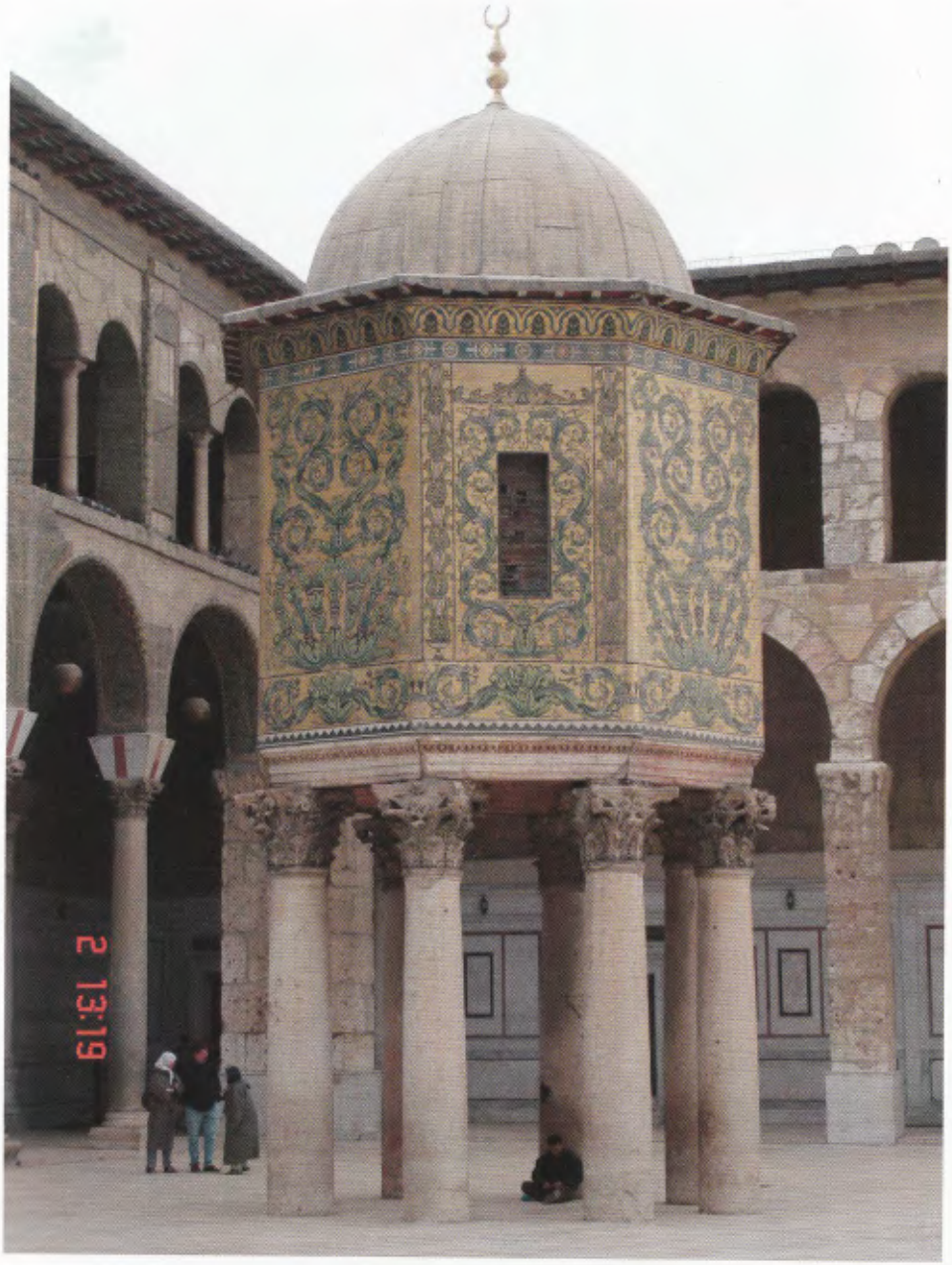


Fig. 11 Great Mosque of Damascus, Bait al-Mal

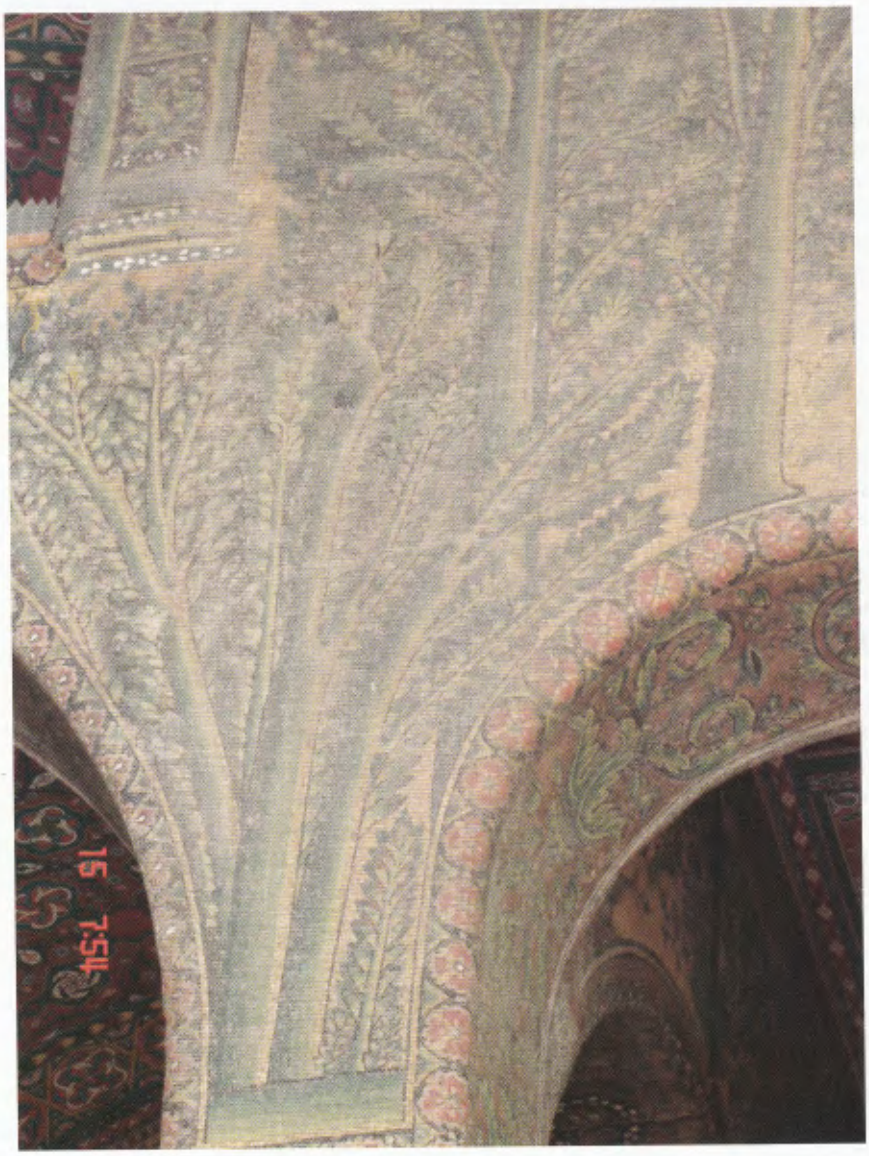


Fig. 13 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic vignette of trees on courtyard façade

Nor did local Christian floor mosaics offer significant inspiration, for here too figural themes were to be seen everywhere, notably in personifications and in the popular theme of the inhabited vine scroll, another legacy from the classical world.[31] The geometric themes so common in these floor mosaics seem not to have recommended themselves for use in wall mosaics, since they are largely absent from both the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus.[32] Indeed, the narrow border patterns in the mosaics, whether geometric or floral, are of a very simple kind and clearly serve as straightforward devices of demarcation. This may suggest that they were not regarded as meaningful, which of course implies that the themes that were used for larger surfaces were chosen precisely because they were not neutral but did carry some meaning.

