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AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE IN YEMEN

Islamic architecture in Yemen is conservative. The Yemeni people are proud of their history, their culture, and their buildings, and they see no discontinuity between their pre-Islamic and their Islamic past. Nor do they see the pre-Islamic era in a negative light; quite the opposite is the case. For this reason they took over as spolia not only architectural fragments of ancient buildings they judged to be particularly beautiful, but whole architectural types. An example of this is the mosque of Solomon in Marib,¹ which was installed on the site of the old temple, complete with its propylon and columns. The inscription states that the mosque of Sulayman ibn Dawud was “restored” in the year 467 (1074–75).

MOSQUES

Cubical mosques. One pre-Islamic cult building was also perpetuated in a particular form of mosque, called a “cubical mosque.” Its floor plan is usually almost square, with an inner chamber divided by two rows of three columns, on the capitals of which rests a flat ceiling. The entrance is along the axis, facing the mihrab. The characteristic feature of this type of architecture is its closed, cubic form, with no windows, which gives it a cave-like aspect. A fine example is provided by the small mosque of Tamur. The building dates from either pre- or early Islamic times.² Inside, stone architraves bearing the ceiling of stone slabs are carried by two rows each of three monolithic supports. The block-like dossier capitals underline the ancient character of the structure, which was “restored,” according to the ceiling inscription, in the year 430 (1089); this could mean that it was converted into a mosque at that time. To do that, its west side — apparently originally open — was closed in and a mihrab marked on the qibla wall as a projecting stucco arch. The roofing, the projection-like protruding end bays of the corners on the north side, and the oversize dog-tooth frieze on the façade all seem archaic. The method of construction and the ornamentation are reminiscent of the temple of Baraqish Yathil.³

This type of temple architecture, with its rectangular

floor plan, two rows of three columns, and axial entrance achieved by using a bent entrance, is found in Hadramawt, in the temples in al-Hajra, Makaynun, Husn al-Qays, Raybun West, and Hurayda.⁴ In the north, too, a structure of this kind still stands at Maʿin, the former Qarnawu. Its entrance is not along the axis, but in the northwest corner; at the most famous sacred site of this type, the Kaʿba in Mecca,⁵ the entrance is similarly placed, but there it is in the southeast corner. The structure of this sacred site originally also included two rows of columns, but these later fell victim to the restoration work of Ibn al-Zubayr,⁶ who divided up the room with an axial row of only three supporting columns; these were left unchanged in the further alterations under Hajjaj

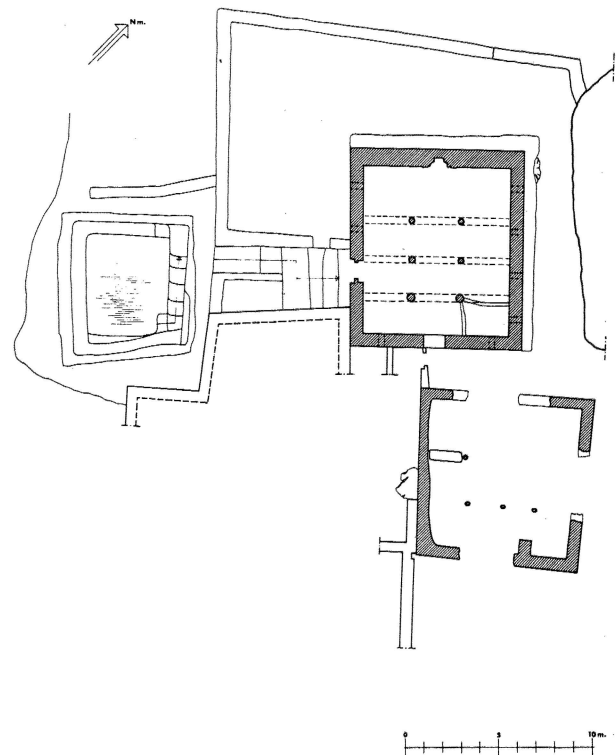


Fig. 1. Asnaf/Khulan, Masjid al-ʿAbbas. (R. Paone and A. Cavaliere)

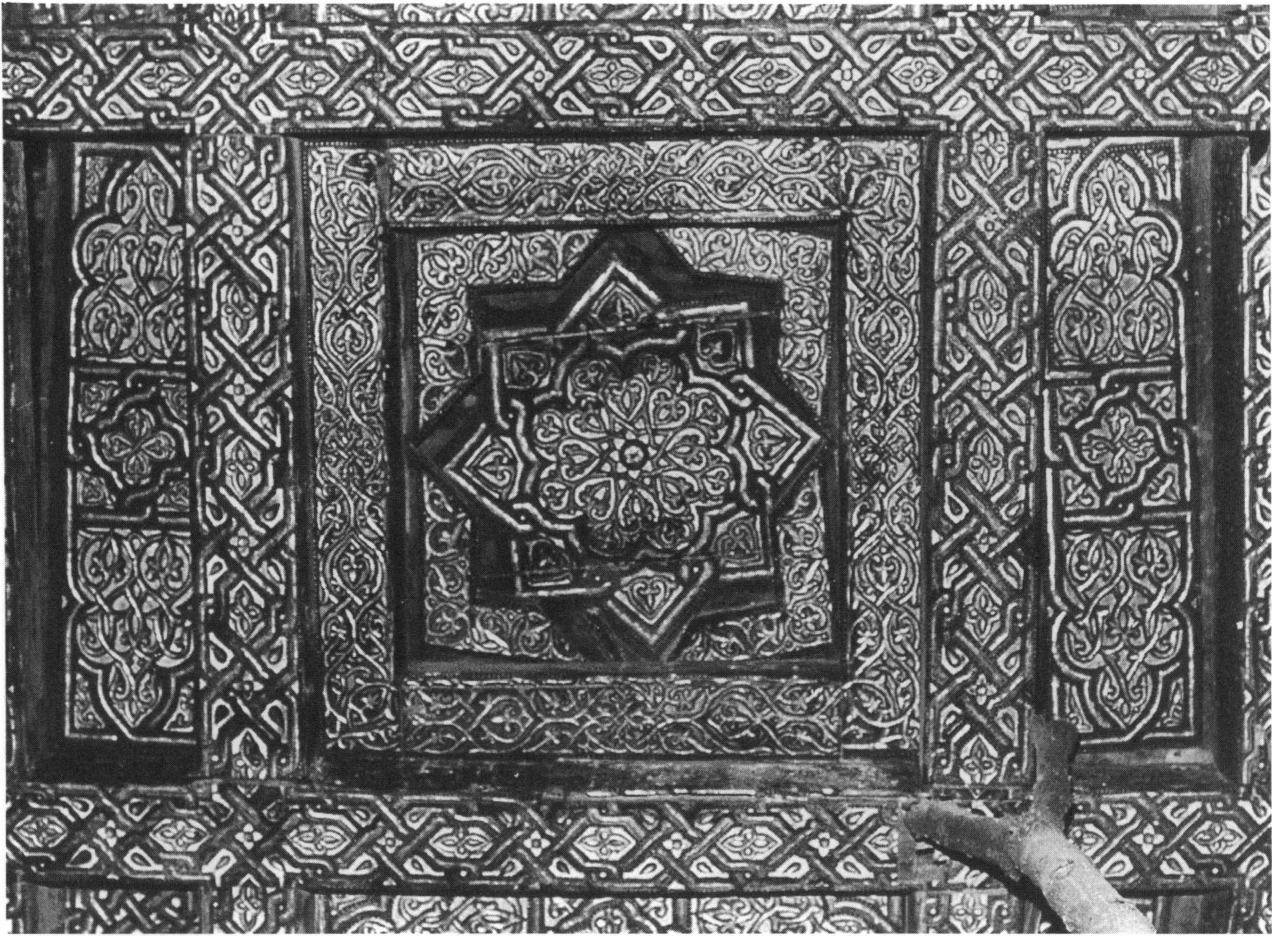


Fig. 2. Asnaf/Khulan, Masjid al-ʿAbbas. Coffered ceiling. (photo: B. Grunewald)

ibn Yusuf. Incidentally, the cubical form of the Kaʿba has never been changed; rather it has been emphasized by increasing the height of the structure.⁷

The development of the cubical mosque reached a peak in the Masjid al-ʿAbbas in Asnaf/Khulan and its magnificent ceiling decoration (figs. 1–2). The richly carved, painted, and gilded patterns — interlacing and star patterns — not only serve as ornamentation, but also articulate the otherwise undifferentiated space,⁸ in quality as well as in direction, beyond what could be anticipated from the floor plan. The mihrab bay is set off by a stylized, bracketed egg-and-dart frieze, and the raised ceiling gives the effect of a dome; the two adjacent bays to the east and west are also emphasized by decoration. The central nave is seen as a whole, running toward the mihrab, the beams decorated with a special ornamenta-

tion. An unusual feature for this type of mosque is the row of windows, breaking through the walls under the ceiling and allowing light to penetrate via alabaster panes. The inscription states that this mosque dates from 519 (1126).

The mosque of Sarha, near Yarim, although constructed about a hundred years later, creates a more archaic impression than the mosque of al-ʿAbbas.⁹ The ground plan is again rectangular, but the ceiling indicates a room that is more centered, with cupola-like forms covered at the top with alabaster panes arranged in a cross shape. The central bay has a fixture on which to suspend a lamp. The walls are plain and windowless; the room is dimly lit, like the Kaʿba as it was constructed by Ibn al-Zubayr, with four or perhaps five windows in the ceiling. The coffered ceiling of the mosque of Sarha

impresses one with the severity of its brown and white interlaced ornament contrasted with the lively polychrome painted scrolling.

Apart from these cubic forms with rectangular floor plans there are numerous other cubical mosques with only four or even two supports. These forms also have their precursors in pre-Islamic shrines, as evidenced by the temple of Ba Qutfa in Hadramawt.¹⁰ The common feature here is that the height is usually identical with the length. The type continues in use today in private or village mosques made of clay or hardened cement paste.

Many of these small, unassuming sacred sites possessed richly decorated ceilings, as demonstrated by the Masjid al-Dar in Jibla (mid-thirteenth century), the Masjid al-ʿArraf from 1081 (the constructional history of which is problematic), and the mosque of Qaydan near Tawila, the opulently colorful painted ceiling of which allows one to venture a dating somewhere in the later thirteenth or fourteenth century.

