



The Haram at Mecca with the Ka'aba at the centre

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MODULE CODE AHAC5018

Islamic Art

Islamic art is a broad term covering a range of objects materials and techniques many of which would be described under the term crafts in Western (European) art history. Within Islamic culture the idea of an individual artist in the European sense did not exist until the nineteenth or even twentieth century and is still a rarity. The remarkable feature of Islamic art is that there is a variety of themes decorative techniques which recur over vast distances and differing cultural and political entities. Until the 1980's the study of Islamic material culture was dominated by studies of Islamic art whilst archaeological considerations (e.g. context) were at the best secondary.

Islamic Archaeology

As an academic field of inquiry, Islamic archaeology began in the nineteenth century although during this time the focus was on objects which could be taken and displayed in museums as Islamic Art. Medieval Islamic remains were intimately linked with the present, and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was often a tendency to see Muslim society as either static or in an inexorable decline. There was therefore little to be gained from an archaeological study of Muslim society as the trajectory of development was already known, and the only value that could be derived was from the excavation and retrieval of decorative objects.

GENERAL READING

Archaeology

Millwright, M. 2010 *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology* (Edinburgh : University Press Edinburgh)

Insoll, T. 1999. *The Archaeology of Islam* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Petersen, A.D. 2005. What is Islamic archaeology? *Antiquity* 79: 617
100-106.

Vernoit, S. 1997. The rise of Islamic archaeology. *Muqarnas* 14: 1-10.

Architecture

Hillenbrand R.1994. *Islamic architecture: form, function, and meaning*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

G. Michell (ed.),1978 *Architecture of the Islamic World*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Petersen, A.D. 1998. *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Islamic Art

Grabar, O. 1973. *The formation of Islamic art*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

MODULE OUTLINE

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION

30.9.15 History and Religion

2.10.15 Geography and Cultures

WEEK 2 IMAGE AND SCRIPT

7.10.15 Koran, Arabic and Arabesque

9.10.15 Painting, Statues and Iconoclasm

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14.10.15 Basra, Kufa, Baghdad and Samarra

16.10.15 Palestine, Jerusalem, Ramla and Gaza

WEEK 4 CRAFTS AND INDUSTRY

21.10.15 Glazed pottery, glass and metalwork

23.10.15 Plain wares, hand made pottery and coarse wares TONY GREY

WEEK 5 ARCHITECTURE

28.10.15 Mosques and Shrines

30.10.15 Secular Architecture

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION

30.9.15 History and Religion

This session will review the historical development of Islam as a political and religious force from the early seventh century (600's) to the early sixteenth century. The explosive expansion of Muslim Arab armies into the Middle East was the beginning of a process that led to fundamental changes into a series of regions stretching from Spain in the west to northern India and beyond. However the conquest of vast territories occurred at a time when the religion was still developing so that by the ninth century irreconcilable differences existed between different branches of the Muslim faith and political unity was lost as a result.

Readings

Donner, F.M. (1986) The Formation of the Islamic State *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1986), pp. 283-296

Whitcomb, D. (ed.) 2005. Changing Social Identity with the Spread of Islam, Oriental Institute Seminars Number 1 (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).



2.10.15 Geography and Cultures

In order to appreciate Islamic history and culture it is essential to understand something of the geography of the Middle East. In particular it is important to get some knowledge of the harsh desert landscapes of the Arabian peninsula which was the home of both the religion and its early followers. From the Arabian Peninsula the Arab armies quickly overran the Middle East which at the time was still ruled by the late antique successors of the Romans and Persians in the form of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires. For the first time the inhabitants of the Iranian world and the post Roman world of the Eastern Mediterranean were united under a single political rule. Readings

Crone, P 2008 "Barefoot and Naked ": What did the Bedouin of the Arab Conquests look like? *Muqarnas* Vol. 25, 1-10

Johns, J. (2003) Archaeology and the History of Early Islam: The First Seventy Years *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (2003), pp.411-436

WEEK 2 IMAGE AND SCRIPT

7.10.15 Koran, Arabic and Arabesque

In many ways Islam as a religion could be characterised as the religion of the Koran (Quran). This religious text is central to all Muslims and crucially is written in Arabic. As a consequence of this situation Arabic has a special place within the Muslim religion and although the versions of the Koran have been made in other languages the Koran must be read and remembered in Arabic. The central role of Arabic within the religion is also reflected in its decorative arts thus a variety of Arabic scripts were developed. In addition to its use in books the Arabic script was used to adorn all types of object from ceramics and metalwork to monumental inscriptions on buildings.