The total absence of inscriptions in the Umayyad decoration that does survive at the Damascus mosque suggests that the decision to accord a major role to epigraphy, as was so often the case in later mosques and other public buildings, was still some way off. That said, as Finster has noted,[33] the area around the mihrab did indeed bear inscriptions.[34] They are described in the medieval sources as being predominantly Qur'anic rather than historical and were of pronounced apocalyptic intent. Since no other Umayyad inscriptions apart from the Qur'anic ones and the foundation inscriptions are recorded in the medieval sources describing the Damascus mosaics,[35] it seems legitimate to assume either that there were none or that they were not regarded as significant. It follows that, unlike the Dome of the Rock, this mosque did not rely on the written word to transmit doctrinal messages, and the likelihood is that these played a minor role. Nevertheless, their concentration around the mihrab, the cynosure of the entire mosque, in the immediate vicinity of an image of the Ka'ba[36] – the only named building in these mosaics mentioned by the Arabic sources - indicates that their intent was serious indeed.

The huge area to be covered with mosaics brought its own attendant problems. The danger of monotony was especially acute in the case of the long uninterrupted surfaces of the inner walls, since they had no architectural articulation

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31. J.M.C. TOYNBEE and J.B. WARD-PERKINS, Peopled scrolls: a Hellenistic motif in imperial art, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 18(1950), 1-43; C. DAUPHIN, The Development of the "Inhabited Scroll" in Architectural Sculpture and Mosaic art from late Imperial Times to the Seventh Century A.D., *Levant* 19(1987), 183-212.

32. Though the window grilles of the Damascus mosque display extremely sophisticated geometric patterns (analysed by CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, 202-4, figs.118 and 127 and pl.59). So clearly geometry of this kind, though well within the compass of the craftsmen, was not regarded as suitable subject matter for large surfaces of mosaic work. The geometric character of the borders of the mosaics is kept quite simple.

33. FINSTER, Mosaiken, 119.

34. The Qur'anic inscriptions are helpfully given in full in an Appendix ("The Lost Inscriptions of the Umayyad Mosque") in FLOOD, Damascus, 247-51; the historical inscriptions are given on 252-4.

35. But see n.72 below.

36. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 238-9.

to lend them variety. This problem simply did not arise in the case of the arcades. The solution of artificial division into separate panels was not adopted, so continuity as well as variety was at a premium. The methods by which this was achieved are an absorbing study in themselves, but cannot be pursued here. Ample and regular fenestration ensured good natural lighting for the longer stretches of wall, while within the body of the sanctuary itself long rows of hanging lamps, with their flickering flames, invested the mosaics with life, mystery and a dim splendour thanks to the uneven and shifting play of light. The aspect of such an interior is well captured in the Qur'anic frontispieces from San'a', one of which depicts a structure that has much in common with the Great Mosque of Damascus.[37]

The originality of the mosaics

It is important to concede at the outset that the subject matter of the mosaics – landscape elements combined with buildings - is not original in itself, as Förtsch has demonstrated in compelling and nuanced detail.[38] But the interpretation of this theme is full of original touches. That is perhaps not surprising, given that it was essentially a Roman rather than a Byzantine theme, and thus not a major part of the living tradition of the visual arts that the Umayyads encountered in Syria. It would therefore have lent itself all the more readily to alterations and rethinking of various kinds. As is well known, architecture-scapes figured largely in Roman art of the 1st century A.D. and later, as the wall paintings of Rome, Pompeii, Boscoreale and Herculaneum show,[39] and landscapes were also popular. It is likely enough that this repertoire spread far beyond Italy and reached the Roman East. The Umayyads might very well have seen isolated aspects of this general theme in late antique floor mosaics, such as those of the Antioch area,[40] and perhaps examples of relevant wall decoration also survived in Syria into early Islamic times. Indeed, excavations at Ephesus have revealed plenty of such ornament. But why choose an outdated Roman model in the first place? The choice of Roman rather than Byzantine models could be explained by an awareness on the part of the Umayyads

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[37]. H.-C. GRAF VON BOTHMER, Architekturbilder im Koran: Eine Prachthandschrift der Umayyadenzeit aus dem Yemen, *Pantheon* 45(1987), 4-20 and colour pl.II.

[38]. R. FÖRTSCH, Die Architekturdarstellungen der Umaiyadenmoschee von Damaskus und die Rolle ihrer antiken Vorbilder, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 7(1993), 177-212. FÖRTSCH has once and for all systematically documented the Roman connection in truly impressive detail, with a keen awareness of the various strands discernible in these borrowings. He treats the Roman motifs recognisable in the Damascus mosaics one by one, which lends his analysis extra authority. Cf. too G. HELLENKEMPER SALIES, Die Mosaiken der Grossen Moschee von Damaskus, *Corso di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina* XXXV(1988), 295-313.

[39]. FÖRTSCH, Damaskus 182-5, 190-6, 203-7; this discussion, conducted as it is in the context of the Damascus mosaics, is by far the most subtle, wide-ranging and authoritative treatment of their sources, particularly the Roman ones, published to date.

[40]. Cf. the discussion of how architecture is depicted in the mosaics of Antioch (D. LEVI, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, Princeton, London and the Hague 1947, I, 137-9, 142-4, 149-50, 157-9, 392-3, 606-8 and II, pls.XXII, XXV-XXVIIa, XXIXa, XXX, XXXV and XLIIb).

that it was Rome rather than Byzantium that had built a world empire, so that Rome was the more appropriate model to follow for the new aspiring world empire.[41] Too close a reliance on Byzantine precedent, on the other hand, would have politically undesirable implications. After all, the Byzantine empire remained not just the major political foe of the Umayyads, but also their most formidable rival in both cultural and religious terms. That made it imperative to avoid too obvious a reliance on Byzantine models. But in fairness one must add that while Roman models clearly provided the initial inspiration for the Damascus mosaics, the detailed realization of this theme on such a grand scale in this mosque goes far beyond any Roman example. The minds that could recompose the time-honoured basilical form into such unexpected configurations as we see in the Damascus mosque clearly did not baulk at rethinking the stereotyped Roman iconographic formula of landscape-with-buildings in ways that craftsmen raised in that culture would never have dreamed.

So what exactly is new? There is space in this paper to develop only two topics at appropriate length: first, the huge size of the mosaic programme; and second, the many changes that were introduced into the familiar theme of a landscape with buildings.