Hypostyle mosques. The second type of mosque that was in constant use consists of a simple hypostyle hall with an

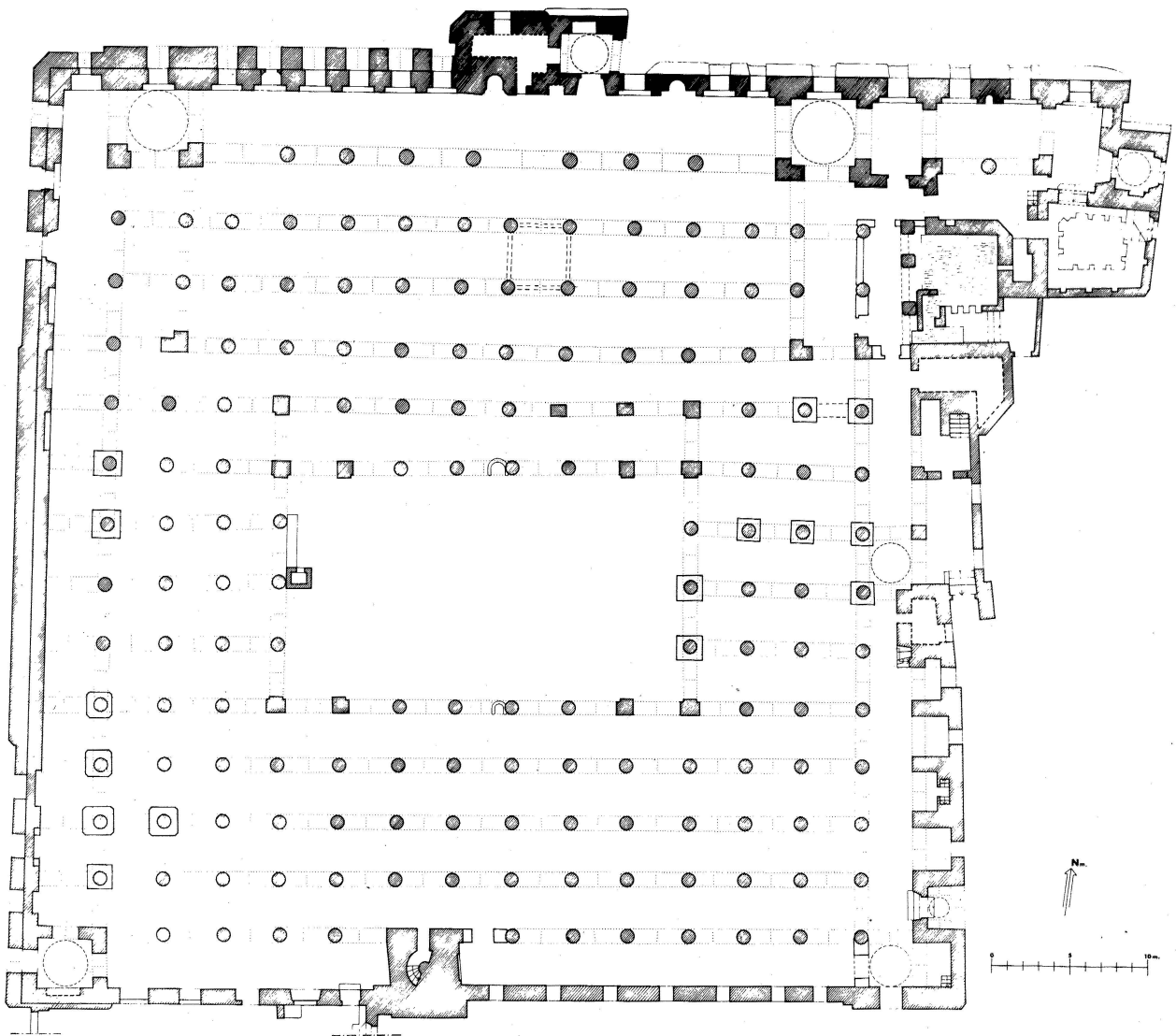


Fig. 3. Zabid, Great Mosque. (R. Paone and A. Cavaliere)

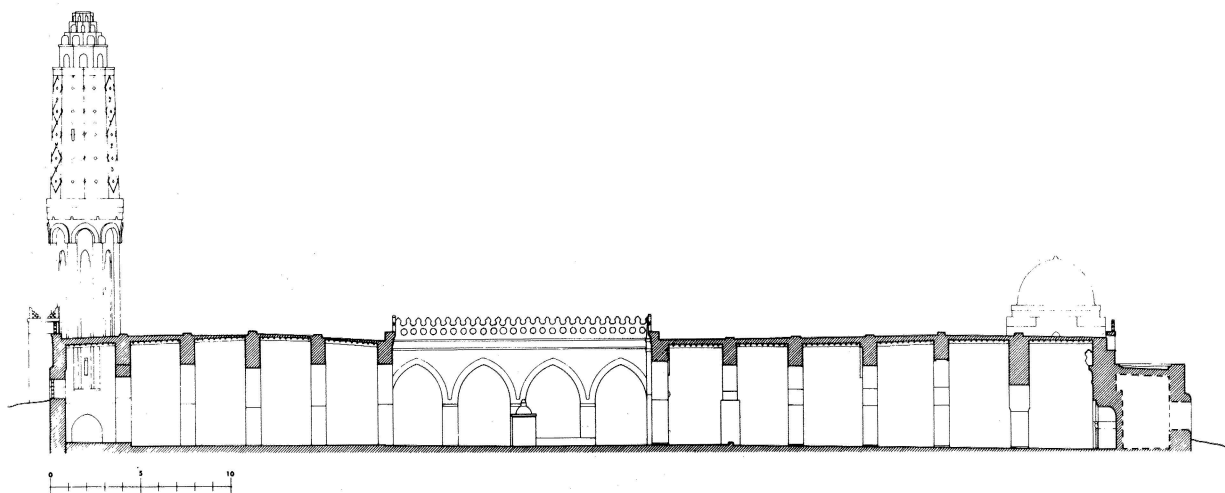


Fig. 4. Zabid, Great Mosque, Section. (R. Paone and A. Cavaliere)

oblong ground plan, often laid out transversely. Here too pre-Islamic columns were commonly used as spolia, as in the mosque of Sulayman ibn Dawud (1074) in Marib and the Great Mosque in Yarim (before 1621). This often required placing columns on top of each other until the required height was reached. A courtyard could be added to these structures, although it was not an essential component. Many of the early great mosques, the Great Mosque of Zabid (figs. 3–4) and that of Dhamar, for example, must have looked like it,¹¹ and the first mosque of al-Hadi in Sa^ʿda, many of the smaller mosques, such as the Masjid Asha^ʿir in Zabid and the Masjid al-Abhar in San^ʿa², also followed this model. The flat ceiling sometimes rested directly on the capitals, as in the mosques at Marib and Yarim, or were carried on arcaded walls, as in the mosque of Dhamar, the Masjid al-Abhar in San^ʿa², and the Masjid Salah al-Din (ca. 1390).¹²

The hypostyle hall as a type is also found in pre-Islamic times, but the use to which it was put is not always clear. Excavations in Baraqish have demonstrated that the rectangular, hypostyle structure found there is in fact a temple; something similar may be suspected in the case of the building at Husn al-Qays, also possibly in Shaqab/Hadramawt.¹³ One could, of course, object that such simple architecture does not need a model; a hall is a readily available form and can be extended at will.

Courtyard mosques. The courtyard mosque was apparently almost nonexistent in Yemen in the first centuries after the Hijra.¹⁴ According to Ibn Rustah, the Great Mosque

in San^ʿa² was the town's sole courtyard mosque. It is unknown whether the Great Mosque of Janad, which vies with the Great Mosque of San^ʿa² for the title of the oldest mosque in Yemen, was originally founded as a courtyard mosque.¹⁵ In its present form it dates from the Ayyubid era (around 1200).¹⁶ Like the Great Mosque in San^ʿa² and that of Zabid (figs. 3–4), it embodies the classic Arab mosque.

The architecture of pre-Islamic Yemeni temples is exemplified by the very early Wadd Temple near Jabal Qatuta or the temple of al-Huqqa, documented by H. von Wissmann. It is admittedly a late temple, but suitable for purposes of comparison. It consists of an enclosed cella, in front of which is a peristyle courtyard;¹⁷ the cella is raised on a podium, in contrast to the courtyard mosque which is at ground level. The mosque usually has many entrances, rather than only one, as was the case in earlier temple architecture. However, the ancient type of temple in fact became more popular, as the later development of the courtyard mosque shows. What was once an open courtyard mosque has today become an enclosed haram with a courtyard in front. The haram continues to be considered "holier" than the courtyard.

In its present layout and dimensions, the Great Mosque of San^ʿa² corresponds to the architectural scheme carried out by the Caliph Walid ibn ^ʿAbd al-Malik between 705 and 715. Five naves, running parallel to the qibla wall and formed by arcades, constitute the haram with the mihrab. Three naves, which also run parallel to the outer wall, make up the western, southern, and eastern riwaq. The eastern riwaq was completely re-



Fig. 5. Shibam/Kaukaban, Great Mosque. Haram. (photo: B. Grunewald)

newed in the mid ninth century; parts of the haram including the qibla wall were, according to an inscription, renovated in 553 (1158).¹⁸ As a result each individual wing of the building stands in contrast to the others, yet communicates through the wide arcades with the adjacent room and in particular with the courtyard. Thus the openness and expanse so characteristic of the early era also shape the mosque. Accordingly, I would venture the opinion that this architecture was imported.

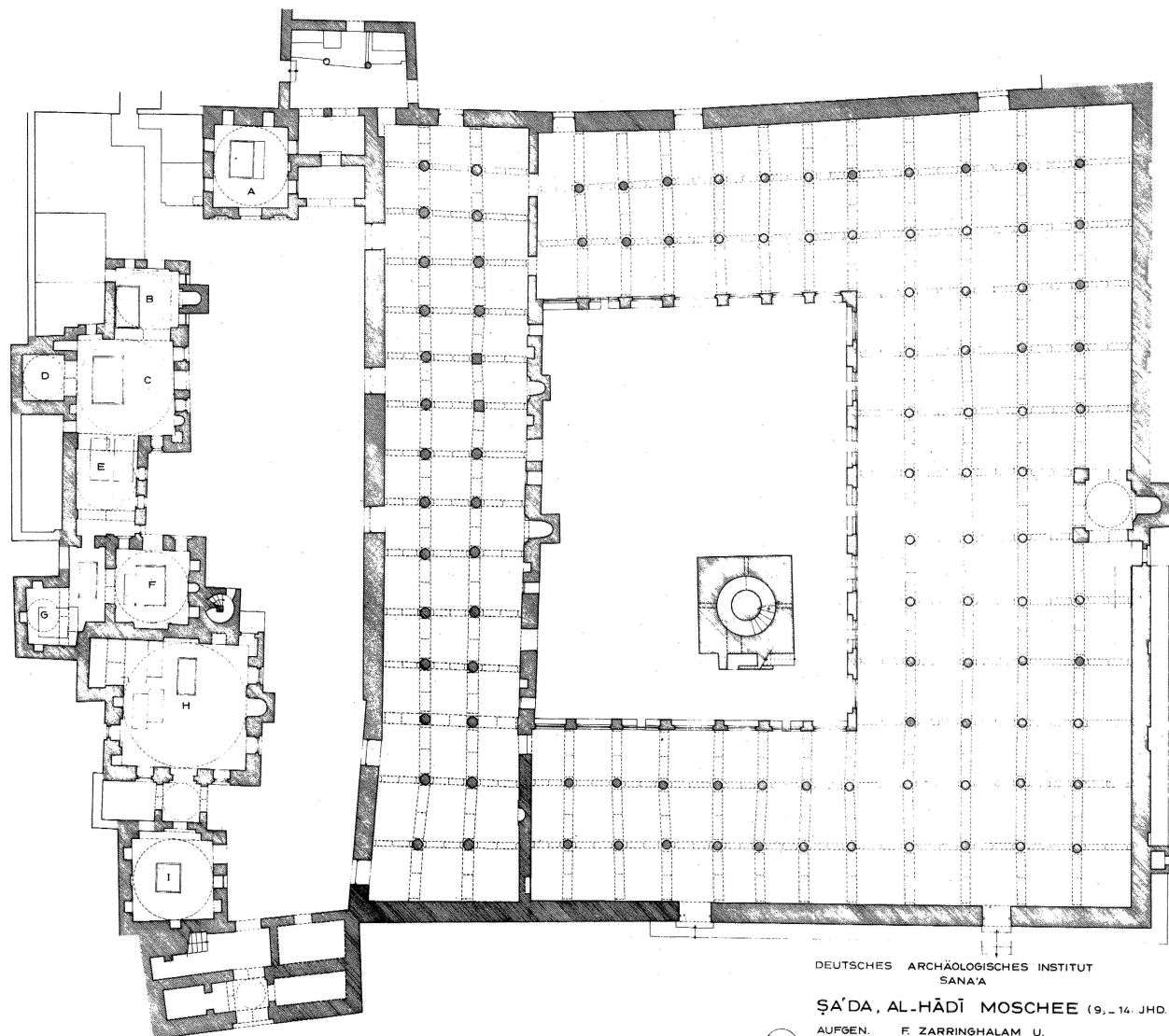
The number of entrances is unclear, nor has it been established with any certainty whether the mosque in the early era already had a minaret. Ibn Rustah testifies to the existence of one in the tenth century, but the two towers there today date from 602 (1206).¹⁹ Arcaded walls were not really an innovation in Yemen at the beginning of the eighth century — they were known from the church of Abraha in Sanʿaʿ at the end of the sixth century²⁰ — but they do not belong to traditional Yemeni