Readings

George, A.F. (2003) The geometry of the Quran of Amajur: a preliminary study of proportion in Early Arabic calligraphy *Muqarnas* Vol. 20 pp.1-16

Roxburgh, D.J. (2008) "The Eye Is Favored for Seeing the Writing's Form": On the Sensual and the Sensuous in Islamic Calligraphy *Muqarnas* Vol 25, pp.275-298



Inscription from walls of Jerusalem 1535-8

9.10.15 Paintings, statues and iconoclasm

Although Islamic religious culture focussed on the Arabic script as the medium for conveying meaning through decoration there has always been a tradition of painting within the culture as a whole. Painting from the early Islamic period is mostly represented by frescoes found within buildings although there are also some early examples of illustrated manuscripts. From the early period there are many examples of figurative painting which include representations of the human form. There are even examples of statues and figurines made in either human or animal form.

Readings

Gruber, C. 2009 Between Logos (Kalima) and Light (Nūr): Representations of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Painting *Muqarnas* Vol 26, 229-262

Hoffman, E.R. 2008 Between East and West: the wall paintings of Samarra *Muqarnas* 25 107-132

Elias, J.J. (2013) The Taliban, Bamiyan and Revisionist Iconoclasm in S. Boldrick, L. Brubaker and R. Clay eds. *Striking Images, Iconoclasm Past and Present* (Farnham: Ashgate).

WEEK 3 URBANISM

Islam has always been an urban religion from its origins in the Arabian cities of Medina and Mecca to the great cosmopolitan centres of culture of Cairo, Baghdad and Istanbul (Constantinople). Recent research on Islamic urbanism has instead concentrated on issues such as origins, economic viability and internal organization.

14.10.15 Basra, Kufa, Baghdad and Samarra

The first session will focus on the development of major Islamic cities within Iraq from the seventh to the ninth centuries. During this period Iraqi Islamic cities transformed from military camps to some of the largest and most sophisticated centres of their time dwarfing the cities of Western Europe.

Akbar, Jamel. Khatta and the Territorial Structure of Early Muslim Towns. In *Muqarnas* VI Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989.

Northedge, A. and D. Kennet (2015) *Archaeological Atlas of Samarra. Samarra Studies II.1* London British Institute for the Study of Iraq



Tel Afar Northern Iraq 1988

16.10.15 Palestine, Jerusalem, Ramla and Gaza

The second session will focus on the development of Islamic cities in Palestine from the seventh century transformations at Jerusalem to the foundation of the new city of Ramla in the eighth century. The session will also consider the subsequent development of these cities following the destruction and warfare of the Crusader periods.

Readings

Petersen A.D. 1999 Preliminary Report on an Architectural Survey of Historic Buildings in Ramla Levant "A preliminary Levant 28, 1995:75-101.

Petersen A.D. 2005 The Archaeology of Towns in Muslim Palestine BAR, Archaeopress Oxford.