The first topic, then, concerns the sheer scale on which the mosaic programme, and the panorama in particular (figs.14-15), is conceived. Its huge extent has symbolic dimensions irrespective of the content of the mosaics themselves. Even to imagine this amount of wall mosaic, let alone finance it, called not only for a capacity to think big but also for a bold originality of concept. The exuberant profusion of these mosaics, covering it seems most of the wall surfaces above a height of 6.65 metres from the ground, would have made of the mosque, in the area around the courtyard, within what one might term its cloisters, and finally in the musalla or sanctuary itself, a complete enclosed world of its own. Merely to be inside the mosque would in some sense transport those who viewed it into that world, for it was all around them on an engulfing scale. The choice of a distinctively Christian medium of decoration on this unprecedented scale drove home the unwelcome message of Muslim dominance. And its impressive scale and consequent prestige guaranteed that its lessons would not be lost on subsequent Muslim architects.[42] So a great deal follows from the colossal scale on which this formula of landscape with buildings is deployed. It is scale alone that propels it to a new importance, essentially promoting it from a mere background role, operating so to speak just as wallpaper, to the foreground, indeed to centre stage. That catapults it from a minor supporting role to the major decorative accent of the entire building. This had already been done at the Dome of the Rock, where the entire drum of the

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41. In much the same way it is Rome rather than Byzantium that does duty for the idea of "the West" in the decoration of Qasr al-Hair al-Gharbi, as shown for example in the frame of the gateway itself, the Palmyrene echoes of the sculpture of that gateway, the seated imperial figure from the first floor and, most striking of all, the floor fresco of Mother Earth.

42. G. MARÇAIS, La mosquée d'El-Walid à Damas et son influence sur l'architecture musulmane d'Occident, *Revue Africaine* 50(1906), 37-56.

interior is taken up by an apparently endless unfolding scroll in multiple tiers, which springs from a series of vases.[43] This theme (minus the vases) occurs in the mosaics of one of the minor vaults at Haghia Sophia in Constantinople, where it fits perfectly well as a space-filler; the eye glides over it.[44] But swollen to immense size in the Dome of the Rock, it cannot be ignored and thereby acquires an extra freight of meaning. And if that result could be achieved with a theme as initially unpromising as vases and vegetal scrolls, how much more powerful was the message of the much bigger, much more visible and much more varied architectural panorama in the original state of the Damascus mosque!

And here it is appropriate to consider briefly in more general fashion the fortunes of the landscape-with-buildings motif in Byzantine monuments. For indeed this theme was not entirely lost after the decline and fall of Rome: it continued to play a useful part in providing background detail for the major figural programmes of Christian church decoration. This can be seen, as scholars have long recognized, in the apses of early churches in Rome, some of which also develop complex architecture-scapes,[45] and in several 4th-6th century monuments in Ravenna[46] and elsewhere,[47] and it would be strange if now lost Syrian churches had not furnished further examples. To that extent, some impact of early Christian and Byzantine elements may be recognisable in the Damascus mosaics.[48] But the key point here is

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[43]. The effect of its apparently endless repetition is well captured in ROSEN-AYALON, Early Islamic Monuments, colour pls.I-XVI.

[44]. E. KITZINGER, Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm, *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongreß*, Munich 1958, IV/1, 11, Abb.10 (= W.E. KLEINBAUER [ed.], *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West. Selected Studies by Ernst Kitzinger,* Bloomington and London 1976, 167 and 215).

[45]. An outstanding example is the apse of Sta. Pudenziana; see E. KITZINGER, *Byzantine Art in the Making. Main lines of stylistic development in Mediterranean Art 3rd-7th Century*, Cambridge, Mass. ^{2}1980, pl. 80. Representative images from other early Roman churches are conveniently assembled in W. OAKESHOTT, *The Mosaics of Rome from the third to the fourteenth centuries*, London 1967: Sta. Maria Maggiore (pls. 46-7, 49-51, 53, 55-6, 127-9 and colour pls. II, IV, IX-X and XIV), Sta. Costanza (pl. 41), Sta. Agnesi fuori le Mura (colour pl. XVI), and S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura (pl. 77).

[46]. For large colour plates, see E. RICCOMINI, *Ravenna*, Florence 1967: S. Vitale (pls. 5, 8 and 73); the Baptistery of the Orthodox (pls. 49-50) and Sant' Apollinare in Classe (pls. 64, 68 and 70) and A. BUSIGNANI, *I Mosaici Ravennati*, Florence 1964, pls. 26-7. For a range of stereotypical architectural motifs, well suited to the reductionist idiom of the Christological programme in the upper panels of the nave of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, see G. BOVINI, *Mosaici di S. Aollinare Nuovo di Ravenna. Il Ciclo Cristologico*, Florence 1958, pls. VV-VIII, XI, XVIII-XXI and XXIV-XXVI.

[47]. Such as the church of St George, Thessaloniki (KITZINGER, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, fig.99; for details, see A. GRABAR, *Byzantium from the death of Theodosius to the Rise of Islam*, tr. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons, London 1966, figs.82-3). Curiously enough, perhaps the closest Byzantine parallel for the Damascus mosaics is not from a church at all; it is a detail from the Great Palace floor mosaic in Constantinople, depicting buildings, trees and rushing water (ibid., fig.105).

[48]. See too the conspectus of this topic provided by GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 368-9.

that landscapes and buildings were, to say it once more, secondary. So for the Muslims to remove the heart of this Christian iconography – its sacred figures and narratives – and promoting what was left into new prominence did not merely change the balance between constituent parts (as had been done in the design of this mosque) but rather created something new and unprecedented. This new concept demands attention on its own terms and is not to be dismissed as a copy of something else, however accomplished that copy may be.

The second topic concerns the ways in which Umayyad craftsmen re-interpreted the somewhat stale theme of buildings in a landscape, or a landscape enlivened by buildings.[49] One may identify as new the consistently lateral thinking which, by looking at such a long-familiar theme with a fresh eye, makes possible its radical transformation. Here we come to the heart of the distinctive Umayyad achievement in these mosaics. This transformation, like so much else, is intimately linked with the grandiose scale of the mosaics, since that necessitated, as already noted above, a greater attention to detail and to variety than any earlier surviving versions of the theme attest – or indeed required. Monotony had to be avoided, but how did that work out in practice? Several motifs recur so consistently that they are clearly integral to the desired effect of this steadily unfolding panorama: trees, buildings, waves and, above and beyond all these, but encompassing them all, the gold background.

The surviving record of the Qur'anic inscriptions within the prayer hall indicates that while they did contain isolated references to the Garden and fertility,[50] their principal content was eschatological.[51] But the surviving mosaics evoke rather different Qur'anic passages, as has long been recognized,[52] and it is entirely possible that such passages were inscribed on the walls in the original Umayyad construction. But even if they were not, the content of these Qur'anic verses is vividly realized in these mosaics. It may be as well to record some of the passages that might be relevant; most of them have not been deployed in earlier discussions of the mosaic programme. Sura 2:25 reads "Those who believe and do good works…theirs are Gardens underneath which rivers flow"; 25:10 mentions "Gardens underneath which rivers flow; and (He) will assign thee mansions [qusur]"; 61:12 promises "He will forgive you your sins and bring you into gardens underneath which rivers flow, and pleasant dwellings [masakin] in the Gardens of Eden", while 13:35 speaks of "The Garden which is promised unto those who keep their duty (to Allah): underneath it rivers flow; its food is everlasting, and its

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[49]. Useful insights on this theme are embedded in MARGUERITE GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM'S prodigiously long and detailed account of the Damascus mosaics (Mosaics, 324-72). But this account is seriously flawed because of the gross over-emphasis on description at the expense of analysis, and by the paucity of illustrations.