architecture and were not adopted generally until later. What is traditional for Yemen are the columns with architraves set directly on the capitals, as, for example, in the Great Mosque from Shibam Kaukaban (9th century) or that from Dhu Ashraq (1019).²¹ The effect is to give both mosques a more ancient appearance than the Great Mosque of Sanʿaʿ. However, despite the alterations which have been made in the course of the centuries, the Great Mosque of Sanʿaʿ still has the appearance of an archaic Arabian mosque, complete with all its functions as a place of prayer, instruction, and the dispensation of justice. Here, too, as was so often the case elsewhere, columns from pre-Islamic structures were used, some elements of which without a doubt came from the church of Abraha.²² The decoration and wealth of this mosque were contained in its coffered ceiling, parts of which have survived, especially in the eastern, ninth-century riwaq. The walls remain white, with only a carved inscribed frieze, possibly also dating from the ninth century, running all around the ceiling.

The courtyard mosque in Shibam-Kaukaban, probably built in the ninth century, represents a variation in that the mosque's architraves all run in a north-south direction (fig. 5).²³ That section of the haram that spans the width of the courtyard is the only part to have its own very richly decorated coffered ceiling. Despite the archaic construction, therefore, the mosque is given a sense of direction and structure reminiscent of ninth-century Abbasid mosques. The courtyard façades are emphasized by arcades, as is frequently the case with later cult buildings. A row of blind niches is set above them, also indicating a ninth-century date.

The type of courtyard mosque in which the haram has a widened central nave along the lines of Fatimid mosques finds its way into Yemen with the Great Mosque in Jibla, commissioned by Arwa bint Ahmad in 1087.²⁴ In an earlier instance, that of the mosque in Dhu Ashraq²⁵ from 1019, the central nave is already slightly broader than the rest of the aisles; henceforth, however, it is delimited by architraves running north-south. Here too the haram has only high supports upon which the flat ceiling rests; however, arcades run all around the courtyard, leading to a domed bay on the axis of the haram, as in the Great Mosques of Qairawan and Tunis. It is possible that the building originally had two minarets, but the two towers there now are not original. This mosque was also once distinguished by its richly decorated coffered ceiling, but only a few remnants of it have survived.

This type of courtyard mosque with a wide central nave acquires new significance in the architecture of the



DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT
SANA'A

ŞA'DA, AL-HĀDĪ MOSCHEE (9.-14. JHD.)

AUFGEN. F. ZARRINGHALAM U.
Z. MADANI XI. 86
GEZ. F. ZARRINGHALAM
Z. DRUCK GEZ. Z. MADANI



- A GRAB DES ĀLI IBN MUḤAMMAD
- B GRAB DES NĀŞIR AḤMAD
- C GRAB DES AL-HĀDĪ
- D GRAB DES ḤASAN IBN QĀSIM
- E GRAB DES MUḤAMMAD IBN QĀSIM
- F GRAB DES ḤASAN IBN AL-MUḤTĀR
- G GRAB DES ĀBULLĀH IBN ḤUSAIN
- H GRAB DES AḤMAD IBN QĀSIM
- I GRAB DES AL-QURBĀNĪ

Fig. 6. Sa'da, mosque of al-Hadi.

BESTANDSAUFNAHME OHNE UNTERSCHIEDUNG
HISTORISCHER ZUSTÄNDE

Zaidi Imam al-Mansur Billah, both in the Great Mosque of Huth and in the palace mosque of Zafar Dhibin (ca. 1200).²⁶ Both mosques have columns with architraves in the interior of the haram and a courtyard surrounded by arcades. The mosque of Huth has sparingly applied stucco decoration of very high quality; sadly the ceilings have been destroyed. The mosque of Zafar Dhibin is still furnished with splendid coffered ceilings.

In the absence of the southern courtyard riwaq, the layout of the mosque of Zafar Dhibin cannot be considered that of a true courtyard mosque. The haram dominates through its height and building mass. Besides, the space enclosed by the courtyard — and in fact the whole

complex — is strongly affected by two tombs. One belongs to Imam al-Mansur Billah, the man who commissioned the structure; it is set in the middle of the courtyard; the second belongs to his son and sits in the south-eastern corner.²⁷ The haram takes the form of a traditional hypostyle hall with a coffered ceiling borne directly on high columns. The floor plan is a rectangle laid out transversely with two rows of columns. Only the façade is provided with curved arcades, probably imported from the Maghrib via Egypt. In accordance with the function of a palace mosque the three central naves are heightened and thereby emphasized, and the ceilings are particularly sumptuous; the whole is to be



Fig. 7. Zafar Dhibin, mosque. Façade of the haram. (photo: K. Anger)

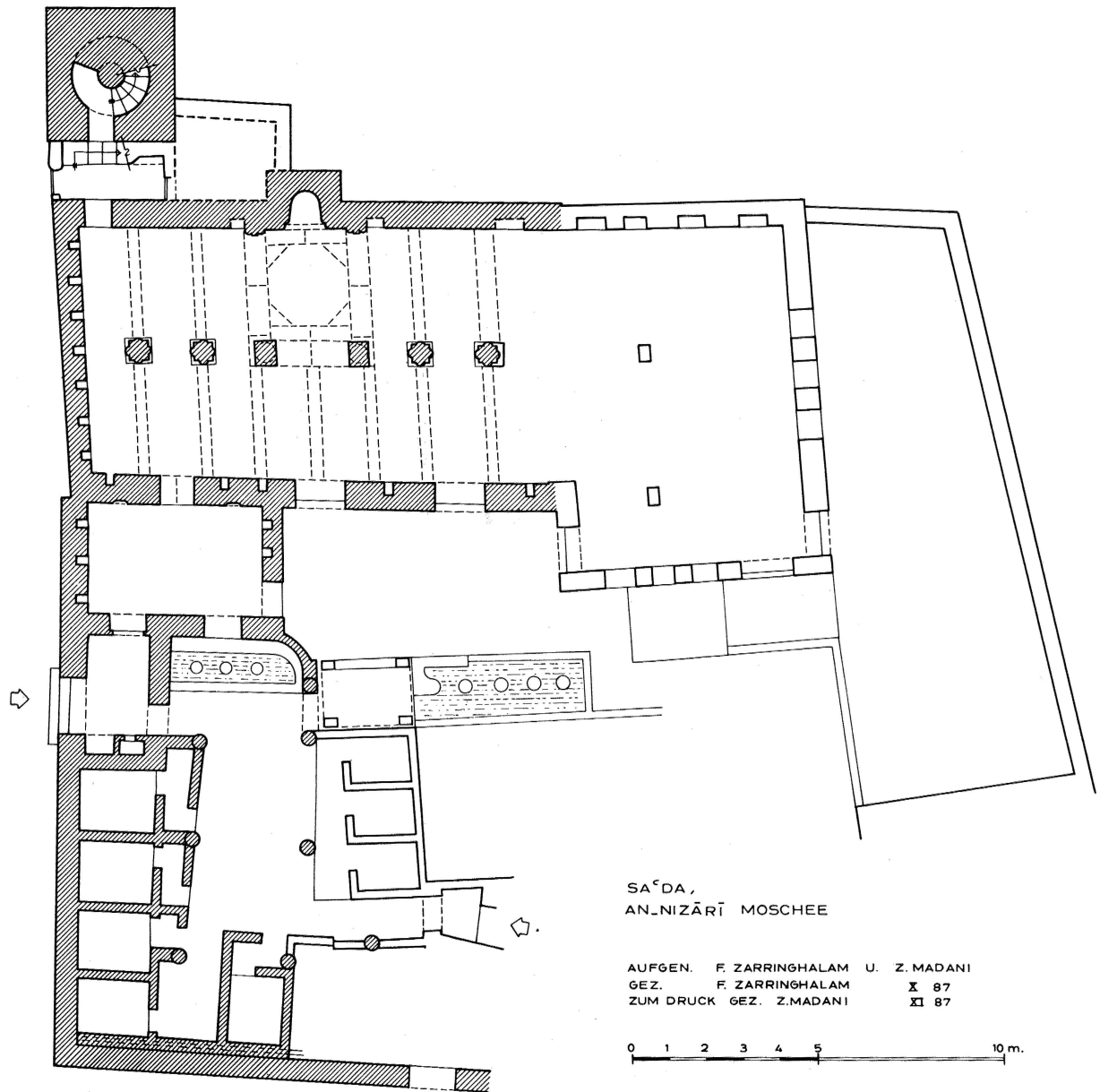


Fig. 8. Sa'ada, Masjid al-Nizari.



Fig. 9. Al-Mahjam, minaret. (photo: G. Grunewald)

understood really as baldachin architecture. Unfortunately the mihrab bay was destroyed by a bomb, but it is certain that a cupola-shaped construction indicated the place for the imam. The room opens through the trefoil arcades of its façade onto the tomb of Imam al-Mansur Billah, which lies on the axis with the mihrab and clearly refers to it. The first mosque of al-Hadi in Sa^cda is similarly conceived. There too mihrab and tomb are on one axis (fig. 6). An innovation is presented by the windows

which pierce the wall under the ceiling; they are connected by fascias used ornamentally and allow light to enter the large, relatively high room. It is apparent from this arrangement as well as other details that the Masjid al-^cAbbas must have served as a model.²⁸

Later cult buildings of the Zaidi realm frequently cite these façade arcades with their characteristic sweep, the “*curve rectiligne*,” as Golvin called it, as found for example in the mosque of al-Hadi, in the mihrab of the Abhar Mosque in San^ca² (ca. 1390), on the courtyard arcades of the Great Mosque of Thula (1394), and on the entrance to the mosque of Dhibin (14th century?).²⁹ The arcades of the mosque of Zafar Dhibin create the effect of a decorative register, functioning as the lowest of a series of horizontally arranged bands to articulate the proportionally very high façade (fig. 7). The stucco patterns are brightened by the gray-green concave faience tiles inserted here and there, which appear again only later in Zaidi buildings, such as the tomb of Salah al-Din in San^ca² (ca. 1390), the base of the minaret of the Masjid al-Abhar in San^ca² (pre-1390),³⁰ the destroyed Masjid ^cAli in San^ca², the Masjid al-Nizari in Sa^cda (ca. 1400), and the Qubbat al-Sharif, among others. These may be understood as distant echoes of Anatolian-Iranian architectural ornamentation, which is only used in Zaidi cult buildings in Yemen. The ceiling ornamentation uses what would at that time have been the latest motifs in Ayyubid decoration, including muqarnas-like cones that were not widespread in Yemen.