WEEK 4 CRAFTS AND INDUSTRY

21.10.15 Glazed pottery, glass and metalwork

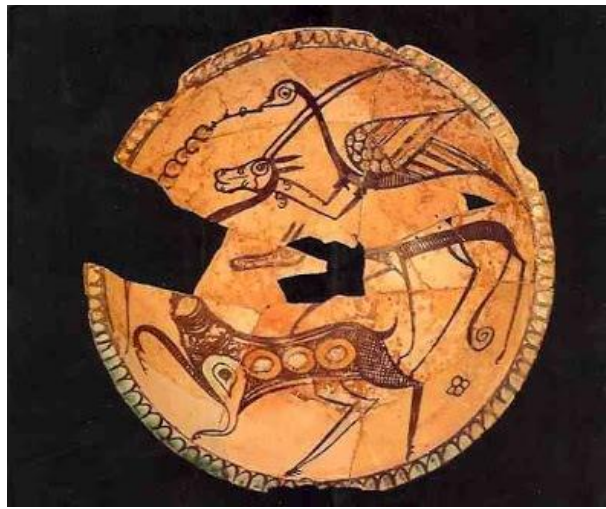
Islamic glazed ceramics are generally regarded as one of the high points of medieval Islamic civilization. Under Islamic rule potters throughout the Middle East and North Africa experimented with glazes and decorative techniques to produce wares which were unrivalled for their decorative brilliance and technical sophistication. At the beginning of the Islamic era potters were influenced by porcelains and other fine wares imported from China and began to imitate and later produce their own designs. Particular technological innovations of the medieval Islamic period include the invention of tin glaze wares, lustre painted pottery and from the twelfth century frit-ware.

Readings

Scanlon G.T (1984) Mamluk Pottery: More evidence from Fustat *Muqarnas*, Vol. 2, The Art of the Mamluks (1984), pp. 115-126

Graves, M.S. Ceramic house models from medieval Persia: domestic architecture and concealed activities *Iran* Vol.46 pp 227-251

Mason, R.B. Ronald M. Farquhar, Patrick E. Smith (1992) Lead-Isotope Analysis of Islamic Glazes: An Exploratory Study *Muqarnas*, Vol. 9 (1992), pp. 67-71



Islamic ceramic dish from Portugal

23.10.15 Plain wares, hand made pottery and coarse wares TONY GREY

This session will be taught with Tony Grey one of the leading experts on Islamic pottery from archaeological excavations. Tony will talk about excavated pottery from Jordan and Israel/Palestine. In addition to introducing the different wares Tony will also consider what the ceramics indicate about other aspects of life in the medieval Levant.

WEEK 5 ARCHITECTURE

Islamic architecture is perhaps the best known aspect of Muslim culture and through its major achievements has influenced Western architecture. One of the achievements of Islamic architecture is the integration of forms and elements from both the Mediterranean (Roman/Byzantine) and the Iranian worlds.

28.10.15 Mosques, Shrines and Tombs

Probably the most definite form in Islamic architecture is the mosque. Derived originally from the prophet Muhammad's house in Medina the mosque is capable of myriad forms from extravagant complexes such as the Sultan Ahmet Cami in Istanbul to a simple unroofed enclosure in the Arabian desert. In addition to mosques mausolea (tombs) are a characteristic feature of Islamic architecture often instantly recognizable with their domed roofs from the Taj Mahal at Agra in India to Saladin's tomb in Damascus.

Readings

Cytryn-Silverman, K. 2009 The Umayyad Mosque of Tiberias *Muqarnas* 26 pp.37-62

Petersen, A.D. (1996) A Preliminary Report on Three Muslim Shrines in Palestine *Levant* XXVIII pp 97-113



Bridge of Mustapha Pasha at Svilengrad Bulgaria dated 1529

30.10.15 Secular Architecture

Whilst Islamic religious architecture is often instantly recognizable secular building in many respects differ little from buildings outside the Islamic world. However there are characteristic features which often define secular buildings as Islamic- for example the use of inscriptions on public buildings or the internal division of houses in separate men's and women's sections. In addition there are a number of technological innovations which were made in the Islamic world which later found their way into European architecture for example the so called Tudor arch (four-pointed arch) which was first developed in ninth century Palestine and only became common in Europe from the late fifteenth century.

Readings

Petersen, A.D. (1997) Jaljuliya: a Village on the Cairo-Damascus Road *Levant* XXIX 1997 pp. 95-114

Petersen, A.D. (2008) Bridges in Medieval Palestine' in U. Vermeulen & K. Dhulster (eds.) *History of Egypt & Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid & Mamluk Eras* V. Peeters, Leuven 2008. pp 291-306.