[50]. FLOOD, *Damascus*, 250 and 251 respectively.

[51]. Ibid., 247-51.

[52]. E.g. by FINSTER, Mosaiken, 119-20 and, following her closely, K. BRISCH, Observations on the Iconography of the Mosaics in the Great Mosque of Damascus, in P.P. SOUCEK (ed.), *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, University Park, Pa. 1988, 16-17.

shade..." 25:75 introduces a new idea: "They will be awarded the high place" (al-ghurfa), which is frequently repeated, as in 29:58 – "Those who believe and do good works, them verily we shall house in lofty dwellings (ghurafa') of the Garden underneath which rivers flow". This is repeated in 34:37, which states "they will dwell secure in lofty halls" (al-ghurafat), and in 39:20 – "But those who keep their duty to their Lord, for them are lofty halls (ghuraf) with lofty halls (ghuraf) above them, built for them, beneath which rivers flow..." Still more Qur'anic verses with similar content have been cited in discussions of these mosaics, and for Muslims familiar with the Qur'anic text the cumulative impact of so many interlocking references to the same subject matter cannot be underestimated. Nor should the ample material on this theme in the hadith literature be forgotten.[53]

Three major themes stand out clearly in these and similar quotations: high buildings; gardens; and rivers which flow beneath them. It would be hard to find a better concise description of the mosaics of the Damascus mosque. In that sense they could be seen as illustrations of the Qur'anic text. In this context it should be especially remembered that while such subject matter is occasionally encountered in late antique or early medieval art as part of the setting for scenes of significant iconographic import,[54] it is unprecedented as the principal theme of a religious building. Its appearance therefore demands an explanation, and Byzantine prototypes are powerless to provide a convincing context. One is left, therefore, with a deliberately Islamic scheme of decoration whose veneer of Byzantine and, behind that, Roman style and subject matter[55] is only superficial and secondary to the intended meaning. The accuracy of the veneer is not in dispute, but that is not the issue. As so often in Umayyad art, the motifs are taken from classical, Early Christian or Byzantine art, but are then transformed by their context into something rather different. In this case, the novelty lies in the combination of deliberately unreal buildings and deliberately unreal trees. That combination removes these motifs from being mere echoes of idyllic classical landscapes and transports them to an altogether higher plane.[56] Indeed, the repeated appearances of high buildings in

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[53]. For the tenor of these accounts, see IMAM 'ABD AL-RAHIM IBN AHMAD AL-QADI, *Islamic Book of the Dead. A Collection of Hadiths on the Fire and the Garden*, Norwich and San Francisco 1977, 133-5.

[54]. See notes 45-8 above.

[55]. FÖRTSCH, thanks to the wealth of photographic documentation and, above all, to the many explanatory drawings of small details that he has assembled, decisively clarifies this point. Methodically subdividing the Barada panel into its constituent parts, and numbering them accordingly ("Architekturdarstellung", Abb.1), he makes it possible for the very first time to appreciate in full the subtleties of layout in this celebrated panel by virtue of treating it as an entire entity istead of discussing its component parts seriatim. This process also reveals some of the varied devices employed to ensure the maximum degree of visual continuity.

[56]. FÖRTSCH argues convincingly (209-11) that certain Roman idyllic landscapes had undertones of the Elysian fields, the Golden Age and the locus amoenus, all with an other-worldly quality that made them suitable models for the craftsmen at Damascus. But even so, there can be little doubt that the Damascus mosaics represent a far more serious engagement

a garden setting defined by gigantic trees and bounded by a predella of running water could be an exact evocation of Sura 56:28-32: "Among thornless lote-trees and clustered plantains and spreading shade and water gushing". All four of these elements are repeatedly present and correct in the Damascus mosaics.

The Qur'an uses a series of words to describe the habitations of the blessed in paradise. By far the most frequently used is ghurfa (usually employed in the plural form ghurafa'), a word to which the adjective "lofty" is commonly applied. It is a word used in Arabic to this day to designate among other things high buildings comprising individual units piled one on top of another, as found in Tunisia for example.[57] The Yemen, too, that ultra-conservative guardian of the ancient Arabian architectural heritage, has maintained intact the tradition of high-rise housing. It was in the Yemen that, surely not by accident, Islamic tradition sited the mythical pre-Islamic palaces of Sadir, Ghumdan and Khawarnaq, the latter two vaunted for their 20-storey height, which made them a topos of architectural excellence for over a thousand years.[58] To interpret the buildings in the Damascus mosaics as half-baked renditions of classical prototypes is thus to miss a crucially Arab dimension in them. Yemen still has thousands of tower houses characterized by sheer faces of forbiddingly blank high walls, broken in their upper reaches by windows. That latter detail in the Damascus mosaics (fig.16) finds its modern counterpart in the formal reception room or mafraj located in the top storey of modern Yemeni houses, the ideal spot from which to enjoy a cool breeze, a good view and relaxing afternoon conversations with friends.

Yet this is not the whole story. Successive observers have noticed the constantly changing perspective used in these architecture-scapes. Scholars have contented themselves with noting the inconsistencies and accounting for them by an imperfect understanding of the relevant classical conventions. This approach will really not do, for the craftsmen's mastery of the technical aspects of mosaic work at Damascus is by general consent well-nigh absolute. It is hard to believe that masters in one aspect of their art were novices in another. Buildings that are formally similar, such as those clustered together in the hill villages, are subtly

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with a far more closely defined Paradise. And here again, the impact of their colossal scale makes itself felt.

[57]. As at Medenine not far from Gabès, where the so-called "beehive skyscrapers" are still locally referred to by that same term ghurfa (R. CARRINGTON, *East from Tunis. A Record of Travels on the Northern Coast of Africa*, London 1957, 103 and pl. opposite 95). The semantic field of the Arabic root gh.r.f., quite aside from the meaning discussed above, embraces a number of symbolic links with the Damascus mosaics – a species of tree, an upper room or storey of a house, and the Seventh Heaven; cf. E.W. LANE, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (repr. Beirut 1980), I, 2249, who draws on the hadith collections as well as the commentaries of al-Baydawi and others.