The brick minaret should surely be seen as having been borrowed from Anatolia or the Jazira; it and the minaret of the Great Mosque of Zabid are probably the earliest still surviving. The minaret’s brick shaft is unusually covered with sculpted snakes that wrap themselves around its whole area in a zigzag pattern from top to bottom, threatening one another with wide-open jaws. It is unclear whether their character is purely apotropaic, or whether they have a special significance to the Zaidi realm.

The display of riches presented by the mosque of Zafar Dhibin is not offered by any other courtyard mosque either within or outside the Zaidi realm. The wide central nave, with its mihrab bay over which is a cupola visible from a long distance, is also obligatory for the new mosque of al-Hadi in Sa^cda (1339–40), and for the small Masjid al-Nizari (fig. 8). In the extension to the mosque of al-Hadi, the flat ceiling is borne by arcade walls which run both parallel and at right angles to the qibla wall, so that they separate individual bays (fig. 6). Surprisingly the room contains no further ornamenta-



Fig. 10. Ta'izz, al-Muzaffariyya, northern façade. (photo: B. Grunewald)

tion; decoration is concentrated only in the mihrab bay, as in the Masjid al-Nizari. The courtyard, situated in front, has a free-standing minaret within it. The Zaidi mosques of Dauran and Dhamar have beautiful inscribed friezes that run around the walls. The mihrab bay in the so-called Madrasa (it is actually a mosque) Shamsiyya in Dhamar, built in 1540, offers exquisite, if formally rather stiff, stucco ornamentation.

In later times, too, the courtyard mosque, like the hypostyle hall or the cubical mosque, holds its own. It lives on, both in the Zaidi realm and in the territory of the Sunna, with its columns evenly placed and its wide central nave.³¹ The two Ayyubid Great Mosques of Janad and Zabid (figs. 4–5), built around 1200, and even the Zaidi mosque in Rauda (San^ca²) built between 1635 and 1655,³² create an almost classical impression.

Domed mosques. An innovation in Yemeni sacred buildings was the domed mosque, probably introduced by the Ayyubids in the twelfth century and disseminated by their successors, the equally orthodox Rasulids. Among the first of them is the mosque of al-Mahjam, whose minaret (fig. 9) is a replica of the Ayyubid minaret in the Great Mosque of Zabid (pre-1200) and alone bears witness to the important place the town once held. Written records tell us that the mosque had a multitude of domes.³³

The Asadiyya in Ibb, built as a madrasa in the first half of the thirteenth century, is in all probability the model for this architecture: its haram consists of a central domed bay flanked on each side by two domed bays, a basic form probably originating in Iran and henceforth typical in Yemeni mosque construction also.³⁴ A peristyle surrounded the courtyard of the Asadiyya, the corners of



Fig. 11. Ta'izz, al-Muzaffariyya. Haram. (photo: B. Grunewald)

which were furnished with domed bays. The main dome of the haram originally displayed very fine painting which can be considered the earliest in Rasulid buildings to have come down to us.³⁵

The Muzaffariyya in Ta'izz, the construction of which was commissioned by Sultan al-Muzaffar, who was also responsible for the mosque of al-Mahjam, provides another fine example of a Rasulid mosque (figs. 10–11). Conceived of as a structure laid out transversely, the haram consists of a large, central dome-covered room, at the sides of which are added domed double bays (two in the west, three in the east), each of which leads into a large dome-covered room in the west and east respectively. While the room is composed of domed bays added to one another, it is nonetheless conceived anew in the way light is admitted: the north wall is broken up by a chain of large rectangular windows which open up the

otherwise enclosed inner room, providing it with a link to the outside world and giving it both light and a view outwards (fig. 11). The high, colorfully painted domes, their drums pierced by windows, are equally bright. The qibla wall faces toward the town and is decorated with generous interlacing and arcaded friezes; the three domes tower above it and accentuate it. Originally the building had no minaret.³⁶ In its stead a tower-like structure with a domed crown marked the mihrab from the outside.

A transverse space with domed bays, a tower-like mihrab, and an opening out of the rooms are repeated in all Rasulid buildings known to us and give them a character all their own. The Tahirids who followed them took up these forms as well, as, for example, in the extension to the Great Mosque of Ibb and that of the Great Mosque of Zabid (fig. 3).³⁷ In this way the orthodox cult building

acquires specific features and can be distinguished from the traditional cult building of the Zaidi imams. The domed building embodied the modern, progressive world; the traditional mosque represented the preservation of what had been handed down.

Almost nothing in this pattern changes in the large mosques, even in the sixteenth century when Yemen was under Ottoman rule, as can be seen from the mosque of Kamal Pasha in Zabid (before 1520).³⁸ The Kamaliyya, like the Iskandariyya (before 1536)³⁹ in Zabid, however, has a tightness and unity in outline and gains through its harmonious proportions, which make its rich ornamentation seem superfluous. The Mustafa Pasha in Zabid (1554), which should perhaps be viewed rather as a tomb mosque, is an example of a simple domed space, whose entire effect lies in its harmonious proportions. Only the Ottoman Bakiriyya in San'a² (1597) reflects something of the clear rationality of Ottoman architecture, but because of that it seemed out of place and was never imitated.⁴⁰ At most the corner cupolas and prayer vestibule were adopted as decorative elements in smaller mosques, from the Qubbat al-Talha in San'a² (1619–20)

to the Qubbat al-Mahdi, the construction of which was commissioned by Imam al-Mahdi li Din Allah al-^cAbbas in 1750–51.

Under the influence of Rasulid domed buildings, small domed mosques spread throughout the orthodox parts of the land, leaving their mark on the face of the countryside. These are mainly transverse spaces composed of several domed bays, such as the mosque at Fa²sa (second half of the fifteenth century) near Zabid and the mosque of Ibn ^cAbbas. Other ground-plan variants also appear, however, such as the mosque at Malhuki, square in floor plan, with three sets of three equally matched domed bays (1499), and the mosque in Nagd al-Juma^ci from the mid sixteenth century, with three sets of five equally matched bays.⁴¹

In sum we can say that three types of mosques — the cubical mosque, the hypostyle hall, with or without courtyard, and the hypostyle courtyard mosque — could be found in Yemen by the end of the twelfth century, each drawing on a long tradition and continuing in use thereafter. The domed mosque was imported in the thirteenth century and together with the other three types

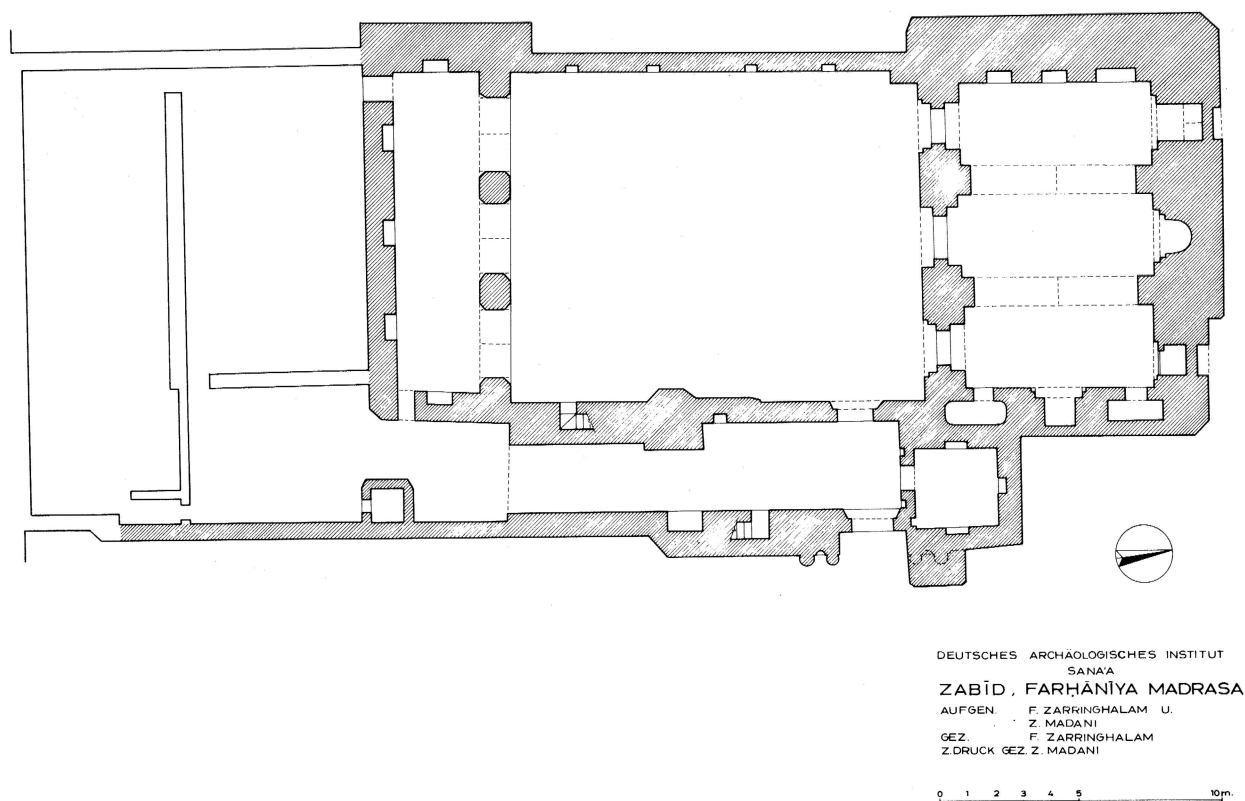


Fig. 12. Zabid, al-Farhaniyya.



Fig. 13. Zabid, al-Farhaniyya. Façade of haram. (photo: B. Grunewald)

determined religious architecture in Yemen for centuries to come.

MADRASAS

The madrasa was introduced into Yemen by the Ayyubids in the twelfth century, and essentially replaced foundations that involved only a mosque. According to written records, the first madrasa in Zabid was an iwan structure (perhaps a madrasa with four iwans), but it did not become a generally accepted form in Yemen.⁴² Yemen developed a madrasa type of its own that was very different from those of other countries. Its plan made no allowance for accommodations for teachers or students; it was a structure only with a place for prayer and a place for teaching; large foundations might have in addition a library, a khanqah, and a Qur^ānic school for children.

The countless small madrasas that can be found across the country are little more than a traditional mosque with a hall opposite. In every case the mosque's floor plan follows the tradition prevalent in that particular part of the country — cubical mosques predominate in the highlands, for instance. The Sharafiyya in Jibla, dating from the mid thirteenth century, is composed of a cubical mosque and a hall, enclosed by a courtyard. An additional small mosque, which still has its beautiful coffered ceiling, was an unusual feature. As is often the case with these complexes, only the mosques have survived; this is true of both the Madrasa Dhu ʿUqaib near Jibla (before 1312) and the madrasa in Haqla near Ibb (14th century).

In Zabid transverse mosques predominate. The Hak-kariyya (ca. 1300) is a good example of the type: it is a simple mosque facing an equally wide, open hall and

connected to it by a corridor-like courtyard. Both buildings have flat ceilings. A staircase minaret adjoins the hall to the east. This type can be seen in the Farhaniyya (before 1432) (figs. 12–13) with its lavish decoration, where the haram and hall are separated by an oblong courtyard. The façades of both halls are furnished with rich stucco ornamentation, concealing the simplicity of the architecture. A small minaret rises on the east side of the courtyard, a replica of the Ayyubid minaret of the Great Mosque.