[58]. N.N.N. KHOURY, The Dome of the Rock, the Ka'ba, and Ghumdan: Arab Myths and Umayyad Monuments, *Muqarnas* 10(1993), 60-2; N.A. FARIS, *The Antiquities of South Arabia*, Princeton 1938, especially 8-9, 13-19; G. ROTHSTEIN, *Die Dynastie der Lahmiden in al-Hira. Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, Berlin 1899, 15-16 and 144-5.

differentiated from each other in numerous ways, such as triangular patches of shadow executed in a darker shade of the same colour, or other variations in shade creating a dappled effect, or tesserae laid in diagonal or rippling rows, or in a grid pattern, or a monochrome tone enlivened by a random scatter of black cubes. All these devices help to suggest depth. And the ubiquitous rampant vegetation, by its location behind, in front or in the middle of buildings, also serves perspectival ends. Such technical virtuosity means that quite a different explanation for these inconsistencies is therefore required. The key issue is that these buildings are not intended to be realistic. The insistence on realism is part of the unconscious intellectual baggage of Western art history. Quibbles about perspective are beside the point. The whole aim is that this should be fantasy architecture, able for example to disregard the laws of gravity. Some of the visual references in early Christian and Byzantine mosaics to the bejewelled buildings of the New Jerusalem, or to buildings in a sphere beyond the earthly one – as in the Baptistery of the Orthodox at Ravenna, the church of St George at Salonica or Santa Pudenziana in Rome[59] – are fantastic in the same deliberate way. What might perhaps be called the anti-realism of the buildings depicted in the Damascus mosaics thus falls into place as a defining characteristic of their other-worldliness. Their multiple stories, often mutually unrelated, their split levels, their blithe disregard of architectural propriety and structural realities, their reduction of bearing members so that they look increasingly precarious and top-heavy from one storey to the next, so that multi-storey buildings rest preposterously on four columns (fig.17) – all these are pointers in the same direction.

[59]. See notes 45-8 above.



Fig. 14 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of panorama on the west back wall



Fig. 15 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of panorama on the west back wall, including modern restorations



Fig. 16 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of clustered tower houses on the west back wall



Fig. 17 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of multi-storey building on the west back wall

But perhaps nothing stamps them as being so unmistakably non-terrestrial as the vegetation which burgeons from them in such rank profusion and at times threatens to engulf them. It invades these buildings and transforms them into something organic – from fleurons in their spandrels to columns whose surfaces are densely packed with leaves, branches and scrolls, with vines[60] twining themselves around the shafts. Such vegetal elements – not just leaves but miniature trees, bushes, shrubs, saplings, thickets - expand to fill empty spaces, and sprout incongruously from capitals, roofs, balconies and plinths, indeed it seems from almost every nook and cranny of many a building. Roof gardens proliferate and huge leaves drape roofs with a curvilinear flourish (fig.18).[61] All this is an imaginative but entirely legitimate inference to draw from the Qur'anic descriptions of paradise, which conjure up images of lofty buildings embowered in greenery.

Indeed, the Qur'an mentions several other types of structure besides the ghurfa, though their nature is somewhat enigmatic. They include dwellings (masakin) in the Gardens of Eden (Sura 61:12), pavilions (khiyam) in which the houris are closely guarded, the rafraf, variously translatable inter alia as a cushion or a building with apertures,[62] and mansions (qusur, plural of qasr, a word often meaning fort or castle but sometimes also employed of a princely residence). None of these words occurs frequently, and there is clearly some difficulty in deciding which of them could be applied to a second type of structure which recurs repeatedly in the Damascus mosaics. The palatial flavour of these other structures, however, makes the word qasr perhaps the most appropriate. Instead of the massive cubic blocks of the ghurafa' they sport balconies, verandahs, balustrades, porticoes, arcades, semi-domes, interior lighting and other refinements (fig.19). Their open-plan design suggests pavilions or kiosks. Their size varies dramatically. They too are overrun by vegetal growth, and for good measure festooned with jewels. Were it not for the implausibility of social distinctions among the elect one might be tempted to explain them as buildings intended for a different category of believers than those whom the ghurafa' would suit. Yet many of them, like the ghurafa', perch at the water's edge. Perhaps, then, they simply assert the variety of the buildings of paradise. It has to be said, however, that by no means all of the buildings depicted in the Damascus mosaics can be fitted comfortably into a Qur'anic context. Some evoke the façades of classical temples or other public structures of the Graeco-Roman world (figs.20-21), thereby substantiating the comment made by al-Muqaddasi and subsequently repeated by other medieval

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[60]. Although in Islamic tradition vines are explicitly excluded from Paradise (A.J. WENSINCK, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition alphabetically arranged*, Leiden, repr. 1971, 183).

[61]. CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, pl.53d. R. ETTINGHAUSEN, Arab Painting, Geneva 1962, 26 suggests that this is a misunderstanding of acroteria, but it may be a knowing and playfully witty re-interpretation of that feature.

[62]. This root, like gh.r.f., has a wide semantic field, including "window", "aperture for the admission of light", "pillows", "meadows" or "gardens" (of Paradise), and is related to raff, a kind of arched construction (LANE, *Lexicon*, 1116-17).

Arabic authors that "there is hardly a tree or a notable town which has not been pictured on these walls",[63] while others[64] have a specific context that excludes any Qur'anic association. As for the oft-noted emptiness of this paradisal landscape, the echoing absence of human beings, Brisch has explained this convincingly by the fact that paradise will be peopled only on the Last Day when, as the Qur'an says, "The Garden shall be brought forth for those who fear Allah".[65]

Once it is recognised that, on the whole, the buildings can be associated with paradise, and thus on a scale and of a type which transfigures earthly prototypes, the way is open to see the trees in the same way. Their astonishing height has often been remarked, but has been discounted as the result of naïveté on the part of the artists – another example of the casual downgrading of the craftsmen at work here – or as stemming from the desire to devise some rhythmic equivalent for the regular placing of saintly figures in Byzantine mosaics. Yet it is a consistent feature of Islamic tradition to attribute immense height and size to the trees of paradise.[66] Whether the intention here is to depict specific trees, such as "the lote-tree of the utmost boundary" mentioned in Sura 53:14, must for the time being remain an open question. Many of them can justly be termed generic, though some scholars have claimed to recognize a variety of species.[67]

Indeed, it is perhaps the treatment of trees that marks the most significant departure from the Roman, Early Christian and Byzantine traditions. These trees take many forms: huge, bare monumental trunks bursting into a leafy canopy at a great height; smaller trees with a more natural balance between trunk, branch and

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[63]. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 233. Not one of the medieval Arabic authors, incidentally, suggests a paradisal interpretation for the Damascus mosaics, even though some of the craftsmen responsible for the mosaics saw them in that light (see note 76 below).

[64]. E.g. CRESWELL, EMA, 1/1, pl. 56b. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM interprets the central structure as a bridge and takes it as an indication that Damascus is the city being depicted here (Mosaics, 371-2). ETTINGHAUSEN, on the other hand (Arab Painting, 26), calls it a hippodrome, and that is much more plausible. He sees this building and an open-roofed gateway visible on the right of CRESWELL, EMA, 1/1, pl.53d as examples of a third type of building, distinct from both houses and palaces. Presumably he had public buildings in mind. That said, even though only a fraction of the Umayyad mosaics remain, it is worth noting that not a single known building is to be found in the 500 square metres of mosaic that survive.

[65]. BRISCH, Iconography, 17.

[66]. A celebrated example, mentioned in several hadith collections (three accounts in Muslim; two in al-Bukhari), is the tree in Paradise which is so huge that a rider on a swift horse can travel in its shade for a century and would still not pass from under it. For further references to the trees of Paradise, see WENSINCK, Concordance, 183.