The mosque of the ʿAlawiyya madrasa consists of two aligned domed bays with a similar hall opposite, and again a staircase minaret to the east. An unusual variant, even for Zabid, is represented by the mosque of the Fatiyya (before 1366), which has a transverse room covered with a barrel vault.⁴³ A portal opens in the middle of the façade, its tympanum filled with triangular shapes

containing rosette patterns. These patterns, together with the fine stucco network laid over the brick surface of the structure, clearly imitate the art of the mosque of al-Mahjam. Inside, decorated rosettes mark the mihrab bay.

In addition to these small madrasas, some large royal foundations were also built that constituted an architectural genre of their own. They maintained their position as a special Yemeni form alongside the other large madrasa foundations of the Islamic world. Domed buildings reach their apex with these madrasas, as can be seen from the early Asadiyya, the later Muʿtabiyya, Ashrafiyya, and many other madrasas now destroyed.⁴⁴ The layout of the Asadiyya in Ibb can be considered the embodiment of this type. Its mosque consists of a central domed bay flanked on each side by two domed bays. Variations to this basic model are found in the Muʿtabiyya (fig. 14),



Fig. 14. Ta'izz, al-Muʿtabiyya. Courtyard. (photo: B. Grunewald)

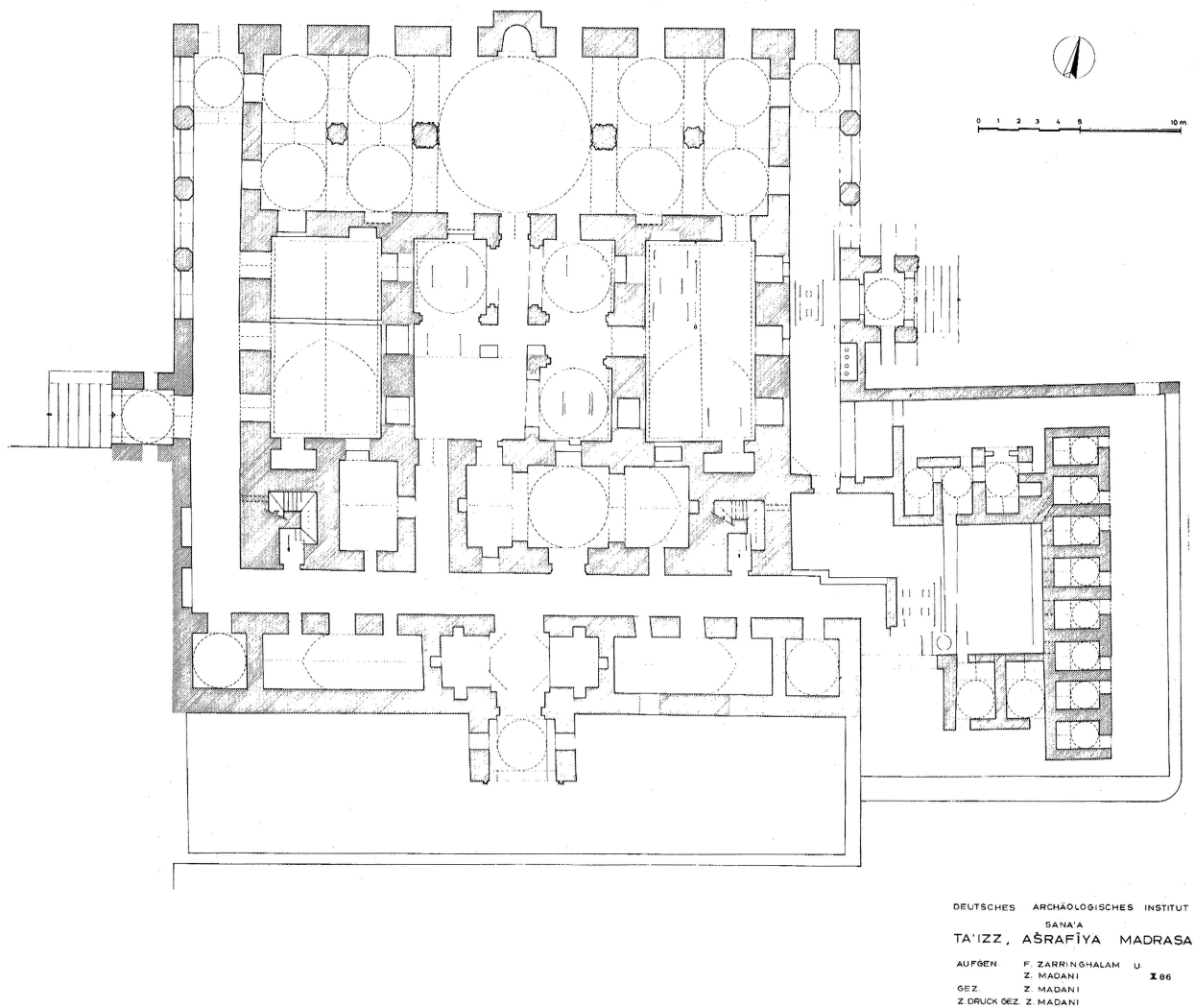


Fig. 15. Ta'izz, al-Ashrafiyya.

and its successor, the considerably larger Ashrafiyya (fig. 15), in that the teaching rooms, the Qur'anic school, and the library are added and integrated into the complex in a masterly fashion. The floor plan represents a high point in Yemeni architecture, rendering for the Yemeni madrasa an architectural form that is well organized down to the last detail.

The planning and execution of the Muṣṭabiyya (before 1393) place it among the most successful of the Yemeni madrasas still standing today.⁴⁵ As in the Muzaffariyya, the haram lies with its northern façade facing the town. The haram consists of two sets of three equally large dome-covered rooms. In front of it is a courtyard,

bound on east and west by teaching rooms. A U-shaped passage lies around the prayer room, separating the courtyard from the haram, open toward the countryside through wide arcades and tempting the visitor with its kiosk-like pavilions in the north to stay and look at the view. This gives the structure a touch of Mediterranean architecture (fig. 14), creating a pleasing effect, especially since the different angles of vision constantly produce new vistas. The entrance, a projecting pishtaq, something otherwise found only in the mosque at Hais, leads into a vaulted room, adjacent to which are seating areas covered with a barrel vault. A small passage covered with a barrel vault separates the entrance area and

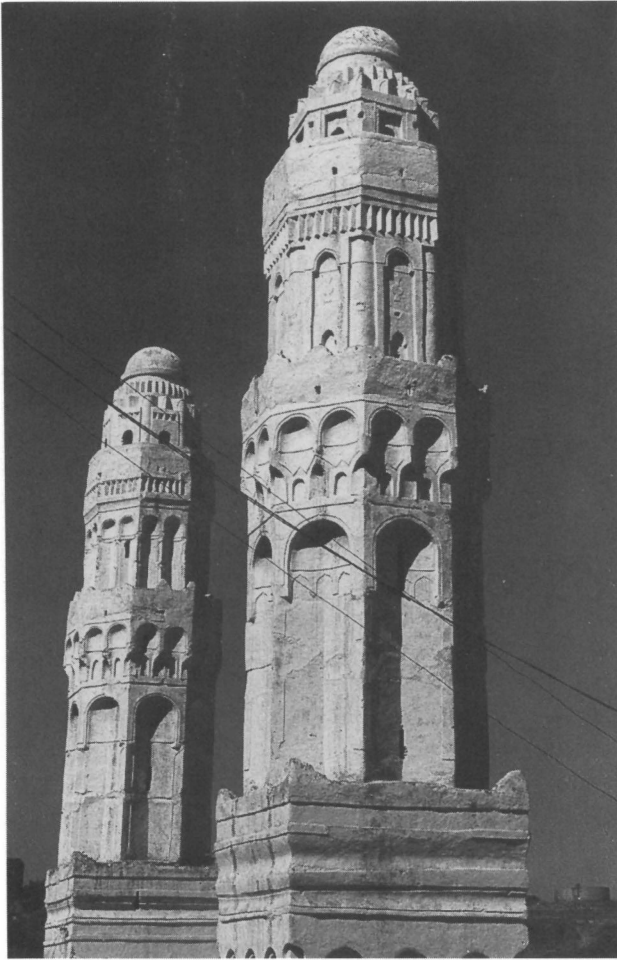


Fig. 16. Ta'izz, al-Ashrafiyya. Minaret. (photo: B. Grunewald)

the adjoining rooms at the Qur'an school from the inner area of the courtyard where more advanced instruction was carried on. Adjoining this to the southeast were the ablution facilities. Today the eastern space is filled with tombs. The mosque room has decoration in cheerful colors with a particularly powerful visual effect rarely found in the Islamic architecture of the period.

The Ashrafiyya, designed a few years later quite certainly by the same architect, essentially involves an increase in proportions rather than a change in conception (fig. 15). The U-shaped passage here surrounds the mosque together with the adjacent teaching areas to the south and links them around the central courtyard to form a block.⁴⁶ A transverse room to the south in the form of a domed bay with flanking wings covered by barrel vaults functions as a khanqah. The towering minarets

at the southern corners of the inner building have an unusual front elevation (fig. 16); the protecting portal on the southern side emphasizes the importance of the foundation.

The portal consists of carefully prepared red, green, and gray-brown sandstone ashlar — in contrast to the rest of the structure, which is of unworked stone — and clearly represents an import from the Jazira. Blind niches, scallop-shaped vaulting, egg and dart, molded string courses, and cyma moldings all belong to an architecture based upon a late-antique building tradition (fig. 17). But in the Muzaffariyya it was also possible to observe such elements of classical Mediterranean architecture as profiles, demi-shafts, arcaded friezes, etc., which thereby find their way into Yemeni architecture and are later further handed down in distorted form. These elements even appear misconstrued in the small mosques of the Tihama.

The influence of Indian Islamic art also begins to make itself felt in the niches lined up and placed one

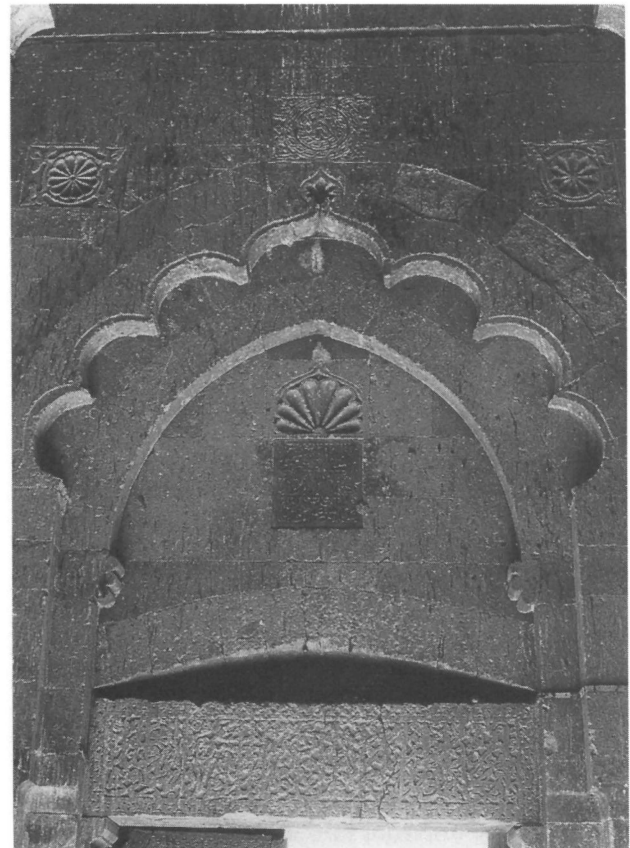


Fig. 17. Ta'izz, al-Ashrafiyya. Southern portal. (photo: B. Grunewald)

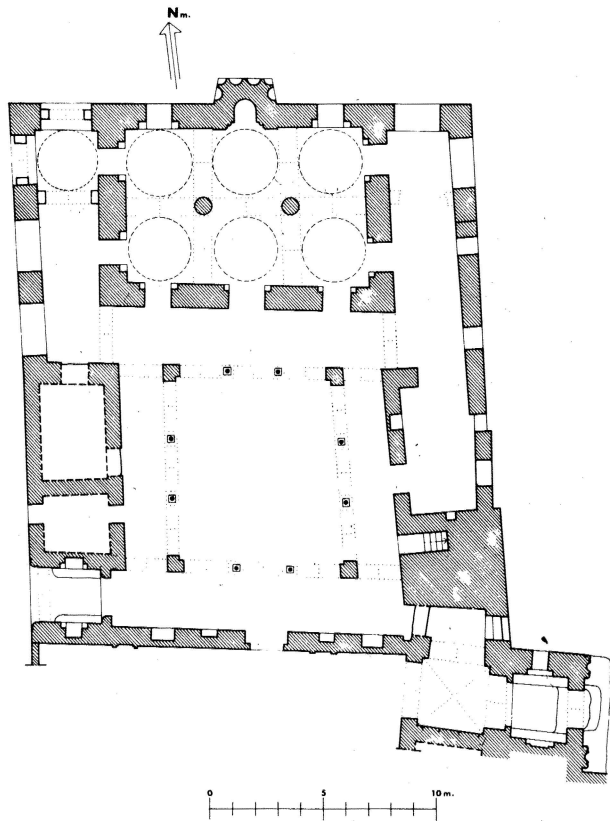


Fig. 18. Juban, al-Mansuriyya. (R. Paone and A. Cavaliere)

over the other in courses, lotus rosettes, and cupolas with lotus finials. The eastern door — still the original — of the Ashrafiyya is an example of purely Indian work, although it could well have been carved in Zabid itself, a town considered to be “Indian.”

The influence of Indian forms increases under the Tahirids, who felt obliged to follow the models of their predecessors, perhaps as a means of expressing their loyalty to orthodoxy. Accordingly, the Mansuriyya Madrasa in Juban (1482) can be seen as a replica of the Mu^ctabiyya in Ta^cizz (figs. 18–19). The marble columns in its courtyard are incomparably beautiful, probably the only ones in Yemen which were either worked in situ by Indian craftsmen or imported.⁴⁷ Similarly the famous ^cAmir-iyya in Rida^c (1504) displays clear signs of Indian influence as, for example, in its cupola forms. Yet even its floor-plan variant, in which the haram is completely surrounded by an ambulatory in the form of an arcaded walk with three fountains sunk into the ground, points to Indian origins.⁴⁸ The fully developed basement has precursors in Rasulid (and also Indian) architecture, as do

the architectural decoration and rich, colorful painting in the haram.

The madrasa plays no part in the foundations of the Ottoman occupation. No madrasas were established in the Zaidi realm as an instrument through which the orthodox rulers could fight against the Shi^ca. An inscription tells us that even the so-called Shamsiyya Madrasa in Dhamar (1540) is in fact a mosque.

KHANQAHS

Khanqahs were also to be found in the public foundations of the Rasulid era, although they are not quite as common as madrasas. Sultan Muzaffar (1250–95) is said to have endowed a khanqah in Hais, which is extolled in literature.⁴⁹ This khanqah can perhaps be identified with the Great Mosque which local tradition credits Muzaffar as having built. With its two-nave, barrel-vaulted haram, square courtyard with large southern iwan, originally open to the outside via a large arcade, and projecting entrance pishtaq on the southeastern side, the layout offers a floor plan unusual for Yemen. Two rooms, also covered with barrel vaulting, run along the east side of the courtyard, in a north-south direction. Corresponding to them on the west side is a row of vaulted rooms; these are new, however. The small *guldasteh* on top of the pishtaq with its stylized stalactite cupola creates an equally unusual impression.

The structure in Hais characterized as a khanqah consists of a small haram with three dome-covered bays and a staircase minaret and does not correspond to the building extolled in the literature. That it is possible to install a khanqah in a madrasa has been demonstrated for the Ashrafiyya.

MAUSOLEUMS

An extravagant wealth of ornamentation and inscribed friezes is reserved for the tombs that surround the mortal remains of the imam and the domed mausoleums over them (figs. 20–21). All that is holy, the baraka, and the worship of the believers are concentrated here. The earliest mausoleums known to us are the dome-covered square buildings of Zafar Dhibin which date from the early thirteenth century. The mihrab was in the north wall; the structure was originally open on the other three sides via arcades, permitting access at all times and forming a shrine that was not enclosed. These buildings are well balanced in their proportions; they have inscribed friezes — Kufic and thuluth executed in stucco — in the squinch zone and are otherwise sparingly decorated;

they probably represent a transitional form between simple architecture and the extravagantly decorated domed mausoleum in Sa^ʿda. The carved cenotaphs are of incomparable quality; their inscriptions can be numbered among the great achievements of Islamic calligraphy.⁵⁰

The dome-covered tombs of the imams in Sa^ʿda, lying to the south of the mosque of al-Hadi, form a group in which each element appears from the outside to have merged with the others (fig. 6). The structures themselves are in principle all the same: a dome-covered square open on three sides with arcades and a mihrab niche in the walled qibla side. However, the abundance of ornamentation and inscribed friezes in them is overwhelming. While the ornamentation in mosques was restricted to the mihrab and its bay, these domed tombs are decorated all around, making it a shrine, admission to which is completely forbidden to non-Muslims.

The domed tomb of the donor Imam al-Hadi is an exception. This building was originally open on all four sides — that is, on the qibla side as well — although the axial position put it in direct relationship to the mihrab of the mosque to the north. The present structure probably dates from the fifteenth century, but it is likely that it repeated a model that did not provide for a mihrab. Examples of buildings with the baldachin open on all sides, most of them dating from the fifteenth or sixteenth century, can be found today in the cemetery in Sa^ʿda. Some are also richly decorated with inscriptions and stucco ornamentation; they were reserved for the imam's family. Their decoration and especially their inscription bands make the domed tombs of Imam al-Mahdi li-Din Allah (d. 1371; the builder of the new mosque of al-Hadi) and Hasan ibn al-Mukhtar historically important architectural monuments.

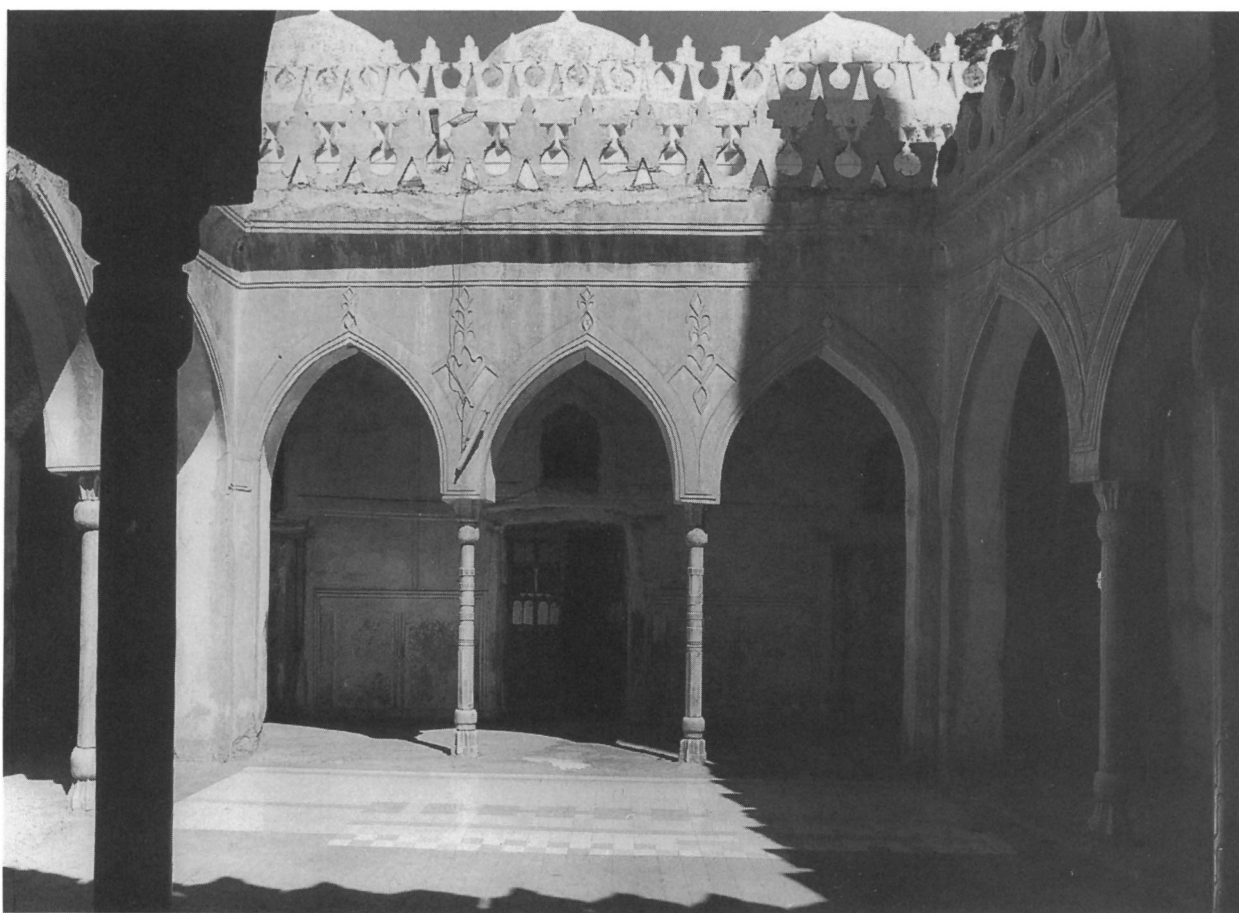


Fig. 19. Juban, al-Mansuriyya. Courtyard. (photo: B. Grunewald)