[67]. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 336-7, mentions "almond or olive", apple and pear; and later adds to these poplars, cypresses, walnut, fig, plum and apricot trees (ibid., 339). The problem is that for the most part she does not identify their precise location in the mosaics, so one cannot check her interpretation tree by tree. Compare DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 158, a spandrel with four trees identified by DEGEORGE on the basis of their fruit as almond, apple, pear and fig trees respectively. Yet while their fruits are fully distinct, their trunks are uniformly generic: a curious combination.

leaf; shrubs; saplings; and bushes. Pride of place goes to the massive trunks, the exclamation marks of the entire panorama (figs.15-17 and 20-21). Suddenly they have become major players in the design. They are brutally pollarded; their many stumps show how the lower branches have been cut off in almost uniform fashion. Stripped down in this way, the leafless lower part of these trees is clearly demarcated from the upper part, which is a riot of vegetation. The result, visually speaking, is a succession of massive golden trunks which punctuate the foreground at fairly but not mechanically regular intervals. As noted above, they could be interpreted as the botanical equivalent of the files of saints processing towards the altar in many a Byzantine basilica. In both cases these upright accents create a slow, majestic rhythm which the eye follows almost involuntarily. In a church they mirror the movement of the congregation towards the altar in the mass. Here, in the mosque, they have no such liturgical function; but they do correlate in an unobtrusive way, like the flowing river beneath them, with the slow walk of the viewer round the courtyard.

But they do more than this. Boldly colourful modelling, applied in vertical strips in graduated tones with the brightest yellow-gold tones in the centre shading off into dark red, black, green, cream or blue tones at the sides,[68] alleviates the bareness of their lower parts. But it is precisely that bareness which allows the buildings scattered between them to be seen in full detail, with no danger of being engulfed by the leafy branches found higher up in such profusion. These trees, then, serve as articulating devices for the composition as a whole, lending the entire composition a stately rhythm; moreover, by virtue of sheer repetition they ensure continuity, effectively creating a sequence of adjoining panels. This is achieved not only by their form but also by the broad and distinctive technicolour striation of their trunks. The strong emphasis on trees goes far to explain the presence of many different types in the entire programme, though the long panorama features broadly similar trees which are, as already noted, of no easily recognizable species. But the soffits of the arcades create shapes that lend themselves to long narrow trees, or multiple clumps of trees with tall thin trunks and vertical branches, and foliage that clings closely to them,[69] while the spandrels – though occasionally they contain buildings[70] - favour stockier trees with spreading leafy foliage (fig.22).[71] It is noticeable that the trees in these confined spaces are much closer to nature than those in the large panorama, whose colouring is consistently surreal.

The artists went to great lengths to breathe life into the depiction of water, with cubes of powder blue, turquoise, sea green and dark blue. The fact that the river is flowing rather than still is admirably suggested by irregular white-capped

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[68]. The range and combination of colours varies from one tree to the next.

[69]. CRESWELL, EMA I/1, figs. 391-6 and pls. 50a,c,d and e, 51c and d, 52b, 58c,d and e and 60b,c and d; DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 162 and 183.

[70]. CRESWELL, EMA I/1, figs. 387, 389-90 and pls. 52d, 53b and d; DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 168-9, 178, 218-9.

[71]. CRESWELL, EMA I/1, figs. 397, 411-12 and pls. 48a, 51a and b, 52a and c, 53a and c; DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 15-17, 101, 158-9.

waves, by sudden breaks in the flow and by gradations of colour (fig.16). The cubes are laid in undulating, diagonal, stepped or horizontal courses to suggest the varied movement of the water, with eddies, swift currents, choppy waves, and broader billows. Sometimes waves collide to make bursts of spray. Or they are topped with spume. Or the blue tonality is interrupted by broad parallel white lines ending in little falls of water rendered as multiple commas. Sometimes the water falls in three separate parallel spurts or freshets. White is used for all of these effects. Everywhere water is in lapping, curling motion. This water is alive, a bringer of fertility; it is not merely a flat blue surface. The river banks are defined by a continuous double course of brown tesserae topped by a single or double course of white ones. These banks can have diagonal, ragged or jagged profiles. One underlying message here is movement, and that correlates well with the eye of the beholder slowly traversing the panorama, and still better with the viewer walking slowly along its length.

The aesthetic and symbolic potential of a continuous gold background had long been a distinctive marker of Byzantine mosaic decoration. Its capacity to suggest both sanctity and other-worldliness had already long been exploited in the decoration of churches, where holy figures were set against such backgrounds. These associations worked equally well in the Damascus mosaics. As an anonymous commentator on al-Muqaddasi's text writes, "Some parts are entirely encrusted with gold mosaic, so that the wall appears to be a blaze of gold".[72] That effect is not easily secured. Close examination of some of those areas where the original gold background has survived reveals that sometimes the cubes were matt, sometimes polished; sometimes smooth, sometimes rough; sometimes laid flat in their beds, but sometimes angled slightly in one or another direction so as to refract light at different angles; and that the cubes of gold leaf were sprinkled more or less liberally with cubes of other colours including black, silver, cream, and light or dark brown. The presence of any one of these individual subtleties may not be readily detected, but their cumulative impact cannot be mistaken (fig.16). It brings these gold backgrounds to life and prevents them from degenerating into a brassy, dead, flat sameness as in the modern restoration of the Bait al-Mal (fig.12).[73] Yet even the Umayyad work shows that yellow rather than gold cubes were frequently used in dimly lit areas, virtually out of sight, to save expense.[74]

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[72]. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 234.
[73]. DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 188.
[74]. Ibid., 333.



Fig. 18 Great Mosque of Damascus, building overrun with vegetation, western arcade

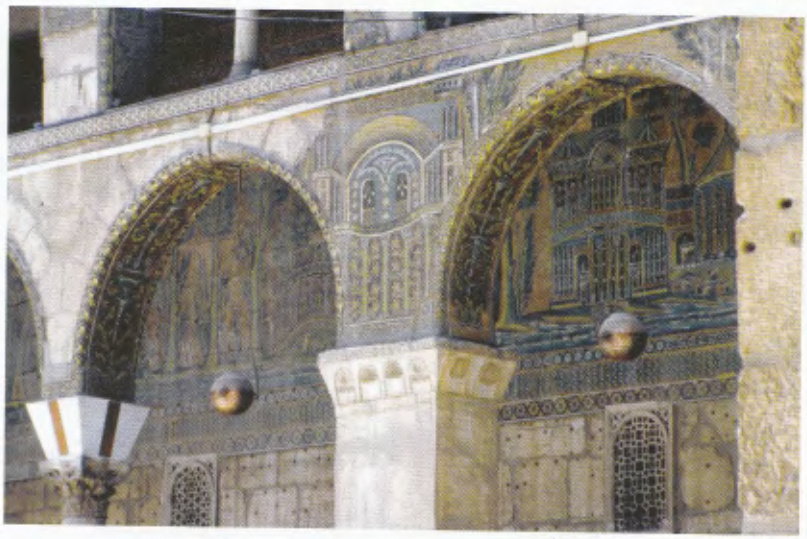


Fig. 19 Great Mosque of Damascus, courtyard façade with mosaic panorama in background



Fig. 20 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of loose interpretation of a classical building on the west back wall



Fig. 21 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of public and palatial buildings on the west back wall



Fig. 22 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of tree in spandrel of courtyard arcade

As to the messages that these mosaics transmitted, that contentious topic deserves a more extended treatment than this paper can give. A scholarly consensus has gradually consolidated around the notion that the theme of Paradise permeates these mosaics. But one should guard against the assumption that a single, exclusive interpretation was ever intended. The popularity of symbols, after all, has much to do with their ability to suggest multiple ideas simultaneously. Conclusive proof that Paradise was the intended theme would require inscriptions within or beside the panorama, or contemporary literary evidence, and neither is now to hand.[75] Several scholars have, however, noted the account quoted by Ibn al-Najjar, writing in 593/1196, and repeated by al-Samhudi (d. 911/1506), that "Some of the workers in mosaic said 'We have made it [the Medina mosaic] according to what we know of the forms of the trees and mansions of Paradise'".[76] Not enough has been made of this,[77] the sole medieval evidence of how some of the craftsmen themselves interpreted the images they were creating. At the very least, this one passage offers compelling evidence for the Paradise interpretation from within Islamic culture itself, since the reference to trees and mansions clearly connects the Medina mosaic programme with that of Damascus. And the fact that 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz, of all people, gave thirty dirhams as a reward to the artist who was responsible for "the big tree" depicted in the Medina mosque[78] – clearly an important part of the mosaic programme – provides valuable supporting evidence for the doctrinal acceptability of the Medina mosaics even among the ultra-pious.

While there is indeed, as noted above, a literary record of now lost Qur'anic inscriptions with apocalyptic messages in the area of the mihrab in the Damascus mosque, those verses do not, as discussed above, fit well with the great landscape panorama that seems to have been the dominant visual accent of the mosque. So from the outset the mosaic work transmitted more than one message. That leaves the way open to suggest that, apart from the themes of Paradise and the Day of Judgment, the mosaics might also have had still other meanings, whether complementary or supplementary. Some scholars have suggested that they were perhaps intended as an attempt to outdo local Byzantine work,[79] or as a depiction of the ghuta of Damascus,[80] or as an evocation of the great Syrian city of Antioch,[81] famous for its nocturnal illuminations,[82] or indeed of Syria itself. And still bolder speculations have been or could be proposed: for instance, that the mosaic

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[75]. Al-Muqaddasi, however, twice mentions inscriptions in the context of the courtyard (GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 233).
[76]. SAUVAGET, La Mosquée Omeyyade de Médine, 81.
[77]. BRISCH, Iconography, 18 is an honourable exception.
[78]. SAUVAGET, Mosquée, 81.
[79]. P. BROWN, The World of Late Antiquity from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad, London 1971, 195.
[80]. E. DE LOREY, The mosaics of the Mosque of the Omayyads at Damascus, *Syria* XII(1931), 19.
[81]. Ibid., 18-20.
[82]. IDEM, L'Hellénisme et l'Orient dans les Mosaïques de la Mosquée des Omaiyades, *Ars Islamica* I/1(1934), 45.

programme could be understood as a vision of the known world, now at peace, with a strongly implied claim to dominion of that world,[83] or as a realization of the Bedouin ideal of a vast fertile oasis, as an echo of Arabian architectural traditions, as a celebration of the faith, even as an instrument for proselytizing.[84] No doubt still other ideas could be entertained. At all events, the many switches of emphasis, omissions, unexpected juxtapositions, repetitions, exaggerations, contrasts and continuities incorporated in these mosaics, and of course the huge scale of the panorama,[85] could well have been part of the aim of transmitting certain messages. That aim seems to follow logically from the decision to promote the landscape-with-buildings theme from a supporting role to the centre of attention.

In short, whatever interpretation one champions, to interpret so lavish a spread of costly mosaics as "mere" decoration simply will not do. The example of Christian churches, and – more to the point – of the Dome of the Rock argues against such a reductionist idea. So does the location of these mosaics in the great mosque of the capital city of the Umayyad empire. Here, if anywhere, was the place to make a statement, at once political and religious: to assert the power of the Umayyad state and to proclaim the triumph of the Islamic faith. If that Umayyad statement is not entirely free of ambiguity, if its details are not yet fully streamlined, that should occasion no surprise; the Umayyads were still finding their feet in the complex domain of religious and political iconography. Hence, perhaps, as in the Dome of the Rock, that statement was conveyed in multiple ways – through the choice of a hallowed site, through the building itself, through inscriptions and through the decorative scheme. There was of course nothing new in using the decoration of a religious building to say something important; the essential novelty was the idea of using this somewhat banal theme of a landscape with buildings as the instrument of such messages. And it is here that the scale of the entire enterprise comes into its own, for – to say it yet again - to a significant extent its meaning depends on its size. No longer are these landscapes and buildings mere background or filler ornament. Executed on this dwarfing scale, they create the sense of an entire self-contained world which, though similar to ours in many ways, has been transfigured into a higher reality. These are landscapes of the imagination. And as such they are susceptible to more than one interpretation.

Nor should one forget the karma so celebrated in medieval times as a particular tour de force of this mosque[86] – a golden carved vine scroll some 45 cm

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[83]. ETTINGHAUSEN, Arab Painting, 28.

[84]. This may sound intrinsically implausible, but non-Muslims were received and even lodged in mosques, and while they had no intrinsic right to enter them, they were admitted there on sufferance: see the compendium of hadiths drawn from al-Bukhari's Sahih (M.M. ALI, *A Manual of Hadith*, London [3]1978, 69).

[85]. Of which only some 500 square metres survives (GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 326), which in all probability represents significantly less than 10% of the original total; it is important always to keep in mind the dwarfing impact of such a huge acreage of mosaic.

[86]. FLOOD, Damascus, 57-68 is the fullest account available; see too IDEM, Umayyad Survivals and Mamluk Revivals: Qalawunid Architecture and the Great Mosque of

wide set some 3 to 4 metres above the floor level and which ran along and around the qibla and adjoining walls, a kind of cordon sanitaire for the entire sanctuary, that most sacred part of the whole building.[87] Some clues as to how it might have looked in its original gem-incrusted state survive – for example, a rare photograph of the qibla wall taken before the fire of 1893;[88] the main theme of the inner drum mosaic of the Dome of the Rock; the circular roundels in the border between the base of the Barada panel and the window grilles (figs.15 and 18);[89] the massive, slowly unfolding vegetal scroll on the eastern wall of Bab Jairun;[90] the border below the panorama on the west wall of the Damascus mosque (fig.15); and the scrolling border of both buildings in the double architectural frontispiece of the luxury Qur'an from San'a'.[91] More generally, one might compare its role to that of the carved frieze of arches and fleurons around the inner perimeter wall of the Dome of the Rock,[92] with its striking colour scheme of gold and black.

It is time to conclude. The Damascus mosaics have been analysed in exhaustive detail by several scholars, from de Lorey[93] to Marguerite van Berchem[94] and Bonfioli,[95] from Finster,[96] King[97] and Brisch[98] to Förtsch,[99] Hellenkemper Salies,[100] Flood[101] and Degeorge[102] and a host of other studies in the past few

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Damascus, *Muqarnas* 14(1997), 57-66, which outlines the impact of the karma on later Islamic architecture.