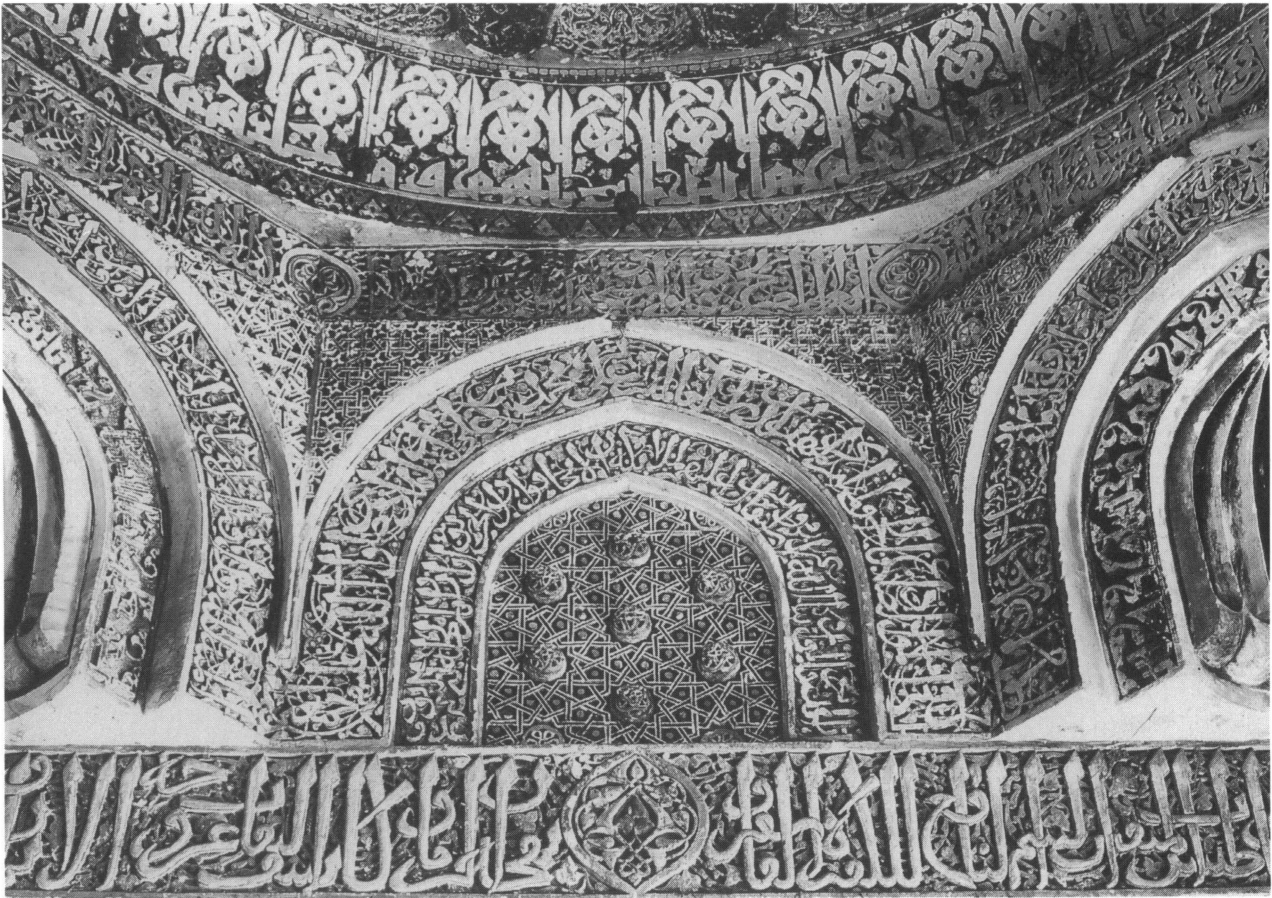


Fig. 20. Sa'da, mosque of al-Hadi. Qubbat al-Sharifa. (photo: F. Zarrinqalam)

The tomb building of Imam Salah al-Din (d. 1390) in Sa'nā' presents an unusual floor plan; its domed square is extended to the north by an iwan with a mihrab niche. In the south, the room ends in a kind of apse, expanding toward the west through a rectangular protrusion containing a mihrab niche. Comparable tomb architecture is to be found in Damascus from Ayyubid times, although it is unlikely that it served as a model for these buildings.⁵¹

The tombs of the Rasulid rulers do not occupy buildings of their own; instead they are placed inside the madrasa founded by the deceased ruler. An example is in the basement of the Ashrafiyya which once served as a burial place for the family.⁵² However, the modest attitude of the rulers is compensated for by the richness of the decoration and the painting and gilding of the stucco ornamentation found on the sumptuous cenotaphs of the domed baldachins over Sultan Ashraf, his

son, and his family, later built in the courtyard of the Ashrafiyya.

Those Ottoman governors who died away from their homeland were also unwilling to forego their türbe. The domed tomb of Mustafa Pasha (1554) in Zabid (fig. 22) was added to a pious foundation that included a mosque, fountains, and estates, but the türbe of Husain Pasha in Ta'izz (1593–94) is a more typically Ottoman tomb (fig. 23).⁵³ The floor plan is octagonal; high rectangular windows and a round window above them pierce the walls so that the whole interior is full of light. The rough masonry gives the architecture a somewhat provincial look; however, the stucco work on the interior is of high quality. Ornaments of Ottoman inspiration — band of tulips and carnations — cover the stucco panels which subdivide the walls. The burial site lay between two gardens (*baina jannatain*).⁵⁴

Evidence thus far suggests that saints' tombs and

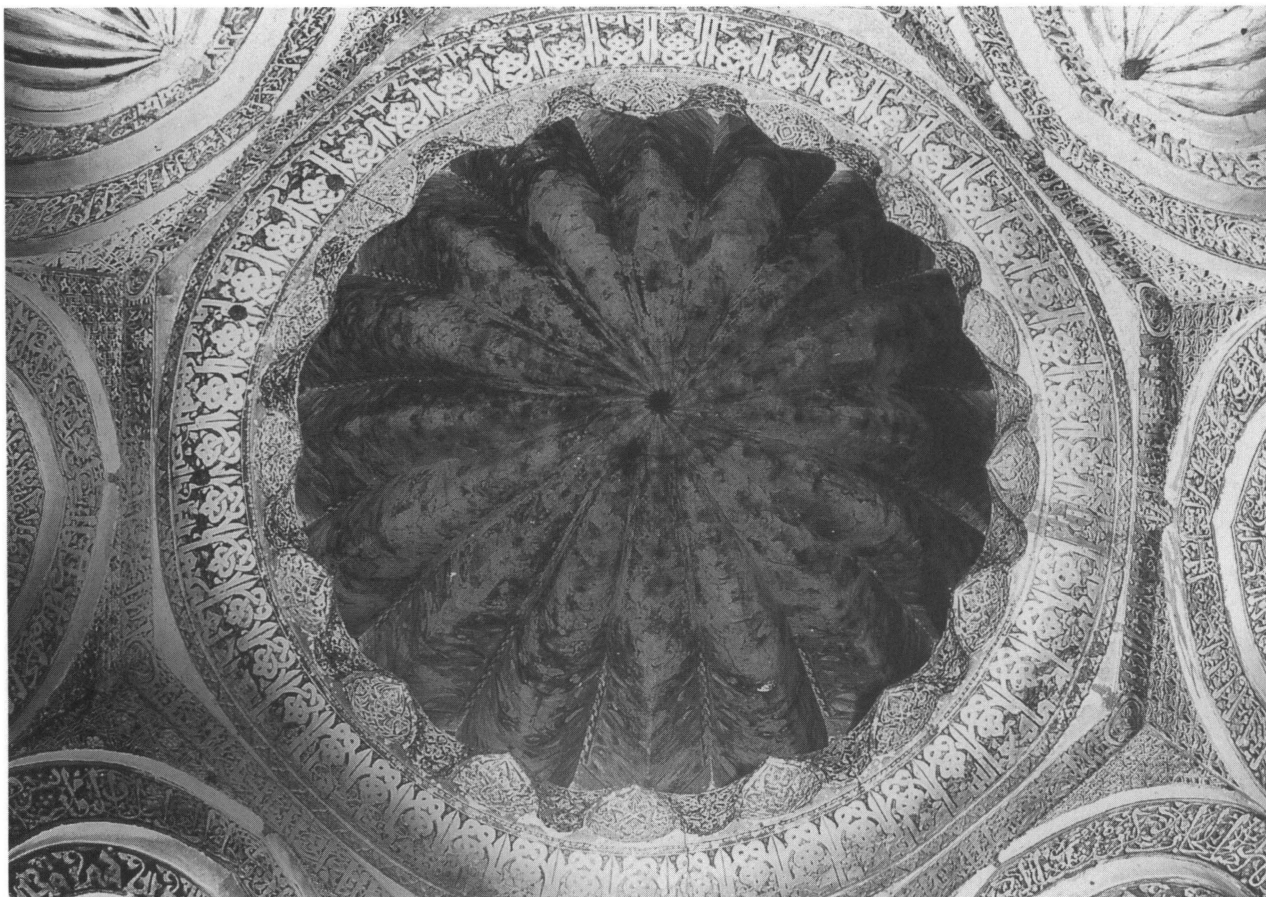


Fig. 21. Sa'da, mosque of al-Hadi. Qubbat al-Sharifa. (photo: F. Zarrinqalam)

tomb architecture came into being in the sixteenth century in Yemen. Tomb and mosque were originally kept separate; usually the saint's tomb lay behind the qibla wall as is the case in Ibn 'Abbas or Fa'sa, for example. The mosque in Yafrus, a Tahirid foundation, surrounded the tomb of the saint; not until Ottoman rule under Murad Pasha (1576–80) was it furnished with a dome over the tomb and integrated into the mosque proper. The shrine thereby became a focus of orthodox piety and has remained so up to the present day. Similarly the formerly modest tomb of al-Sudi in Ta'izz was converted in 1604 by Sinan Pasha into a center of religious life, undoubtedly with the intention of providing a counterbalance to the tomb cult of the Zaidi imams. These domed tombs are likewise open on three sides, even if — as is the case with the shrine of al-Sudi — there is a curtain riwaq in front of the eastern side.

The quality of the domed building in Mauz'a in the

Tihama, executed in stone ashlar (ca. 1676) and the domed tomb in 'Arraf/Wassab (16th? century) is remarkable (fig. 24). Its simple interior is given a festive character through the fine painting and magnificent inscriptions.

Islamic Yemen presents a picture of an isolated province remaining true to its tradition. The domed architecture of the Rasulids represents not only a modernization and integration into the *koiné* of Islamic architecture, but almost a revolution: in place of the hypostyle halls appears the interior design of a genuine architecture, an architecture that is identified with orthodoxy. For that reason the succeeding Tahirids also adopted the same forms as a way of expressing their legitimacy. Their architecture nevertheless fails to attain the quality of the Rasulid era. But the reverse is also true: insistence on the old forms represents a program by means of which the legiti-



Fig. 22. Zabid, mosque of Mustafa Pasha. (photo: J. Schmidt)



Fig. 23. Ta'izz, al-Husainiyya. (photo: B. Grunewald)

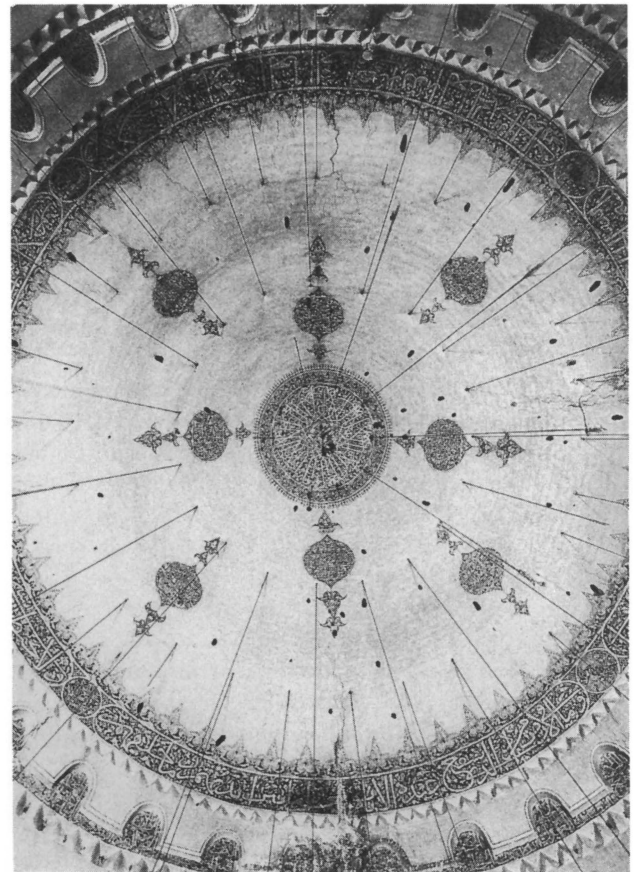


Fig. 24. Arraf/Wassab, dome of the tomb. (photo: F. Zarrinqalam)



Fig. 25. Sa'da, mosque of al-Hadi. Tomb of Hasan ibn al-Mukhtar. Inscription in the dome. (photo: F. Zarrinqalam)

macy of Zaidi rule is documented. Thus it comes about that different architectural traditions develop side by side, traditions that then lose their relevance with the final rule of the Zaidi imams in the seventeenth century.

Despite this traditionalism, Yemen has been receptive to decoration of all kinds. There was a process of selection, however, that resulted in a repertoire of ornaments being used again and again — for the stucco decoration on Zaidi cult buildings, for example. One formal canon was used for Zaidi artistic output, and another for the orthodox realm, so the attentive observer may be able to identify what particular cult a building belonged to by its decoration, though the method is not infallible.

Coffered ceilings are among the great achievements of Islamic art, but, with a few exceptions, they have not survived elsewhere in the Islamic world. Their tradition can be traced through six centuries, and are linked with an equally archaic architecture of which we also have few examples. Yemeni minarets are also original creations peculiar to the country. Examples are the minarets of

Zabid and al-Mahjam, that of Zafar Dhibin, and the incomparable towers of the Ashrafiyya. The large Rasulid madrasas are also impressive: the painting in the cupolas which can only be compared with contemporary book illumination; the woodcarving in the minbars as in Dhahmar, Jibla, and Janad; the cenotaphs, the stuccowork, and, not least, the calligraphy, the queen of Islamic art in Yemen (fig. 25). It is especially to this last that future research should be devoted.

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NOTES

Author's note: This article, originally given as a lecture, is necessarily a cursory treatment of an extensive subject. Some of the structures have not been published, nor has their history been written, even briefly. Nor was it possible to touch upon all the buildings known to us; here we will mention the most important of a given type. The work presented here was carried out under the auspices of the Ger-

- man Archaeological Institute, San^{ʿa}. My gratitude to the colleagues — architects Dr. R. Paone, A. Cavaliere, Z. Madani, and F. Zarrinqalam, and photographer B. Grunewald — for their help. I would also like to express thanks to Professor E. Wirth, who encouraged me to publish this fragmentary survey and Dr. Peter Alford Andrews, who corrected the English translation.
1. The building is published in *Archäologische Berichte aus dem Yemen* [henceforth cited as *ABADY*], vol. 3 (1986), p. 109.
 2. *Ibid.*, 1: 213; see also “Cubical Yemeni Mosques,” in *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 21 (1991): 49.
 3. *ABADY*, vol. 1, pl. 49b.
 4. J. F. Breton, L. Badre, R. Audouin, J. Seigne, “Le Wādī Ḥaḍramaut,” *Prospectiones* 1978–1979, pls. 3–7; B. Doe, *Monuments of South Arabia* (Naples, Cambridge, New York, 1983), fig. 57; J. Schmidt, “Zur altsüdarabischen Tempelarchitektur,” *ABADY* 1, p. 161.
 5. *ABADY* 1: 164, fig. 46.
 6. Al-Azraqī, *Kitāb akhbār Makka: Geschichte und Beschreibung der Stadt Mekka* (henceforth cited as al-Azraqī), ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1857; rept. Hildesheim–New York, 1981), pp. 104, 138.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
 8. *ABADY*, 3: 161.
 9. *Baghdader Mitteilungen* (henceforth cited as *BaM*) 10 (1979), p. 229.
 10. Breton et al., *Ḥaḍramaut*, pl. 9–10.
 11. U. Scerrato, G. Ventrone, P. Cuneo, “Report on the Third Campaign for the Typological Survey of the Islamic Religious Architecture of North Yemen,” *East and West* 36,4 (1986), fig. 59.
 12. *ABADY*, 3: 145.
 13. *ABADY*, vol. 1, fig. 46e.
 14. Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-ʿlāq al-nafīsa*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, 1st ed., vol. 7 (1892).
 15. The mosque was founded in the year 6 (627–28) by Mu^{ʿadh} ibn Jabal; al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifāt Jazīrat al-ʿArab*, ed. D. H. Müller (Leiden, 1884), p. 54; Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Ṣifāt bilād al-Yaman wa Makka wa ba^ʿd al-Hijāz*, ed. O. Löfgren (Leiden, 1951), p. 165; also the Great Mosque in San^{ʿa} is believed to have been founded by a companion of the Prophet (Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-ʿlāq*, p. 110; *BaM* 9 (1978): 94).
 16. According to inscriptions on the mihrab and in the courtyard, ʿAlī ibn Mahdī had destroyed the mosque in the year 558 (1163), al-Daib^{ʿa}, *Bughyat al-mustafīd fī ta^ʿrīkh Madīnat Zabīd*, ed. J. Chelhod (San^{ʿa}, 1983), p. 77. Atabek Sunqur built up the southern riwaq, the eastern and western riwaq, and parts of the haram or the complete haram (*ibid.*, p. 86).
 17. A. Grohmann, *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaften, Kulturgeschichte des Orients, Arabien* (Munich, 1963), fig. 56, 57; Doe, *Monuments*, fig. 52.
 18. al-Rāzī al-San^{ʿānī}, *Kitāb Ta^ʿrīkh Madīnat Ṣan^{ʿā}*, ed. Nabih ʿAqīl (San^{ʿa}, 1974), p. 85; *BaM* 9 (1978), p. 92; *ibid.*, 10 (1979): 179; *ABADY*, 3: 185; K. A. C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, ed. J. W. Allan (Aldershot, 1989), p. 83.
 19. According to an inscription on the minaret, R. B. Serjeant and R. B. Lewcock, *San^{ʿa}: An Arabian City* (London, 1985), fig. 18,51, p. 348; Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-ʿlāq*, p. 111.
 20. Al-Azraqī, p. 90; Serjeant and Lewcock, *San^{ʿa}*, p. 44.
 21. *BaM* 10 (1979), pls. 60 and 64; *ABADY* 1, pl. 87b.
 22. *BaM* 9 (1978), pls. 60–63a.
 23. R. B. Lewcock and G. R. Smith, “Two Early Mosques in the Yemen: A Preliminary Report,” *arp/Art and Archaeology Research Papers* (December 1973), p. 117, fig. 1; Creswell, *Short Account*, ed. Allan, p. 409; *BaM* 10 (1979), p. 193.
 24. *ABADY* 1, fig. 74; Lewcock and Smith, “Two Early Mosques,” p. 119; also the Great Mosque in Ibb, which must have been founded by Arwa bint Ahmad, *ABADY* 1, fig. 81.
 25. *ABADY*, 1, fig. 69.
 26. *Ibid.*, fig. 85.
 27. *Ibid.*, fig. 87.
 28. As, for example, the masonry, *balaq*, is used for the plinth; brick for the walls.
 29. *ABADY*, 1, pl. 124a.
 30. *ABADY*, 3, pl. 51, 55c.
 31. In 1186 Tugtekin built three riwaqs around the courtyard of the Great Mosque in Zabīd and the minaret, al-Daib^{ʿa} (*Ta^ʿrīkh Madīnat Zabīd*, p. 80); Atabek Sunqur built the riwaqs of the Great Mosque of Janad and the haram, *ibid.*, p. 86.
 32. ʿAbd al-Wāsi^ʿ ibn Yahyā al-Wāsi^ʿ al-Yamanī, *Ta^ʿrīkh al-Yaman* (Cairo 1346/1927), p. 53.
 33. Yahyā ibn al-Ḥusayn, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-Yamānī* (Cairo 1388/1968), p. 475; *ABADY*, 3, p. 197.
 34. *ABADY*, 3, fig. 45.
 35. *Ibid.*, pl. 41a.
 36. The minaret shown in the publication by Lewcock was built, according to an inscription, in the year 786 (1384) by Sultan Ashraf (R. B. Lewcock and G. R. Smith, “Three Medieval Mosques in the Yemen,” *Oriental Art*, N.S. 20 (1974), pl. 3).
 37. *ABADY*, 1, fig. 81.
 38. Ismāʿīl al-Akwa^ʿ, *al-Madāris al-Islāmiyya fī l-Yaman*, 2nd ed. (San^{ʿa}–Beirut, 1406/1986), p. 394.
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 360; the Iskandariyya is also believed to be of Rasulid origin; only an examination of the structure will show definitely to whom the building must be ascribed.
 40. Serjeant and Lewcock, *San^{ʿa}*, fig. 19.7.
 41. *ABADY*, 3, fig. 56; the Great Mosque of Thula consists of vaulted bays which cannot be read on the outside. The mosque was built according to an inscription at the western riwaq of the courtyard in the year 797 (1394).
 42. Al-Daib^{ʿa}, *Ta^ʿrīkh Madīnat Zabīd*, p. 76; Ismāʿīl al-Akwa^ʿ, *al-Madāris*, p. 10.
 43. See the list of constructions in *Yemen: Three Thousand Years of Art and Civilisation in Arabia Felix*, ed. W. Daum (Innsbruck, 1987–88), p. 260; for the Madrasa al-Hakkariyya, see Ismāʿīl al-Akwa^ʿ, *al-Madāris*, p. 213; for the Madrasa al-Farhaniyya, *ibid.*, p. 289; the madrasa was commissioned by a wife of the Sultan Ashraf; al-Fatiniyya, *ibid.*, p. 237, built by a daughter of Sultan Malik al-Mu^ʿayyad.
 44. For example, the Madrasa Jauhar in Ta^ʿizz or the Zahiriyya which was deliberately destroyed some twenty years ago; Ismāʿīl al-Akwa^ʿ, *al-Madāris*, pp. 20, 296.
 45. Commissioned by a wife of Sultan Ashraf, al-Jihat al-Karima Jihat al-Tawashi al-Ajall Jamal al-Dīn Mu^ʿtab ibn ʿAbd Allah al-Ashrafi who died in 796 (1393) (Ismāʿīl al-Akwa^ʿ, *al-Madāris*, p. 283).
 46. An inscription on the lintel of the two southern doors gives the year 800 (1397–98).
 47. Ismāʿīl al-Akwa^ʿ, *al-Madāris*, pp. 331 ff.
 48. The ground plan is reminiscent of the Tughluq mosque near Delhi built in 1387. This mosque is also built on a plinth, but

the details of the planning are different (Anthony Welch and Howard Crane, "The Tughluqs: Master Builders of the Delhi Sultanate," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983), fig. 4.

49. Ismā'īl al-Akwa^ḥ, *al-Madāris*, p. 337.
50. The Rasulids commissioned a number of khanqahs (*Yemen*, ed. Daum, p. 263); a number of small mosques at Zabid are said to be khanqahs.
51. The tomb of Safwat al-Mulk in Damascus; see E. de Boccard, *Les monuments ayyoubides de Damas*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1938), fig. 2.
52. Ismā'īl al-Akwa^ḥ, *al-Madāris*, p. 272.
53. Al-Mauza^ḥī, *al-Iḥsān fī dukhūl mamlakat al-Yaman taḥt zill 'adālat al-'Uthman*, ed. 'Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī (San^ca², n.d.), p. 74.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 116.