87. For the justification of these measurements and for the proposed extent of the karma, see FLOOD, Damascus, 59-61.

88. Best reproduced in CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, pl.62A, d. Cf. the enlarged digital version of a section of the karma illustrated in FLOOD, Survivals, 59, fig.3.

89. Detailed colour plate in DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 181; but the drawing by Farid Shafi'i reproduced in CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, 175, fig.92, depicts something entirely different – a continuous scroll which, while not identical to the karma, is much closer to it in spirit.

90. DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 140.

91. VON BOTHMER, Architekturbilder, colour pls.I and II and fig.7.

92. M. ROSEN-AYALON, Note on a particular technique of architectural decoration, *Israel Exploration Journal* 24/3-4(1974), 223-35; M. F. ABU KHALAF, The Carved and Gilded Marble Friezes of the Umayyad Period in the Dome of the Rock, in A. BAKHIT (ed.), *The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilad al-Sham During the Umayyad Period. Between 24-27 October. 1987*, Amman 1989, 462-83; IDEM, *Islamic Art through the Ages. Masterpieces of the Islamic Museum of al-Haram al-Sharif (al-Aqsa Mosque) Jerusalem*, Jerusalem 1998, 81-9.

93. See notes 80 and 82 above.

94. M. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics.

95. M. BONFIOLI, Syriac-Palestinian Mosaics in Connection with the Decorations at the Mosques at Jerusalem and Damascus, *East and West* X(1959), 56-76.

96. FINSTER, Mosaiken.

97. G.R.D. KING, *The Origin and Sources of the Umayyad Mosaics in the Great Mosque of Damascus* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis) University of London 1976.

98. Brisch, Iconography.

99. FÖRTSCH, Architekturdarstellungen.

100. HELLENKEMPER SALIES, Mosaiken.

101. FLOOD, *Damascus*.

decades. The discussion has been further complicated by uncertainties about what is genuine Umayyad workmanship. The glaring, painful inconsistencies of colour values between two high-quality published versions of a couple of the most famous details of the Barada panel – the hemispherical "hippodrome" and the stacked volumes of a cluster of tower houses[103] - leave one with a sense of profound unease. Such violent tonal discords insistently pose the question "what did the original mosaics really look like?"[104]

But quite apart from this issue, too often the close scrutiny of detail and indeed meaning has trumped a full assessment of other aspects of this programme. These include the interplay of the mosaics with the architecture that they grace; their fitness for purpose; their innovative quality; and, perhaps above all, a full appreciation of the huge challenge posed by this project of wall decoration in terms of imagination, time, expense, materials, and labour, not to mention less easily quantifiable matters such as imagination, consistency and appropriateness. In short, these mosaics, given their seminal importance in the genesis of Islamic art, are still curiously under-published.

Were the Damascus mosque and its mosaic decoration bigger than they needed to be? Among many other factors governing that choice, one should not forget that the huge scale of both architecture and decoration was a statement of hope and belief in the future – a future when Muslims would be the overwhelming majority in Damascus and would need a mosque on this scale. In that sense this was a speculative building, an immense gamble – for at the time, Damascus was a largely Christian city. Hindsight has obscured this dimension of the project. But whatever the motive, whether short-term or long-term or both, the sheer grandeur of the whole concept – now sadly lost to view for the most part - compels admiration. Yet its colossal size fulfilled a key function of these mosaics, namely to outperform the achievement of the Christians of Syria in their splendid ecclesiastical buildings. Those were the buildings on the spot in Greater Syria and they were the ones to beat. That message was all the more powerful because the mosque occupied previously Christian sacred space. But that space was not the entire mosque; it was only the site of the destroyed Christian church in the middle of the courtyard. The Muslims were numerically a small minority but they nevertheless used a much bigger worship space than the Christians had found necessary. It is hard not to see political as well as religious motivations here.

The homage to the Roman past, and the keen desire to reconnect with that past, was underlined principally by the use of the entire walled classical precinct (the temenos) with its remaining classical structures such as corner towers and the

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[102]. DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*.

[103]. Compare ETTINGHAUSEN, *Arab Painting*, 24 and 25 with DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*, 148-9 and 224. It is possible to believe that one of the two versions accurately reflects the actual appearance of these mosaics – but not that both of them do so. And of course both versions might contain combinations of accurate and inaccurate renderings of the true colour values.

[104]. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM'S text is peppered with dramatic complaints about the destruction of Umayyad work by incompetent modern restorations.

Bab Jairun complex (fig.2). So it was as important to the Muslims to outdo the Romans as to outdo the Byzantines. They did so in part by the use of colossal scale and in part by a deliberate and indeed exaggerated rejection of realism in many of the buildings and the trees, which evoke an otherworldly ambience. Had that not been the case, the Muslims could have constructed the mosque on the site of the Christian church alone. But al-Walid's ambition was bolder and more comprehensive than this. Finally, unlike the Dome of the Rock, which announced its presence and thus its message from afar to all and sundry – Muslim, Christian and Jew alike – the Great Mosque of Damascus kept its choicest splendours out of infidel gaze. One had to enter it to savour its full effect. It was therefore aimed principally at Muslims.[105] And in comparison with other contemporary mosques it was in a class all of its own.[106] Other mosques in the region, as the examples at 'Amman,[107] Palmyra[108] and Jarash[109] show, were much simpler in their basic design, and even the other major imperial foundations of al-Walid – the mosques at Medina, Mecca,[110] Sana'a'[111] and Jerusalem – were obviously not decorated on the scale adopted at Damascus. All these factors combined to make the Great Mosque of Damascus the principal religious and cultural icon of its time. Despite the loss of the vast majority of its Umayyad mosaics,[112] it has retained much of its unique lustre right into our own times.

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105. But see n. 84 above.

106. That said, one of its most enthusiastic admirers, al-Muqaddasi, writing in the late 10th century, so far forgets himself as to state not only that "the mosque [of Damascus] is the most beautiful thing that the Muslims possess today" and that al-Walid "made it one of the wonders of the world", but also that "the Mosque of al-Aqsa was more beautiful than the Mosque of Damascus" (GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics, 233-4). The contradiction is left unresolved.

107. A. NORTHEDGE, The Umayyad Congregational Mosque, in A. NORTHEDGE (with contributions by J. BOWSHER, U. HÜBNER, H.I. MACADAM and J. WOOD), *Studies on Roman and Islamic 'Amman. The Excavations of Mrs C.-M. Bennett and other Investigations*, Oxford 1992, 63-9, figs. 20-7 and pls. 8-10a.

108. D. GENEQUAND, An Early Islamic Mosque at Palmyra, *Levant* 40(2008), 3-13.

109. A. WALMSLEY and K. DAMGAARD, The Umayyad congregational mosque of Jarash in Jordan and its relationship to early mosques, *Antiquity* 79(2005), 362-78.

110. The fullest discussion is by FINSTER, Mosaiken, 129-31.

111. CRESWELL, rev. ALLAN, *Short Account*, 83-8.

112. I am most greatful to my old friends David Gye, Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair for allowing me to use their photograps in this paper.